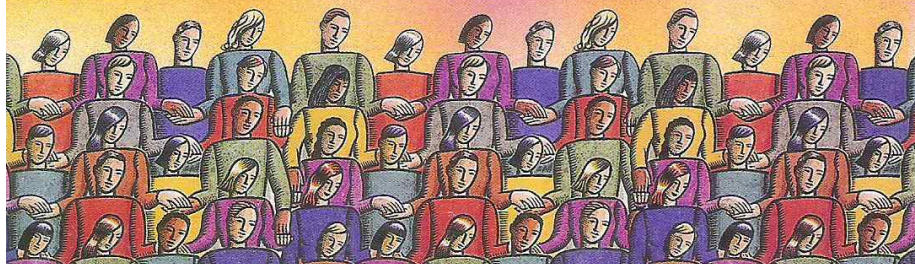


Melvin J. Steinbron

Author of *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*

THE LAY DRIVEN CHURCH

How to Empower the People
in Your Church to Share the
Tasks of Ministry



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The Lay–Driven Church

Dr. Melvin J. Steinbron

**FOUNDER OF THE LAY PASTORS MINISTRY
AUTHOR OF CAN THE PASTOR DO IT ALONE**



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Dedication

To Char, my wife of five-plus decades.

I called her Honey.

I also call her my Silent Partner because her support is the quiet, low-profile kind, just the type of God knew I needed for my life, my ministry and for writing this book.

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Acknowledgements

Scores of laypeople in all the churches where I have served throughout the past years have had a part in writing this book. They are my brothers and sisters in Christ and in Ministry. I learned from them while they were learning from me. They mentored me while I mentored them. We grew together while discovering how to be partner in ministry.

I have fond memories and great respect for the people in the churches where I have served:

First Presbyterian, Ellsworth, Wisconsin;
Westminster Presbyterian, Duluth, Minnesota;
Haili Congregational, Hilo, Hawaii;
Randolph Heights Presbyterian, St. Paul, Minnesota;
College Hill Presbyterian, Cincinnati, Ohio;
Hope Presbyterian, Richfield, Minnesota.

Other significant people who have had a part in writing this book are the committed and competent laypeople in churches of many denominations in the United States, Canada, Australia and the Bahamas where I have conducted seminars. Also, the 25 clergy and laypeople who have even with me in pioneering what has become Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc. Each one knows of whom I speak, and I know them. We have become "family."

To God be the glory! Nehemiah said, "My God put it into my heart to assemble the...people" (7:5). I applied that great security to myself during the months of writing. "My God put it in my heart to write this book." I truly believe He did.

Introduction

"How long does it take to write a book?" I'm asked this question often. My best answer is, "Nearly two decades."

What you are about to read comes from my steady involvement with the Lay Pastors Ministry. It organized in our church in 1979 to care for our 2,000-plus members, then it spread regionally as other churches adopted or adapted this model. Next, it spread nationally and internationally through my first book, *Can the Pastor do It Alone?*¹

In my part-time position on the pastoral staff of Hope Presbyterian Church in Richfield, Minnesota, I continue to have a hands-on experience with the Lay Pastors Ministry. Every day I know again the "agony and ecstasy" of ministry in action. My position as founder of Lay Pastors Ministry and President of Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc., keeps me aware of other churches starting, managing and sometimes restarting or burying their ministries. I have been invited to give seminars in churches of 26 denominations (and many nondenominational churches) in the United States, Canada, Australia and Bahamas.

Revelation 2:7 reads: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Increasing numbers of churches are hearing the Spirit, which explains why this ministry continues to grow. The Lay Pastors Ministry is one of the new things God is doing in His Church. It has found its niche in the "Second Reformation," having proved its lasting value by being a usable model for congregational care.

A persistent part of my self talk while this book was, *Mel,*

who are you writing for? This question kept me focused. Nearly two decades of my pastoral years have been developed to equipping churches and their people for lay pastoral ministry, so I could have chosen many different to the idea of lay ministry.

This book is practicable. Knowing that *theology* without *doing* is fruitless, and *doing* without *theology* is pointless, I have strived to maintain a balance between principle and practice. Many excellent books are available about the theology and theory of lay ministry, but not many deal with its application. What is usually missing is how to get from where the reader is to where he or she wants to be - how to move from vision to reality.

Vocational and volunteer ministers who want to start a lay ministry, and those who want to maintain an existing healthy ministry will, in this book, discover the steps they need to take. So will those who want to renew, rebuild or reinspire a declining ministry. For some chapters, I have included laboratory experiences, called "Labs," in the appendix. They can be used by individuals, groups or in training sessions.

The focus for this book is lifted almost verbatim from Romans 12:6-8. The cadence in the *New International Version* uses the refrain "Let him" after each of the seven ministry gifts, concluding with "Let him do it." Hence the powerful, revolutionary, newly discovered dynamics for "The Next Church,"² *Let laypeople do it!*

The centerpiece of this book is Lay Pastors Ministry, a system of congregational care by laypeople. Pastoral care is traditionally clergy turf. Now, however, this very important ministry is being given to the people. I see pastoral care by laypeople as a decentralization. Moses provided an example. Taking the wise counsel of Jethro, he decentralized the care of Israel by reducing it to caring size - 10 people per leader (see Exod. 18).

Even though my model is the Lay Pastors Ministry, the same fundamental principles undergird lay ministries of all kinds. The biblical call in Ephesians 4:11, 12 is to be heard by *all* Christians in *all* churches for *all* ministries:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors

and teachers, to prepare God's people for work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Pastors, church leaders, denominational heads, seminary professors and "ordinary people" will find this book to be reservoir of tried-and true principles, usable ideas, plans, suggestions, biblical teachings and helps of all kinds. You should be able to find yourself in the following list:

1. Pastors and/or lay leaders concerned about the care of their members and searching for a working model;
2. Churches that have a lay pastoral care ministry and need the need to "beef it up";
3. Pastors and church officers who want to raise the "one another" caring level of their congregations;
4. Seminary professors, particularly those in the pastoral care department;
5. Pastors who want to ignite their people with a vision for authentic and effective lay ministry;
6. Small Group leaders or administrators looking for training and encouragement in caring for the members of their groups;
7. Sunday School or Adult Bible Class ("Learning Communities" is what we call ours) leaders and teachers desiring help in caring for the individual members of their classes;
8. People who want vital up-to-date information about what is happening in today's church regarding lay ministry;
9. "Ordinary people" who want to use their spiritual gifts in ministry;
10. Continuing education or Doctor of Ministry candidates working on studies, papers or projects in any area of lay ministry.

The central pastoral activity of a lay pastor lies in the acronym P A C E. It is important to keep this acronym in mind. Whenever you read about the Lay Pastors Ministry in the following pages, you will need to think PACE to get the picture.

- P:** Lay pastors PRAY regularly for the members of their 5 to 10 households.
- A:** Lay Pastors are AVAILABLE to their people in times of need and celebration.

- C:** Lay pastors CONTACT their people regularly, a minimum of once a month.
- E:** Lay pastors strive to be the best EXAMPLE they can be - not perfect, but moving in that direction.

In a way, this book serves as an update on what has happened to the Lay Pastors Ministry since the publication of my first book in 1987. But more than that, it moves beyond my first book. Significant discoveries during these years have brought this ministry to new heights of effectiveness and longevity. Some discoveries are:

1. The Lay Pastors Ministry works. It does what it is supposed to do.
2. As with anything that is alive, adjustments and adaptations have to be made. Changes based on experience, new insights, evaluation and trial-and-error are necessary.
3. Prayer is absolutely essential! Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). It's true!
4. There is genius in P A C E, which is a complete operational description of adequate pastoral care.
5. "Twelve Foundation Blocks" undergird the ministry. If any one of them begins to weaken, the whole ministry is at risk. There are fleshed out in chapter 7.
6. The ministry works in churches of all sizes. It is found in 49 states in the United States, 6 provinces in Canada, 5 states in Australia, the Bahamas, South Africa and other countries.
7. The ministry is adaptable to particular church needs and people. We have urged churches to use the principles in adopting or adapting the structure. No two churches do it exactly the same are creatively different.
8. Ministries that fail, usually fail for specific reasons.
9. Some churches move on to other forms of caring for their people, having cut their teeth on the Lay Pastors Ministry.
10. Many of the ministry's problems are common to all churches. The two most common are recruiting and motivating.
11. Churches need to position their lay pastoral care ministries into

- their total programs.
12. The "culture" of each church determines the need, priority and viability of its ministries.
 13. Love is the essence of this ministry. Without love, pastoral care is "only a resounding gong or a clang cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).
 14. The ministry is as good as the people doing it.

These discoveries are the makings of this book. It will therefore be a continuing useful resource to those who already has a lay pastoral care ministry, to those who already have a lay pastoral care ministry, to those who are contemplating the possibilities and to those who are starting other lay ministries or have them on-line.

My two books *Can the Pastor do It Alone?* and this one have something in common with two pictures that hang close together in our home. Each by itself is complete. When viewed together as one, however, a synergistic principle is at work - their combined beauty exceeds the loveliness of their separate scenes.

Each of these two books is a complete message. Each stands alone and is not dependent upon the other. When you read both of them, however, you activate synergic energy that creates a value larger than the sum of their separate message. In brief, you don't need both books, but much is to be gained by having both.

For example, in *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*, the description of the Lay Pastors Ministry and the steps required to start it are given. But...the description and steps assume that the pastor and congregation are ready for it. What if they aren't?

This book furnishes the theology and methodology to prepare the people and/or a church not only to start, but also to sustain this ministry. The synergistic value is that you can now implement a lay pastoral care ministry that will be effective and endure because you have all that is needed: the plan, the people and a church culture that is favorable to it. And, the principles which work for a lay pastoral care ministry will work as well for all lay ministries.

While writing this book, I struggled with the words "lay" and "clergy." Sometimes I will substitute "volunteer minister" for "lay" and "vocational

minister" for "clergy." Using "lay" and "clergy" perpetuates an unbiblical dichotomy, but I usually bow to those words because they are the common verbal currency. My substitutions are more accurate, but also more clumsy. Loren Mead, founder of the Alban Institute, says we don't even have terminology to talk about what is happening in the Church today. He is right!

Before we continue, I invite you to share your ideas, insights and ministry experiences with me. If you are findings additional and better principles, ideas and forms, please let me hear from you. You can play a significant part in helping other churches by telling us your story. We, Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc. (LPMI), are committed to serving churches with the best material available through our quarterly Network News, monographs, videotapes, seminars and conferences. Some of the best will come from you.

Notes

1. Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1987)
- 2 "The Next Church" is the intriguing title of an article by Charles Trueheart in the August 1996 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Hints of the content are given in these sentences: Centuries of European tradition and Christian habit are deliberately being abandoned, clearing the way for new contemporary forms of worship and belonging"; and "The Next Church movement makes many traditional church leaders, and many active Christians nervous, because it implies rejection of the tried and once-true and the somehow holy..." pp. 37-38.

PART I:
What Kind of Church
Does It Take?

Chapter I

A Needs – conscious Church

The denomination didn't make any difference to this man - neither did the location nor the size. The preaching and music, though important, were not first on his list. He was searching for a church where people were real in their relationships. For several Sunday following the close of the service, he stood at the edge of the milling crowd, critically observing the way people related to each other.

He had burned in his former church. The relationships were superficial. People were cordial, even polite. They smiled and nodded their heads as they greet one another, but it was evident they were hurrying to more important agendas. He had thought people cared, but when the chips were down, no one was there for him. No one really cared.

In *this* church, however, he sensed a different culture. People were real. He saw them taking time to talk. Their smiles and gestures signaled bonded relationships. He eavesdropped just enough to conclude that people were really interested in one another's lives - their families and jobs, their troubles and sorrows, their joys and excitements. He saw one cry. He watched another throw her head back in laughter. He even observed a small group in the corner join hands in prayer.

After a few Sundays, he ventured inward from the fringe to see if he would be accepted. People talked with him. They included him in their

little circles. Upon discovering that he was a visitor, one person offered to walk him to the refreshment table, then to the Information Center.

This was a different church culture. People were real. He was accepted. He was sure his new acquaintances truly cared. Before long he attended classes, reaffirmed his faith in Jesus Christ and joined the church.

Now that he's "in" what will happen? Will the momentum of this church's culture move him into doing a ministry as it moved him into membership? Are there *Discover Your Ministry* paths to follow with people who will accompany him through the process, like the person who walked him to the refreshment table? Is lay ministry as characteristic of the culture of the church as the love and care he is experiencing?

If a church is to be all God calls it to be, it will also respond to the unfelt needs of its people.

The church responded to his felt needs for love and acceptance. But if a church is to be all God calls it to be, it will also respond to the unfelt needs of its people by: One, learning what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts, and two, equipping people to use those gifts.

Children's unfelt needs illustrate this. A child psychologist, being interviewed on a TV talk show, explained that children do not come to their parents complaining that their parents are not spending enough time with them. They do not ask for more quality time so they can develop into well-rounded adults. But parents who are alert to their children's behavioral symptoms will see that is what they need.

So it is with pastoral care in a church. Many people struggle and suffer with their problems alone, having no idea that they need pastoral care. It is a rare person who will come to the pastor to request more personal attention. But an alert pastor will pick up on clues such as sporadic attendance; arrested spiritual growth; minimal participation in the life of the church; and criticism of sermons, programs and people.

This is a new day in the Church. Leaders clinging to the traditional way of "doing" church are struggling. Many churches are in survival

mode. A six-month study conducted throughout the first part of 1996 indicated that congregations find themselves stuck in old patterns that seem preoccupied with institutional maintenance. Many, however, are moving or have moved from the traditional to the new and are bursting with life.

Loren Mead, the perceptive founder of the Alban Institute, strongly believes the Church has to be "reinvented." He maintains then changes needed are so major that instead of tempering with congregations or polishing them up a bit, we need to "reinvent" them.¹ Management consultant Peter Drucker also believes churches are in trouble. Those that will not only survive into the next century but thrive are those which are "pastoral." He defines pastoral as giving attention to the needs of people.²

A panoramic sweep of Church history indicates we are in an interim age, uncertain whether we are to hold on to the past or take strident steps into the future. One thing is for sure: The Church can't stay where it is. Traditional structures are collapsing; membership and finances are declining. Our culture, in general, is different, hostile or benignly tolerant. It does not take the Church seriously, and is not supportive.

In this interim age (the period between what the Church was and what it is becoming), church-development strategies differ significantly. Some churches are trying to recapture the past. Their goal is: Do what we did before, only bigger and better. Some are holding steady. Their hope is: The curve somehow will soon turn upward. Others are shifting gears. Their risk is: We'll cast out a lot with the Scriptures and successful church models.

One of the dominant characteristics of churches bursting with life is lay ministry. They are giving the ministry to the people. They are calling their people to commit themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ, to spiritual growth and to ministry. They help their people discover their gifts for ministry and equip them to do it. They support them in what they believe God is calling them to do, and hold them accountable. They believe that all Christians are ministers (some vocational and some volunteer), equal in importance while different in function. They believe the laity should be the primary ministering people in the Church.

The genre of lay ministry we are presenting in this book is pastoral care. The model we feature is the Lay Pastors Ministry, a system of congregational care by lay people. The history of the Lay Pastors ministry (nearly two decades now) warrants the focus. The model launched in one church in 1978, with one thought that it would go anywhere else, has been adopted and adapted by hundreds of other churches around the world.

Pastors who discover that they cannot give any member the kind of care they need are relieved to discover this successful system. They often say, "This will keep us from having to reinvent the wheel." Informed laypeople, concerned about the exodus out of the "back door" (or "disaffiliation"), become excited over the possibility of the Lay Pastors Ministry closing that door. Churches that put a priority on pastoral care look to us to help them implement this ministry, or, as many have done, just start it themselves by following the principles and plan given in my first book, *Can the Pastors Do It Alone?*

In this book I ask and then answer four key questions:

1. Are people ready to give and receive this ministry?
2. Are pastors ready to give this ministry to their people?
3. Are people ready to do this ministry?
4. What kind of structures does this ministry take?

The next three chapters cite reasons why laypeople can do this ministry, ways they can do it, how to give the ministry to the people and how lay pastoral care fits into your church's total life.

My prayer is that as you read and ponder what is written, you shall hear the refrain of Revelation 2:7 regularly: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This same refrain concludes the message to each of the seven churches (see 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22).

Be prepared to read this refrain at the conclusion of each chapter because I believe present-day indicators signal that the Spirit "says" the message of this book to your church.

Also, just as each church's message ended with a specific directive from the Spirit, each of these chapters ends with a specific directive.

The success of your church's lay pastoral care ministry will be in

proportion to its energy for these seven qualities:

- * **A Needs -Conscious Church**
- * **A Gift-Oriented Church**
- * **An Egalitarian Church**
- * **A Ministry-Balanced Church**
- * **A Biblical Church**
- * **A Mobilized Church**
- * **A Failure-Resistant Church**

Each quality warrants full treatment, therefore, I have written a chapter about each one.

So let's consider in this chapter what it means to be a need-conscious church.

ALERT TO THE NEED FOR PASTORAL CARE

To have a successful lay pastoral care ministry, the church must be needs-conscious: alert to the needs of its people for pastoral care and ready to (1) *assess* the need; (2) *adapt* to changing realities; (3) *adopt* or create a structure; and (4) *advance* with specific plans, goals and personnel.

Ready to Assess the Need

For several years, I have presented pastoral care seminars in churches that have established pastoral care as a priority. This priority usually results from a survey or other kind of study. Often the needs assessment is generated by a frustrated pastor, fueled by disillusioned members and is conducted by a board or assigned group.

Gary Titusdahl's story is the same as that of hundreds of churches. Gary is the pastor of a growing church, The First Congregational Church (UCC) in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.³

It became clear to me that I could not provide quality pastoral care alone....I felt guilty....I also felt inadequate as a pastoral caregiver for the entire congregation. The church's annual evaluation of my performance in 1992 described my pastoral care efforts as appreciated and, for the most part, effective. But, the congregation

wanted more attention paid to its ongoing pastoral needs. In particular, the congregation said it needed more thorough follow-up to individuals and families suffering loss, confusion and grief.

Group meetings were made scheduled in member's homes throughout a period of several weeks so people could voice their opinions. pastoral care was overwhelmingly determined to be the number one need.

But Gary was already on overload, thus it became clear that if members were to be adequately pastored, laypeople would have to do it. Enter the Lay Pastors Ministry.

I was invited to lead their first equipping seminar. Sunday, January 22, 1995, was a historic day - the first members were commissioned as lay pastors. People were excited, and their expectations were high.

The following week they began to P A C E their assigned flocks of five to eight households. Remember P A C E? They constituted their pastoral care:

- P: PRAYING regularly for them;
- A: Being AVAILABLE to them;
- C: CONTACTING them; and
- D: Striving to be an EXAMPLE

Four typical dynamics are apparent in Gary's story:

1. Only one pastoral caregiver: "I could not provide quality pastoral care alone."
2. Feeling of guilt and inadequacy: "I felt guilty...inadequate."
3. Involving people in needs assessment: "They scheduled meetings in members' homes."
4. Pastoral care identified as the priority: "they felt the urgency to develop a systematic approach to pastoral care."

What did the people meeting in these homes mean by *pastoral care*? Obviously they did not mean spiritual leadership, preaching, marrying, burying, counseling and crisis visitation. Gary was doing these. Let's hear

how they understood *lay pastoral care*:

- "More thorough follow-up to individuals and families suffering loss, confusion and grief."
- "Responsive means to provide spiritual care for the width and depth of [people's] pain."
- "Giving personal attention, support and guidance in Christ's name."
- "Carry others' burdens and spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

People joining our churches deserve the kind of personal attention described in the words you have just read; and clearly, if they are going to receive it, laypeople must give it. The centerpiece of the Lay Pastors Ministry, **PACE**, adequately provides this one-on-one, "love-with-skin-on-it" kind of pastor care.

Formal assessment of the need for pastoral care by involving the congregation does three things: (1) It brings people in on the ground floor of a new system. Being involved in the process makes their "ownership" likely. (2) The solid data gathered in the meetings helps the leader of the congregation make informed and firm decisions. (3) It assures acceptance, both by those who will become lay pastors and members who are to receive their care.

Ready to Adapt to Changing Realities

For some reason churches are more resistant to change than other federations of people. All religion has a tendency to fossilize. No change means death; radical and sudden change can also mean death. Balance between the two extremes is the key to healthy change.

Some things in the churches should never change; some things are changeable and need to be changed; other things change without our choice. As we apply these three realities to pastoral care we see: First, the need for care never changes. Second, the kind of need and the ways of caring change. Third, our high-tech, increasingly impersonal, life-in-the-fast-lane culture has forced change upon us, setting our agenda for us - giving personal care on a continuing basis.

The kind of church ready for this ministry will adapt to changing

realities.

Ready to Adopt or Create a Structure

To move from assessing the need to meeting the need, a church must adopt (or create) a structure. It will search for visible form within which the invisible dynamics can come alive.

How often survey has led to nothing more than a file cabinet drawer filled with responses to questions; talk about what should be done has been nothing more than that - talk. somehow, someone has to carry the data and intention forward.

Many churches have done what the First Congregational Church (UCC) of Cannon Falls, Minnesota, did: appoint a task force of a few committed people to search for the best model of lay pastoral care available to them. After considering others, they selected the Lay Pastors Ministry. Other churches opt for different models. Some invent their own, taking principles and parts from existing packaged-and--ready-to-go ministries.

In 1987, Earl Andrews, the minister of congregational care for Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, read my

A ministry launched without specific plans, goals and a "point person" is destined to mediocrity at best and failure at worst.

book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* (Regal books), while flying home from Israel. He mused, *This will keep us from having to reinvent the wheel.* His congregation has 7,000 members to care for. I was invited to present our model of lay pastoral care to a select group of member present adopted our model. Later, they made necessary adaptations of their particular context.

Amazing! On the very day I was writing these words about adopting a structure, I received this fax from Ed Marshall, pastor of the Durbanville Baptist Church in Durbanville, South Africa:

Greetings from South Africa. Since last speaking with you in October 1994, we have decided to implement the lay pastor program in our church. The delay has been caused by...having to build to accommodate a growing congregation.

He then proceeded to ask about resources that would help them.

Adopting or creating an adequate form for the pastoral care ministry idea can be likened to birthing a child. If there is to be a child, the idea must move from desire and intention through conception and gestation to the delivery of a visible body. The point is made. The church in which his ministry can happen is a church ready to adapt, adapt or create a structure for the ministry.

Ready to Advance with Specific Plans, Goals and a "Point Person"

Can you imagine basketball team going into a game without a game plan? Can you imagine an inventor transferring money without setting a goal for its performance? Can you imagine a group of entrepreneurs starting a business without providing a "point person" - the one whose desk sign reads, "The buck stops here!"?

A ministry launched without specific plans, goals and a "point person" is destined to mediocrity at best and failure at worst. The people putting the ministry together must finalize the plans and get them on paper like an architect does for a house. Vague, undefined plans weaken a ministry from the start and open the door for misunderstanding and failure. Goals have to be set so workers have something against which to evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry and make "in-flight" corrections. A "point person," whether volunteer or salaried, is mandatory. Somebody has to be in charge.

Two flourishing models demonstrate ways to *assess* the need, *adapt* to changing realities, *adopt* or create a structure and *advance* with specific plans, goals and personnel. The first is the Eastridge Park Christian Church in Mesquite, Texas. In a 15-year period, the congregation grew from 300 to 2,000 members. If they were to do right by their people and be true to Christ's calling to "take care of my sheep" (John 21:16), they knew they had to do things differently. Senior minister Dan

H. Carroll wrote:

By the mid-1980s, we began facing more and more challenging tasks as we attempted to minister to [the congregation's] individual needs and provide...a nurturing church home. Clearly more of this work surfaced than the ministers could do effectively.⁴

They believed that the call to ministry extends to all Christians, not just to ordained clergy. "We all shepherds," he stressed. To achieve their goal, "to minister to its members in areas of lay pastoral care," they created a near carbon copy of what the church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota did, even though the membership difference was 270 compared to 2,000. What they titled, "Four Essentials for an Effective Church," assured their success:

1. Listen to people's deepest yearnings.
2. Put together a system that will meet people's basic expectations of the church.
3. Improve the system so it goes beyond people's expectations to delight and excite them.
4. Act [through leaders] to empower all the people to contribute to the effort.

Even though Eastridge Park came up with a model quite different from our Lay Pastors Ministry, their "Cluster Program" accomplished the same objective. It enabled members to minister to one another. These

***The biblical way to operate
the church is on the basis
of spiritual gifts.***

words from the pastor are encouraging to every church leader aware of needing a structured pastoral care program for the congregation: "You don't need a complicated planning process, but you have to do some basic things." By "basic things" Pastor Carroll meant the four essentials listed previously: assess, adapt, adopt and advance.

- **Assess:** The congregation experienced more pastoral care needs than the paid staff could attend to.
- **Adapt:** Acknowledge that people who are not getting their need met will move on. Loyalties to the organization do not exist.
- **Adopt:** They created the Cluster Program, a decentralized plan within which members ministered to one another.
- **Advance:** They moved from need through planning to implementation.

The second model is Christ Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.⁵ As Pastor Dick Willis tells it, his personal new awakening, which was deeply spiritual and born of the Holy Spirit, launched the church into a lay pastoral care ministry. In addition to surrendering his life to God, he needed to surrender the control of the ministries in the church to the laity.

He said he had to unlearn much of what he was taught in seminary. Instead of being a "professional minister," he saw his responsibility now to spiritually feed and equip laity to do the ministers of Christ Church. The biblical way to operate the church is on the basis of spiritual gifts. In this way, each person finds a place of ministry.

In June 1994, Pastor Willis began to consecrate lay pastors. By April 1995, 80 had been appointed. Three categories of lay pastors comprise their model: (1) Wesley Group leaders (the goal is 400 of these groups meeting weekly); (2) Administrative Groups, such as trustees; and (3) Action Ministries, such as ushers and prison ministry. Each group has a lay pastor, the basic care-giving person in the congregation for his or her group.

This model demonstrates the same four essentials:

- **Assess:** First, a personal assessment led to spiritual and ministry renewal. Second, they learned that 80 percent of the 1.4 million people in Broward County are unchurched.
- **Adapt:** His "new awakening" reoriented his life as a minister. Surrendering control of the ministries to the laity reoriented the people.

- **Adopt:** The church is perceived to have three categories of lay pastors. A plan was established for leading and staffing the various groups of laity.
- **Advance:** A person who feels called to be a lay pastor meets with one of the ordained pastors. If the call fits the church's vision, that person is invited to be a lay pastor.

Part of being alert to the need for pastoral care is to be aware of and concerned about *all* members. It's not unlike parents of a large family who must be equally aware of and concerned for each child, the prodigal as well as the bonded. Joining a church is a two-way commitment: new members commit to active participation while the church commits to nurturing and caring for them.

Too often, when a member's commitments lessens, the church is not alert to the signals, doesn't care or does not have a ministry plan for reaching out to these people. A study made by a denominational leader, *Why They Left Their Church*,⁶ identified two major reasons people leave: failed expectations and broken or undeveloped relationships. The *coup de grâce* was failure of others in the congregation to miss them after they had withdrawn.

Two-thirds of those interviewed said they received no contact of any kind inquiring about their absence after they quit attending. Nearly half indicated they would have welcomed a meaningful inquiry from the pastor, or other church leader, and that it could have made a difference in their decision to disaffiliate.

A mother.....said, "We had a daughter with a fatal disease...From June until her death in November, we had heard not one word from then minister."

"I felt very abandoned in my church. I just don't feel connected anymore as a person. I don't think my presence makes any difference in that church."

The process of disaffiliating begins with a *Discomfort Stage*, moves to a *Withdrawing Stage* and culminates in the *Existing Stage*. The best time to prevent dropout is prior to or during the *Discomfort Stage*. The most effective antidote for reaching those in the *Discomfort Stage* is to provide

a climate for lively interaction with others in the congregation and to create formal caring network.

This will not happen by itself.

Neither will it happen if it is left to the pastoral staff - not because they are under committed or lack ambition, but because they are already overloaded with priority ministries. It can, however, happen when a church wants it enough to plan intentionally for it, using as its starting point the awareness of the need for pastoral care - a need-conscious church.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
Be alert to your church's pastoral care needs.

Notes

1. Loren Mead, *Action Information* (May/June 1990) published by The Alban Institute, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.
2. Peter F. Drucker, *The New Realities* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 220.
3. Gary A. Titusdahl, "The Lay Pastors ministry," a thesis project dissertation, Doctor of Ministry Program, Cannon Falls, Minnesota. This document is at the library of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 3000 Fifth Street, N.W., New Brighton, MN, 55112.
4. *Net Results* (June 1994), published monthly by the National Evangelic Association of the Christian Church.
5. *Circuit Rider* (April 1994), a publication of the United Methodist Church, 9-11.
6. *Presbyterian Life and Times* (October 1992), published by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, Bloomington, MN 55425.

Chapter 2

A Gift–Oriented Church

"NOW ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFT...."

The new pastor spent all day unpacking books, visiting in hospitals and contacting some of the church leaders. The hour came for the annual church dinner, which had been planned long before his arrival. He was fatigued and famished. He stood in line along with other people, visiting and slowly moving toward the food. Looking up ahead, he noticed a woman forking one piece of chicken onto each plate. Before long he was at that spot.

Because he was hungry he asked for two pieces. The reply: "One piece to each person. Please move along."

The pastor looked at her and said, "I've had not time to eat since breakfast. Please, could I have two pieces?"

Her firm answer surprised him: "Each one gets just one piece. Please move along."

He thought he would pull rank: "Perhaps you don't know who I am; I'm the new pastor of the church."

He was shocked by her ever firmer response, "Perhaps you don't know who I am; I'm the lady in charge of chicken."

I told this story to a group of people in a new elder-orientation class. They laughed and I laughed with them. Then I asked them to read Romans 12:6-8 and explain the connection to the story. After reading the

verses, they chuckled reverently. One volunteered, "I see the connection. If a woman's gift is forking out chicken, let her fork our chicken. Each person has a special gift for his or her ministry."

The kind of church in which lay ministry can be successful is the kind that will let laypeople use their gifts. A great variety of gifts is required because a great variety of ministries exists. The Holy Spirit orchestrates the giving and the using of spiritual gifts.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Cor. 12:11).

Because the Spirit determines who gets what and who should do what, each of us needs to listen to the Spirit. Listening is a personal and private matter. It often happens, however, in a public place, or during an unexpected moment such as a worship service, a retreat, while conversing with a brother or sister in Christ or while observing or participating in a missions project. How to hear the Lord is a great mystery; but one thing is clear, all who wish to here will hear.

A plethora of helpful books, tapes, manuals, magazine articles, along with several practical gifts-assessment tests have poured forth throughout the past three decades. Word is getting around that every Christians is endowed with spiritual gifts. The apostle Paul started it:

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers [and sisters], I do not want you to be ignorant (1 Cor. 12:1).

I do not intend to add to the gifts literature. I just want to call your attention to spiritual gifts and add a few thoughts. One thought is that by combining two major teachings - the variety of gifts and the use of the gifts - we conclude that people cannot be randomly interchanged.

The traditional church elects or appoints people to ministry positions as though any willing person can take his or her turn at that task. Churches that have functioned this way for generations find it difficult to start matching people's tasks with their spiritual gifts. They may have been merely filling slots instead of helping people to discover their spiritual gifts and hear God's call to their specific ministries.

"The most important decision facing your church today is decision to shift the focus of your church from the ministry of the clergy to the ministry of the laity," writes one of America's prominent layman, Robert Slocum. The possibility for this shift lies in every-member giftedness, the fact that God has endowed every Christian with gifts to us in ministry.

Slocum persuasively pursues this theme throughout his book, *Maximize Your Ministry*.¹ His thesis starts in the preface with a question, "What kind of church will be the effective in the next century?" With the keen mind of an atomic physicist (he worked in such high-tech fields as space exploration and laser system), keyed to analytical exactness, he answered his own question:

I am convinced the effective church for the twenty-first century will be the church that mobilizes, equips, empowers and supports ordinary Christians in ministry.²

Bingo! The possibility for this lies every-member giftedness.

Robert Slocum lays the responsibility for doing ministry on laypeople when he writes: "The challenge for each of us is to search out and identify our own call to lay ministry."³ The search will be rewarded because God has already given every searcher his or her gifts for ministry. Slocum brilliantly assures each Christian a successful search: "The Early Church had a commissioning service for lay ministry; it was called baptism."⁴

The Scriptures are the source for such thinking. Romans 12:6-8 powerfully declares this truth. The words of this passage not only inspired the theme of this book, but also played a significant role in shaping my beliefs about lay ministry. I like the cadence of the *New International Version* (Steinbron paraphrase):

If a man's⁵ gift is prophesying, let him prophesy;
If it is serving, let him serve;
If it is teaching, let him teach;
If it is encouraging, let him encourage;
If it is contributing, let him contribute;
If it is leadership, let him lead;
If it is showing mercy, let him show mercy.

These words sound like a mandate. They do not make ministry an option for us Christians. In our culture, people are not accustomed to accepting mandates. But this is not for people in our culture, it is for those who have been born anew into the culture of the kingdom of God. Mandates from God are an integral part of Kingdom culture.

"If it is encouraging, *let* him encourage!" (v.8). *Let* is imperative, therefore we need to know "who" is to *let*? Because *encouraging* is one of the pastoral gifts, we are talking about *letting* someone pastor. *Let laypeople do it!* Just who is to *let*?

THREE POSSIBLE ANSWERS...

1. You

You *let* means "*You* go ahead and do it. What are *you* waiting for? "If *you* are the one with the gift, *you* are expected to use it. Robert Slocum unequivocally insists that the responsibility for discovering ministry gifts and using them in service is the layperson's! This is true even for laypeople whose churches are not yet promoting lay ministry.⁶ *You* are the one who is to *let*. It is as though the verse reads, "If your gift is encouraging, then by all means *you* encourage!" Or as Bill Hybels, pastors of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, would say it, "Men and women, if you've been given the gift of encouraging, for *God's sake*, encourage."⁷

2. Church Leaders

These are pastors, professional staff and other leaders. They need to step aside so people with gifts can minister, not just "help out." Each member of the church is to function in freedom and authority within the areas of his or her gifts. Because leaders by virtue of their positions are aware of *their* own ministries, the directive *let* means they are to recognize the ministries of their members as well. *Let* means they are to acknowledge people's giftedness, accept them as partners in ministry and affirm them in their roles.

To believe that laypeople are also authentic ministers in their own rights and to affirm the parity of ministries requires a major paradigm shift for most leaders of traditional churches. The shift is to solid ground

because it is biblical. First Corinthians 12, for example, uses the human body to illustrate how all parts - prominent and hidden - are equally necessary.

Leaders, we dare not substitute preaching for action, or lip service for performance. *Let* is an active verb, suggesting that we must make a choice to allow. I am one who deceived himself for years, thinking preaching it was doing it. I, along with a group of committed and competent laypeople, *let* by creating a structure for lay pastoral care and relinquishing the pastoral care ministry to equip and commissioned laypeople.

3. The People

Again, our human body illustrates the truth that each part of the body needs every other part. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Let's apply this analogy to the Lay Pastors Ministry. Members cannot say to the lay pastor, "I don't need you!" The members of our churches are to *let* the lay pastors pastor them. They must let them into their homes and into their lives if the "body" is to function at its best. Conversely, the lay pastor will receive the ministry of those whose gifts are administration, prophecy or whatever. The mutual nature of all ministry is summarized in 1 Peter 4:10:

Each one should use whatever gift he [or she] has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: If a man's gift is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is showing mercy, let him show mercy. You who have the gift, use it! You who are leaders, equip the saints, support them and step aside to let them use their gifts. You who are members, accept pastoral care from them.

People in my seminars often ask, "But isn't everybody supposed to care?" This is the reasoning of a traditional church-minded person. It is the proposed alternative to a structured Lay Pastors Ministry. The belief is that if everybody does their jobs, people will be cared for. But, this is the old and failed system of congregational care. Failure results from

neglecting to distinguish between *caring in general* and *caring in particular*. Caring in general hasn't done it in the past, and it isn't going to be doing it in the future. There must be a better way - *caring in particular*.

Certainly, every Christian is to care for others, but not every Christian is given special gifts for pastoral care. This principle is also seen in other areas of church life. For example, every Christian is to witness for Christ, but not every Christian has the gift of evangelism (the gift of assisting an individual to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord). Every Christian is to give, but not every Christian has the gift of contributing (the gift of earning substantial sums of money in order to give large amounts to the church). Every Christian is to communicate some of what he or she knows about the Scriptures to family, friends and others, but not every Christian has the gift of teaching (the ability to formally instruct groups of people in the truths of God).

So, whereas every Christian is to care for others, not every Christian has the gift of pastoring (endowed with a spirit of mercy and the ability

**The fruit is essential for quality
of life; the gifts are essential
for ministry.**

to encourage). A prime illustration of this is the Neighborhood Watch program: It is every citizen's job to watch for suspicious people; but the police are the specialists in crime prevention and criminal apprehension.

Whereas all members are to care for others, it is the layperson with pastoral gifts, training and commissioning who is the specialist in PACE-ing people.

The Scripture make a clear distinction between the "fruit of the Spirit," which every Christian is to bear, and the "gifts of the Spirit," which are unique to each Christian. The *fruit* is essential for quality of life; the *gifts* are essential for ministry. Paul's analogy of the body with its many parts for special functions helps us understand *caring in particular*. The whole body is not an eye. The ear is not designed to sniff orders. The head and feet are each specialists in their unique functions.

This issue of caring in general versus caring in particular surfaced with high energy in one of my seminars. A participant challenged me from the floor: "We don't need a Lay Pastors Ministry. Everyone is a lay pastor! We just need to get our people to care for one another." My response was crucial because people from 23 churches were there seeking a way to care for their people.

I put four rhetorical question to this person:

1. Is everyone in your church being prayed for regularly?
2. Does everyone have someone keeping in touch with him or her regularly?
3. Does everyone have someone to whom they can bare their soul, to whom they can comfortably turn when the chips are down?
4. Is it possible to get everyone to do his and her part?

After thanking the person for opening an important door for us, I addressed everyone...

Take inventory by answering the following:

How many members of your church are you *praying* for regularly? Does your pastor or any member pray specifically for you in your life situation daily or weekly?

To how many of your members do you think you could be *available* in times of need or celebration? With how many have you built a relationship of trust so they will turn to you with confidence and ease?

With how many are you in *contact* monthly (and meaningfully)?

How many members know you well enough to see you as an *example*, not of a perfectly formed Christian, but one who loves the Lord, loves them and loves the church?

Recognize the italicized words as the ministry description for a lay pastor: P A C E. If pastoral care is to include all members and if it is to be done right, it takes people who have the pastoral gifts, who sense a call from God, who have been equipped and who give themselves to people within the structure designed to provide pastoral care for every member. They provide *care in particular* while others are providing (hit-and-miss)

care in general.

To finish the story about the person who challenged the need for the intentional and structured pastoral care ministry, this person came to me after the seminar, apologized for her contrary spirit and emphatically affirmed that her church needed the Lay Pastors Ministry. She had just made what you call a paradigm shift, shifting from care in general to care in particular.

**God has His part; we have our parts.
God provides the gifts to make
ministry possible; we provide the
bodies to do the ministry.**

A slow but sure way for churches to make th paradigm shift, not only to care in particular, but also to the parity of all ministers (volunteer and vocational, the focus of the next chapter), is to inculcate the idea that God and all His people are in a ministry partnership. God has His part; we have our parts. God provides the gifts to make ministry possible; we provide the bodies to do the ministry. Five observations help us to understand this divine-human partnership:

- God provides the colors; we paint the picture.
- God provides the notes; we write the music.
- God provides the soil; we plant the flowers.
- God provides the mind; we do the thinking.
- God provides the gift; we do the ministry.

GOD'S PART

He provides the gifts. First Corinthians 12:11 teaches that spiritual gifts for ministry are given, not earned. They are not learned, not deserved and not initiated by us. They are produced by seeking of desiring. They are distributed to each person according to God's choosing. They are just there, waiting to be discovered and put to use.

He determined each person's unique gifts. Romans 12:6 informs us that God gives different gifts according to His grace. Grace is the favor and generosity of God. First Corinthians 12:11 tells that the Spirit orchestrates the distribution of the gifts: "He gives them....just as he determines." They are not tossed like a bride's bouquet into the crowd; the Spirit deliberately assigns them.

He gives with the expectation that will use them. First Peter 4:10 says it plainly: "Each one should use whatever gift he [or she] has received" (italics mine). Just as unused Christmas gifts presume poor choices, unused spiritual gifts seem to infer that God may have made some poor choices in His gift giving.

He gives with intention that we will develop them. The fact that Scripture calls us to love God with our minds (see Luke 10:27), especially our renewed minds (see Rom. 12:2), suggests that we are to use our mental faculties to expand the use of our ministry gifts to their fullest dimensions. Peter's directive to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (see 2 Pet. 3:18) includes growth in the development of our ministry gifts.

My growth in using the word processor to provide this message for others illustrates the point. God gives the gifts; we are responsible for nourishing and nurturing them from their undeveloped beginnings to full-bodied potential, just as parents are responsible for nourishing and nurturing undeveloped infants to their full potentials.

YOUR PART

You provide the body. Romans 12, which lists seven gifts, starts with a call to offer your body as a living sacrifice to God. It is significant that Jesus gave His body: "this is my body given for you" (Luke 22:19). Romans 6:13 is specific: "Offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." Name the parts:

- **Hands:** *Offer* them to help others;
- **Arms:** *Offer* them to comfort a struggling person;
- **Ears:** *Offer* them to hear another's anguish or joy;
- **Feet:** *Offer* them to run errands for an incapacitated person;

- **Eyes:** *Offer* them to read for a blind person;
- **Brain:** *Offer* it to create strategies for helping a person in trouble or celebrating a person's festive occasion, such as an anniversary, graduation or birthday.

You provide the time. We won't get much done with our bodies if we use only discretionary time for ministry. If we want to use our bodies in partnership with God, we must build time for ministry into our schedules. For example, a lay pastor will have to intentionally schedule contacts by writing them on his or her calendar, or the body will never get around to it. This takes *self-control*, the ninth "fruit of the Spirit" (see Gal. 5).

You provide the skills. Just as the number and sharpness of tools the craftsman has to work determines the quality of workmanship, so it is with ministry. Let's look at this example as it applies to the Lay Pastors Ministry. A lay pastor can begin to care for a small flock of people just by using whatever ability he or she now has. But that person needs to acquire additional skills to maximize the effectiveness of the spiritual gifts.

For example, if the gift is encouragement, the lay pastor may have an empathic spirit, but may not have all the listening skills required to hear the unspoken hurts as well as the words. Continual growth in skills enables us to be progressively better in ministry.

God's part and your part together make a whole. God is doing His part. When we do our part, His work gets done. God started the process by giving each of us gifts. Withholding our bodies, refusing to provide the time and failing to grow in skill stymies the process.

Many of us who are not withholding our bodies may, however, need the counsel Paul gave Timothy: "Do not neglect your gift" (1 Tim. 4:14); and, "Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you" (2 Tim.1:6). We can become careless and delinquent in doing our ministries, or we can become sloppy in our ways, settling for mediocrity. The flame can die down. Our enthusiasm for ministry is subject to entropy, a cooling effect that reduces the amount of energy available for ministry. If Timothy needed Paul's reminders not to neglect his gift, but to fan (or rekindle) his gift into flame, we Christians need the same reminders today.

The kind of church in which lay pastoral care can happen is the

church that will let laypeople use their gifts. And if lay pastoral care is really going to happen, a structure such as the Lay Pastors Ministry will have to be built - a ministry structure into which the people with pastoral gifts can flow. This will mean that the right people will be in the right places for the right reasons doing the right things.

"He who has an ear, let hear what the Spirit say to the churches." Enable your people to know what their spiritual gifts are and what to do with them.

Notes

1. Robert E. Slocum, *Maximize Your Ministry* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1990), pp. 170, 257
2. *Ibid.*, p.9
3. *Ibid.*, p. 170
4. *Ibid.*, p. 257
5. The Greek word for *man* is *anthropos*, meaning a human being, whether male or female; referring to the genus or nature, not to gender. We at the beginning of verse 6 clarifies the inclusiveness of man. It does not distinguish between man and woman, but between humans and animals, between human beings and God.
6. *Ibid.*, Slocum develops this position on pages 74 and 166-198.
7. "Leadership," *Christianity Today* (fall 1996): 62.

Chapter 3

An Egalitarian Church

CLASSLESS AND "MINISTRY-BLIND"

Suppose I am a layperson, sitting in my pew on a Sunday morning. While listening to the preacher, the following questions and thoughts are chasing each other around in my head:

1. *Why am I here and he there? Is he better than I? Is he more important than I? Do I rank lower than he?*

There is no question that...

- *He is good; his sermons are inspiring, interesting and informative.*
 - *He is important; he is preaching the Word of God, and that is important.*
 - *He ranks high; he is credential, respected and called to be spiritual leader of the congregation. That's why he's there and I am here.*
2. *He is a man of God. His prayers get through to God. He knows his Bible. He gives himself to serve God. That pulpit really sets him apart as "a man of God."*

There is no question that...

- *He is a man of God; he is a servant of god, loves God and seems very close to God.*
 - *He has ability to pray; he can find the right words and express them in earnest.*
 - *He deserves to be in the pulpit; God called him into the ministry. He is a minister. That's why he's there and I am here.*
3. *If God want to truly serve God, be important in the Church, rank high among Christians and do significant ministry, I will have to change my course in life, go to seminary and be ordained. A long pause to ruminate. There must be a serious error in my thinking. I'll have to ponder this later, because I truly want to serve God.*

Later ponderings expose that the error is mine, thinking that...

- *Because he is good at preaching, important to the church and ranks high as spiritual leader of the congregation; and because I am not qualified to preach, am not as prominent in the church and not the spiritual leader of the congregation, I am a second class Christian.*
- *Because I am not an ordained minister, I am not called by God.*
- *Because he is ordained, he is better than I.*
- *Because he is there and I am here, I rank lower than he.*
- *Because he is behind the pulpit, he is a minister and I am something less.*
- *His closeness to God, his passion for ministry and his advanced spirituality is only for special people such as he whom God calls into the ordained ministry.*

Still more ponderings and later discoveries from discussion and Scripture reveal the deeper truth that...

1. *I also am called to do ministry. My cal to ministry was given along with my call to faith. It's part of the new birth, included in my baptism.*

2. *I also have given spiritual for ministry. Because it is the Spirit of God who gives the gifts, who gives the gift, every ministry is significant and every volunteer and vocational minister is important to the Church.*
3. *I also am a minister. The difference between my ministry and his is function, not order. He is a specialist in his, I am a specialist in mine. Together we get God's work done.*
4. *I also have full access to the power of God for effective ministry.*
5. *I also need to be equipped, not for preaching, but for what God led me to do - not by going to seminary, but by taking advantage of training opportunities in my church and community.*
6. *I also have authority to do my ministry. His authority and my authority both come from God, not from credentials.*

The office of pastor is considered by most people to be the highest position in the Church. This notion, however common, is unfortunate development because it has forged a dichotomy, creating two classes of Christians: laity and clergy.

The origin of this error is traced to the fourth century when the Church adopted the hierarchical structure of the Roman empire, instead of staying with the New Testament "body" model. This historical development demonstrates how secular culture bonds with Christian culture. In this case it has been a curse because the hierarchical model replaced the "body" model. Paul's description of how the Church works as a body has been all but lost through the centuries:

Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor...God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor. 12:22-25).

Many churches are breaking free from this historical bond replacing the multi-level hierarchical way of being God's people to the every-member-equal "body" way of being God's people.

Today's traditional church, however, perpetuates this two-class order. This distortion erroneously continues to mislead Christians into believing that if they want to really serve God, they must leave their communities, go to seminary, be ordained and become pastors of local churches.

Not until the 1950s did the Church begin to awaken to a better way of doing God's business. It rediscovered the biblical model for ministry. Ephesians 4:11, 12 sharply focuses it by enjoining pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The context and other Scriptures make it unmistakably clear that every Christian is a minister. So many churches of all denominations are participating in this rediscovery that the result is nothing less than a second Reformation.

In the first Reformation, the Church gave the Bible to the people. In the second Reformation, the Church is giving the ministry to the people. The church is again becoming a classless Church. The disparity of laity and clergy is being replaced by the parity of all the people of God (the laos).

How did the Church we inherited arrive at this separation between clergy and laity and hierarchy? We need to know, for retracing our steps will help us to correct our course. The answer starts in the Old Testament and follows five trail markers to the present.

Marker 1: A Special Order of Priests

In Old Testament Israel the priestly order separated priests from the rest of the people. They led the rituals, represented the people to God and received provision for their material needs from the people. Israelites who were not from the tribe of Levi could not join this order.

Marker 2: All Are Priests

The New Testament does not provide evidence of an order of priests. Jesus' coming ended that order (see Heb. 4-5). The Church of Jesus Christ *in toto* is a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). All Christians are given gifts for ministry. There is only one order: laos, "the people of God." All are ministers. All are priests. All are "called." Oscar Feucht, a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church theologian and churchman, wrote in his significantly titled book, *Every A Minister*:

To Old Testament distinction between priest and people, clergymen and

laymen, is at an end. Christ, our High Priest, has made all Christians priests before God. All Christians are God's clergy, and there is no special clerical order in the Church.¹

Church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette writes about how strongly Martin Luther believed in the equality of Christians:

Luther maintained that the works of priests and members of the religious orders are not a whit more sacred in the sights of God than those of a farmer in his fields or of a woman in her household duties.²

Maker 3: One Order, Many functions

The differences between laity and clergy are not in *order*, but in *function*. Peter's definition of the Church - a "royal priesthood" - establishes the fact that only one order exists. That one order is priest (or minister), however, God has given it many functions. The function we are exploring in this book is pastoral care. *Pastor*, therefore, is understood to be a function, not an order.

In, *Why Priest? A Proposal for a New Church Ministry*, Hans Küng concludes that the New Testament does not really speak of a fixed church office. It uses a variety of terms almost interchangeably. The clergy office is not institutionalized.³

Maker 4: A New Order, Clergy

The Unfortunate two-order change began with one of the greatest events in Church history, the Edict of Constantine in A.D. 312. Until that time the Church had been persecuted by Roman emperors. But during a dream on October 28, A.D. 312, Emperor Constantine saw a cross in the sky accompanied with the words "In this sign conquer." Thus, he conquered; then looked upon his brilliant military victory as proof of Christ's power and the superiority of the Christian religion. He legalized Christianity. The Church was suddenly favored and pampered.

The Church began to adopt the hierarchical structure of the Roman government, thereby starting its drift from the New Testament "body" design. The hierarchical structure elevated some functions and people over others, creating descending degrees of importance. This case system was

antithetical to Christ's teaching, which opposed vying to be greatest in His kingdom (see Mark 10:35-45).

The division between clergy and laity took shape. The clergy preached, taught, pastored and created forms of worship. The people were expected to pray and pay. (One contemporary interprets it: "Lay people are asked to show up, pay up, and shut up.") By the twelfth century, the canon lawyer Gratian wrote in his decretals : "There are two kinds of Christians, the clergy who are to be developed to the divine office...and the other sort of Christians who are called 'lay folk.'"⁴

The Church formed special orders from what were originally functions. For example, the pastors and teachers from the list of five ministries in Ephesians 4:11 are not classical orders in the Church, but are the functions of those to whom Christ gave pastoral and teaching gifts. The Church drifted into the error of institutionalizing these functions, making orders of them, elevating the people in these orders to levels of greater importance.

Maker 5: Rediscovery of the Priesthood of Believers

At times the Church struggled to free itself from the vise grip of hierarchy. The sixteenth century Reformation led by Martin Luther not only rediscovered *justification by faith*, but also rediscovered the *priesthood of believers*. *Priesthood* includes two roles: (1) *priest*, representing people to God; and (2) *minister*, doing service for God.

The Reformation regarded every believer to be a priest and every believer to be a minister. The Church continued to follow the "every believer a priest" reform, but because the grip of the two-class system was so powerful, the "every believer is a minister" reform failed. Not until the 1950s did the Church rekindle its struggle for this reform. Since then, multitudes of church leaders and congregations have broken free by rediscovering what had been lost from the New Testament model wherein every Christian is an minister, and that the differentiation between Christians is *function* - no *order*.

The awakened Church today is winning the struggle. It is releasing the power of the laity by giving ministry back to them, and relasing a new power in the clergy by restoring the clergy's function of equipping the laity to do the ministry. The historic meaning of the New Testament

Greek word, *laos*, is again beginning to resound: "the people of God."

The Church can once again be classless, including both clergy and *laity* in one order - *laos*. At *laos*, clergy are now fulfilling their divinely-ordered roles, as *ministers*, not as *The Ministers*, whose function it is to equip other Christians for their ministries. As *laos*, laypeople are now fulfilling their divinely-ordered roles, doing the ministries for which they have been gifted. The second Reformation regards every Christian as a first-class Christian.

Jesus preeminently models all of the foregoing principles for an egalitarian church in the one act of washing His disciples' feet. If one picture is worth a thousand words, the following scene is worth a million:

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him...When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them..." I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:5,12,15,17).

Let's examine how He models these principles.

HE WAS A SERVANT

He washed His disciples' feet. He was a servant doing a servant's task. His serving unveiled a hard-to-see part of His nature. The Gospels tell mostly of His power, knowledge and wisdom. This one servile act, however, gives a kaleidoscopic twist to all of His acts, revealing Him as servant.

He served His Father by doing His Father's will; He served the sick by healing them; He served the 5,000 by feeding them. Long before washing His disciples' feet, Jesus made it clear that He came into the world not to be served, but to serve (see Matt. 20:28). He had a true "servant spirit."

What in *our* spirits causes us clearly to use our education, ordination and prominence for self-aggrandizement, distorting our understanding of greatness and deceiving us into thinking that mental tasks are beneath

our positions? Laypeople participate in this massive error by believing clergy live on this artificially elevated level. Jesus' example exposes this error.

We have His Spirit (see Rom. 8:9) and His mind (1 Cor. 2:16). Let's use them!

HE EXCELLED IN SERVING

He excelled in all qualities: teaching, prayer, healing and now serving. And He excelled without an air of superiority. The Lord, on His knees before His disciples, basin and towel in hand, revealed the full spectrum of greatness. He was true Lord and true servant.

I am reminded of two clergy friends who exhibit excellence in serving. They regularly help clear the tables after church dinners, taking the plates and silver to the kitchen. One always arrives early to help set up the room or prepare and serve the meals. They feel as much at home while serving in the dining room week-day nights as they do serving in the sanctuary Sunday mornings. This is not put on; it is their nature.

HE WAS EGALITARIAN (CLASSLESS)

Even though He was their rabbi and Lord, He thought of His disciples as brothers and friends (see Matt. 12:49; John 15:15). He did not flaunt His positions, privately or publicly, inwardly or outwardly, subconsciously or consciously.

He accepted His role of great responsibility (forming the foundation for their faith and lives) and high prominence (rabbi, Son of God and healer) without creating a disparity that would have put Him in one class and them in another. He made it clear that He was merely fulfilling His Father's will. Their parity lay in the fact that they, too, were to fulfill their Father's will.

HE AFFIRMED DIFFERENCES WITHOUT DISPARITY

He said, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightfully so, for that is what I am" (John 13:13). The disciples were His pupils. However, this difference implied neither a greater/lesser nor higher/lower level of

importance.

Peter, because he could think only in the categories of greater/lesser and higher/lower, was not about to permit Jesus to be His servant. It must be that he did not yet truly know Jesus, for he denied Him. His desire to serve: "No...you shall never wash my feet" (v. 8). To Peter, washing feet was beneath Jesus' dignity. To Jesus, it was an integral part of what He came into the world to do. He had served by teaching, healing, feeding, comforting and setting the record straight with the religious leaders. He was now serving by washing feet. A few hours later, He would perform the ultimate service, giving His life for His friends.

We in the Church need to take His counsel, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (v. 15).

I derived two essentials from Jesus' example for my own growth in this area, which I hope to pass on to you individually and to the Church at large.

First, Jesus demonstrated that differences do exist among Christians in their church lives; but the differences are function, not in order. By order, I mean rank, class, status, breed, genre, grade, caste, type or species. There is one order in the Church - laos, the people of God. Jesus affirmed one order when He declared, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister" (Mark 3:35).

Differences also exist in function, however, they are utilitarian. They do not infer differences in rank, worth or importance of a person, but differences in kinds of service. Jesus taught that our common denominator is doing the Father's will.

Second, Jesus needed to extricate Himself from Peter's Mental prison. As long as Peter considered Jesus above washing feet, Jesus could not serve Peter without forcing Himself on him. The mental prisons in which people lock their pastors and in which pastors lock their people confine them to these roles.

When I was a pastor in Hawaii, I experienced imprisonment in the minds of the people. They loved me. (The spirit of aloha is real.) I was their *kahu* (the Hawaiian word for "shepherd"). However, these people held me in such high regard that it seemed I was in a different world. Because of this, I was unable to be a "friend" and "brother" to them. Part of me loved it. They pampered me. they were awestruck in my presence.

I was untouchable. Little children looked up at me as though I were deity.

Another part of me resisted this lofty position because it was not my true self. The *kahu* mold they had pressed me into prevented most of them from getting to know me; and I didn't get to know them either. I felt that my ministry among them was seriously limited because it seemed impossible to disengage myself from the role in which they had cast me.

**When People put us on a pedestal,
the temptation is not only to enjoy it,
but also to take advantage of it.**

Jesus was not about to let Peter imprison Him in a superior upper level role. He freed Himself by harsh words to Peter. Peter acquiesced, and was then able to grasp a more complete picture of who Jesus was: servant first and foremost.

Clergy need to extricate themselves both from the role in which the traditional church has cast them, and the role in which they have traditionally cast themselves. Laity need to extricate themselves from the role in which the traditional pastor casts them. If they are not both set free from their tradition-set roles, their respective ministries will be seriously hampered.

HE IS OUR EXAMPLE

Five of Jesus' words say it all: "Do as I have done." If we are not serving, we imply that we are better than our Lord. This is arrogance! If we accept and perpetuate the traditional two-order dichotomy, we imply that we are above our Lord. This is disdain! He neutralized two-level thinking every time it raised its ugly head; He "nipped it in the bud."

There are two examples of this. First, as we have seen, Peter forbade Jesus to wash His feet. But Jesus repudiated him, telling Peter that if he wanted to be part of His life, he would accept the washing. Peter accepted. When Peter put us on a pedestal, the temptation is not only to enjoy it, but also to take advantage of it. If Jesus had responded like

many in the traditional church, He would have had Peter washing *His* feet.

Second, James and John vied with the other 10 disciples for the highest position in Christ's kingdom (see Mark 10:35-38). The others were indignant. Their request rankled the others and threatened to divide them into two camps. Jesus put an end to this brazen lust for privilege by telling the Twelve they didn't know what they were asking for. The two-storied traditional church needs the same rebuke.

If we continue to tolerate the two-class distinction in the Church without taking action to challenge and change it, we have sided with the element Jesus put down; we disregard the example He set for His Church. Shall we call our disregard, rebellion, pride, nose-thumbing and arrogance disobedience or sin? We need to here Jesus: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

We might call a one-class, one-level, egalitarian church a *ministry-blind* church. The term piggybacks in the "color-blind," a term describing a person who does not "see" differences in the color of people's skin. The *ministry-blind* church neither treats one ministry as more important than another and one minister as higher than another. *Ministry-blindness* enables us to see the variety of Christians performing their variety of functions all as laos, the people of God.

In the traditional church,⁵ one ministry is seen as more important than another and one minister as higher than another. I believe the Presbyterian Church (USA) is trying to do something about this by no longer using the designation Senior Pastor in the Book of Order, replacing it with *Pastor, Head of Staff*. This is an attempt, small as it may be, to focus on function rather than office.

The Corinthian Christians wrongly perceived differences between their leaders. Some believed Paul was better than Apostle. Others were sure Apollos was better than Paul. Some felt that Cephas was the greatest. Not to be outdone by any of the preceding, some arrogantly claimed to follow Christ.

They quarreled. They divided into camps, lining up behind their champions: "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul appealed to them to be "perfectly united in mind and thought" (v. 10).

Christ was not divided, he wrote. Paul was not crucified for them. Paul pressed them to see that there was no difference in order, that there was no importance, that their ministries complemented rather than competed with each other.

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (3:5,6).

Unity was of supreme importance to Paul, therefore he carried this issue forward: "so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (3:7). Planter and waterer are one in purpose. Both are faithful servants of God. The tribute was to God who called them and who made their service effective, not to themselves. End of subject? Not quite.

Lest their false perceptions of different ratings between their leaders metastasize to their perceptions of differences among themselves, Paul hastens to explain that they are God's temples. The Spirit of God is in each of them. Then he moves on with these words:

So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ (1 Cor. 3:21—4:1).

When Paul was on one of his missionary journeys, he had to disclaim superiority attributed to him by pagans who regarded him as the god, Hermes. He now had to disclaim superiority to the Christians who regarded him as towering above them. In pagan Lystra, Paul shouted to the crowd wanting to offer sacrifices to him. "Why are you bringing me good news?" (Acts 14:15). Now in the Church he rebuked the Christians, declaring that he was no more than a servant, obligated to do what God assigned him.

The apostle Paul modeled egalitarianism.

He was a *father* without being paternalistic.

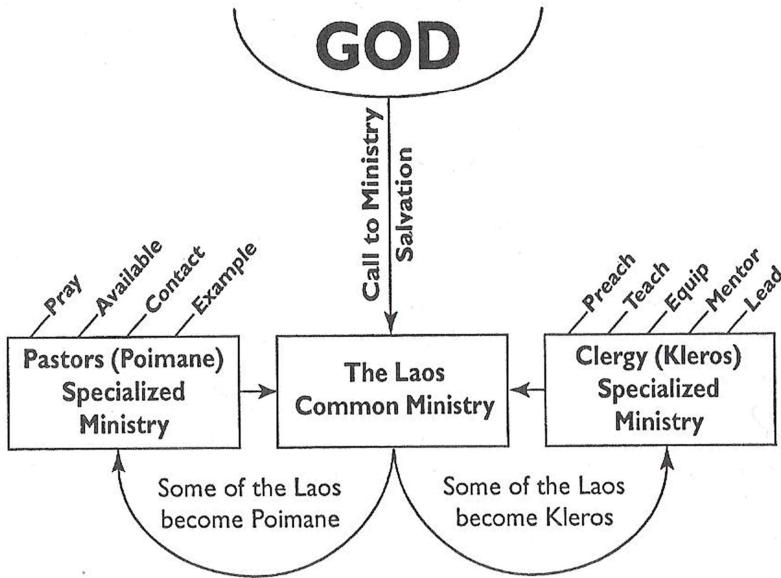
He was an *apostle* without being dictatorial.
He was a *leader* without being domineering.
He was an *authority* without being authoritarian.
He was an *example* without being proud.
He was an *equal* without abdicating his authority.
He corrected without controlling.
He *taught* without be officious.
He *advised* without being manipulation.
He *exhorted* without vindictiveness.
He *compromised* without sacrificing his convictions.
He *suffered* without self-pity.
He *adapted* without losing integrity.
He saw himself a *servant*; we see him a master.
He saw himself a *sinner*; we see him a saint.
He say himself the *least apostle*; we see him the greatest.⁶

How far the Christian has moved from the egalitarian character of the man who had a greater impact on the Church than any other human! How sad that he Church drifted into its split-level, hierarchical aberration centuries ago and continues to perpetuate this malformation! What a need for contemporary leaders to shout to the crowd, "We are only

**Functions unite rather than separate;
they complement rather that compete,
just like the many remembers of a
healthy human body.**

human like you!" Praise God, increasing numbers of leaders are shouting in our day. The volume is increasing. Every church leader and every church members should help raise the volume.

Only in a one-level, classless church can all members be recognized as fully accredited ministers. Only there are members as free to do their ministries as vocational ministers are, the ministries for which God gave



them the necessary gifts and to which He is calling them. The diagram⁷ above helps to understand the egalitarian dynamic.

The diagram could be extended to include many additional curved arrows flowing from "common ministry" pool to other specialized ministries such as evangelism, social issues, cross-cultural ministry, community improvement organizations, youth ministry and on and on.

Notice that clergy are not put down and laity are not raised up. Instead, we are all joined together at the highest level for redeemed folks, Laos, the people of God. No clergy bashing occurs (of which I have been accused at times); and no need for anti-clericalism (which has taken place at times through Church history). We are one in Christ and one in ministry. Only our functions differ. And functions unite rather than separate; they complement rather than compete, just like the many members of a healthy human body.

But what about obvious differences? Isn't there an obvious distinction between the pastor of a church and an usher? Yes. and no. In the church we can affirm differentiation in function without creating differences in rank. Our problem is that we see the church as an organization like any other organization in our community. The CEO is on top—greater responsibility, more power and enviable prestige—while one of the actions

is at the bottom.

Our culture reinforces hierarchical thinking. We erroneously equate the pastor of a church with the CEO, and one of the ushers with the auditor. We rank one higher than the other, thereby unavoidably larding the other lower. Because this is the way it is done in the kingdom of our world, we think it must be the way to do it in the kingdom of God. Not so!

The disturbing fact about Jesus' teaching on greatness and the example He set is that if we believe what He taught and if we follow His example, we are at odds with our culture. We are in a bind, because if we don't believe and follow Him, we are at odds with Him. He taught:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you (*italics mine.*) Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all (Mark 10:42-45).

A church may have a slick, enviable organization by adapting the business model, but that is about all it will be—a slick, enviable organization. The biblical model is that of a body, where each part, though different from all the others, is equally important and exists to serve all the other parts.

Differences in the Church are not to be compared with the difference between the CEO and an auditor, but with the difference between the head and the feet of a body, each indispensable to the whole. My paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 (quoted previously in this chapter), which I believe catches the true meaning for how the church is to function today, reads as follows:

Those Christians who are serving in ways which do not seem as important as others are indispensable, and the functions we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. God has combined the members of the church into one body and given greater honor to those who lack it, so that should be no division between lay and clergy. All parts of the body should accept all the other parts as equals.

The differences, then, are utilitarian. They are functional differences, assigned by our Lord so all of His work can be carried on:

All these [differences in faith, prophesy, etc.] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines [or "just as he assigns"] (1 Cor. 12:11).

But to each one of us grace [for ministering] has been given as Christ apportioned it [or "as Christ assigned it"] (Ep. 4:7).

Each one should use whatever gift he has received [or "has been assigned"] to serve others (1 Pet. 4:10).

Each one of us is dependent upon all the others for doing our part. "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." Any one person can curb the effectiveness of a whole group. Likewise any one person can augment the effectiveness of the whole group.

Two equalizing agents are prevalent in the Church: interdependence and mission. No one person can function effectively in the mission Christ committed to that individual independent from others. Think of the disaster of The Challenger, the space rocket that exploded seconds after liftoff, killing all seven astronauts. What was the commander? Interdependence and mission put them on the same level, regardless of titles, rank and name plates.

So, each person is an equally significant participant in the mission of the Church and equally dependent upon the others.

Because the Scriptures recognize only one order in the Church, the differences among us can be only in the diversity of functions God assigned to that one order. Then there are recognizable differences within each function:

Utilitarian Differences

We differ, but our differences are in what we do, not in who we are. The Church is an organism, not organization; but even organisms have to be organized. Some has to be president, moderator, director, coordinator, etc.

Quality Differences

Variety of experience, training, abilities and skills: careful/careless, thorough/incomplete, effective/ineffective.

Personality Differences

Introvert/extrovert, warm/formal/ loquacious/laconic, activistic/quietistic.

Maturity Differences

New Christian/seasoned Christian, wise/not-so-wise, well-read/not-so-well-read, milk/solid food (see 1 Cor. 3:2).

Training Differences

High school/college, workshops/seminary, life experiences/formal education.

Effectiveness Differences

Persuasive/weak, impressive/unimpressive.

Commitment Differences

Total/partial, Christ-centered/self-centered, spiritual/worldly.

Age differences

14/84, 25/50, Generation X/senior.

Other legitimate differences also existed. Paul recognized them. He wrote to his friends in Philippi that he had no one like Timothy to send to them (see Phil. 2:20,21). Everyone else looked at out for their own interests, not the interest of others. When it came to this man's passion for other-centered ministry, he was head and shoulders above the rest.

Epaphroditus was also singled out for commendation: "honor men like him' (Phil. 2:29,30). His surpassing passion for ministry put him at physical risk. He almost died for the work of Christ.

So within the ministry, inequality of excellence exists, not because of the nature of us humans, but because of the nature of commitment. And this can be nonjudgmentally recognized: "honor to whom honor [is

due]" (Rom. 13:7, *NASB*).

Paul wrote that elders who direct the affairs of the church *well* are worthy of double honor. Can we assume that some did not do as well as others? Certainly. There will always be a difference in quality and effectiveness. But these performance variations do not challenge the fact that there is no difference in order.

I believe Jesus referred to performance differences in His parable of the talents (see Mark 25:14-30). Even though each of the two who performed increased his money 100 percent, the actual number of dollars differed. The one with five thousand dollars gained five thousand more; the one with two thousand gained two thousand more. The difference made no difference to the master for he equally commended both. It was the one who did nothing with his talent who was in trouble.

Recognizing differences in excellence should challenge every one of us to maximize our ministry, to strive to reach our highest potential. Watching brothers and sisters whose spirits are bursting with enthusiasm for ministry and who excel in performance should prod others of us to dedicate our giftedness to perfection and to deny halfheartedness and mediocrity. Could Peter have been referring to excellence in ministry when he used the word *faithfully* in his counsel to Christians: "Each one...faithfully administering God's grace [or ministry] in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10)?

All are first-class Christians, but all may not be doing a first-class job. All are in one order, *laos*, but all may not be doing ministry as well as they could be doing it. The idea is not to compare ourselves with others to see if we are doing ministry as well as they, for that would lead to gross wrong; but to compare how we are doing ministry with how we could be doing it.

This is the sense of Hebrews 10:24: "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Observing people who are doing ministry well should spur us on, not to do it as well as they, but to do it the very best we are capable of doing it. We actually may be capable of doing it better than they if we apply the same energy and spirit.

By reading this far, you now possess a body of truth, a newly recovered cache, about how Christ is building His Church in our era:

egalitarian, classless, "ministry-blind," on order. What can you do with it? Because truth is power, and because truth is for a purpose, the following are some tailored uses for this truth:

For leaders: This truth arms you with the rationale to liberate your church from the confines of traditionalism and to lead it onward into new frontiers of lay ministry. This a fair application of Jesus' confidence in the power of truth: "You shall know the truth that the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, *NASB*). Preach it, teach it, love it, talk about it, create structures to house it. *Let laypeople do it!*

For church member: This truth assures you of your parity with the clergy. It authorized you to stand before a mirror (as one layperson told me she did) watching yourself articulate, "I am a minister!" Visualize both you and the clergy at laos, the people of God. Believe it, take it up, pray about what you should do. Then take action. *Let laypeople do it!*

For your church: If your church's culture does not include "every member is a minister," work together to change the culture. Culture change can start with preaching, but preaching alone will not do it. Culture change is far more than starting a new program. Culture change is a paradigm shift from the traditional model to the new. It requires a change of what you believe, how you see yourself, how you see one another and what you do. *Let laypeople do it!*

For the Church at large: Paul Stevens said it best: "Without every-member-ministry, we have unlived biblical truth, unstrategic leadership deployment, untapped resources in the congregation and an unreached world!"⁸ *Let laypeople do it!*

If you are going to do something with this truth, you have to begin somewhere. Start with giving the pastoral care of the congregation to laypeople. The formal for doing this is provided in appendix H of this book. Hundreds of churches are using of Lay Pastors Ministry model and discovering that laypeople are also gifted for ministry, are also called by

God to do ministry and are as turned on by doing pastoral care as vocational pastors. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." *Let laypeople do it!*

Notes:

1. Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone A Minister* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), p. 64.
2. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol. II*, as quoted by George Hunter III in his book, *Church for Unchurched*, p.21.
3. Patricia Page, *All God' People Are Ministers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), pp. 36037.
4. Ibid., p. 64.
5. When I use the phrase "the traditional Church," I am referring to the Church universal form AD. 312 to the 1950s, the Christendom period as defined by Loren Mead in his book, *The Once and Future Church* (Washington, D.D.: The Alban Institute, 1991) pp. 13-22. He describes it as hierarchical, over-institutionalized and divided into two classes of Christians: clergy and laity. Many churches are traditional, trying to do business as usual and will barely limp into the next century without changing. Their cry is, "if only things could be the way they were!" while we say, "If only things were the way they could be!"
6. These biblical references, line by line, are for those who wish to study this part of Paul's life and ministry: father; apostle; leader, authority; example...
7. For the basic idea of this diagram, I am indebted to James L. Garlow of his book, *Partners in Ministry* (Kansas City, MO, 1982), p. 43
8. R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor* (Washington, D.C., Aban, 1993), p. XI.

Chapter 4

A Ministry—Balanced Church

THE GREAT COMMISSION: THE GREAT CHARACTER

The headwaters of the Mississippi River in Minnesota's Itasca State Park have been the starting point of long canoe trips for many adventures. My family and I camped at this beautiful site years ago. I recall how thrilled we were to step from rock to rock over the narrow beginnings of one of the two greatest rivers in the western hemisphere. After leaving Lake Itasca, the mighty Mississippi wends its way 2,000 miles to the Gulf of Mexico.

The other great river—the Amazon—is in South America. These two prominent streams have something in common: they become part of a far greater body of water, the Atlantic Ocean.

Two great streams of another nature flow through the New Testament, joining their waters in the greater ocean of God's love. One stream is the great Commission, the mandate of our Lord to go make disciples of all nations (see Matt. 28:19,20). The other may not sound as familiar. It is the Greater Charter, the mandate of our Lord to take care of His sheep (see John 21:16). The one calls for the Church to make disciples; the other, to care for those disciples.

The church in which the Lay Pastors Ministry can happen will strive to equalize these two streams. On the one hand, they will deploy those

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gifted and called to make disciples in ministries designed for mission and evangelism. On the other hand, they will deploy those gifted and called to care for Christ's followers in ministries designed for pastoral care. Neither is done at the neglect of the other: not "either-or," but "both-and." Balance is the key.

I believe God raised up the Lay Pastors Ministry to help fulfill the Great Charter. There is no thought of disparaging the Great Commission (much of my won ministry energy), but because Scripture places such a heavy emphasis on lay pastoral care, my emphasis is on the one stream I call the Great Charter.

History records the Magna Carta—meaning the Great charter—as a constitution guaranteeing fundamental personal and other rights, wrested from King John by the English barons on June 15, 1215. I call 1 Peter 5:1-4 the Magna Carta of the Lay Pastors Ministry because this model of congregational care guarantees the fundamental personal right of every church members to pastoral care:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (NIV)

The flow of the Great Commission through the New Testament is well known. To its credit, the Church has plied these waters with great success for the past three centuries, the Great Chapter is not well known. I invite you to accompany me through the New testament for the grand experience of exploring these less familiar waters.

We begin at the headwaters. Three bubbling springs feed this great flow of pastoral care:

- Jesus' mandate: A new commandment I give you [My disciples]: *Love one another*" (John 13:34)
- Jesus's prayer: "I pray for *them* [My disciples]. I am not

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praying for the world, but for those *you have given me*"
(17:9)

- Jesus' charge: "*Take care of my sheep*" (21:16).

The italics, of course, are mine. They make it obvious that Jesus places great importance on caring for those who are already His. A misinterpretation of this selective attention risks Christian elitism. It comes dangerously close to claiming that only Christians matter to God.

This thinking, of course, is ridiculous. After all, Jesus' earlier call to Peter to make disciples—"Follow me and I will make you [a fisher] of men" (Matt.4:19)—predates this call to take care of His sheep. He struck a balance between the two ministries.

The elitist risk wakes us up! It opens our eyes to the fact that when people come to Christ and join our churches, they have a right to be loved, heard, nurtured, prayed for and encouraged. They have a right to pastoral care. The Great Charter guarantees this right.

We now journey downstream to Acts. The caring dynamics was given a practical spin when the apostles chose seven people to take responsibility—not for all people in the community, but for the widows in their church (see Acts 6:1-7). Moving on, we hear Paul instructing the elders of the Ephesians church: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made your overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God" (20:28). He made no reference to making more disciples.

Next, we said through Romans. Again, as though the world did not matter, the Church is seen as a Body that includes only Christians—"each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5). It is a closed fellowship. The seven gifts listed in Romans are all intended to be used within the Body. This is followed by, "Be devoted to *one another* in brotherly love" (v.10, italics mine). Sound exclusive, doesn't it?

On down the river—the 14 spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are for those who confess, "Jesus is Lord" (v.3), and are to be used within the Church. In Galatians 6, the apostle asks for the preferential treatment of believers, "let us do good to all people, *especially to those who belong to the family of believers*" (v. 10, italics mine).

The waters widen in Ephesians 4, calling pastors and teachers to

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prepare God's people for works of service. For what purpose? Evangelism? Missions? Making disciples? Not at this time. The purpose is to build up the Body of Christ, promote unity and further the maturity of the saints.

Like the Mississippi River at Lake Piben on the Minnesota-wisconsin border, the stream through the New Testament widens at 1 Peter 5:1-4. Peter, who was called by Jesus first to fish for people and later to take care of His sheep, appeals to the elders of five Roman provinces to do what? Make disciples? Not at this time. His appeal is that they shepherd God's flock. Have we explored this stream sufficiently to make the point?

If a person were to read only the parts of the New Testament calling Christians to love one another, to tend the flock, to shepherd God's people and to give preferential treatment to Christians, he or she would think that the Church's energies are to be consumed only on itself at the exclusion of those outside the Church. It would appear that the Great Charter is the only mission of the Church.

Conversely, if a person were to read only the parts of the New Testament calling Christians to make disciples of all nations, to evangelize and seek the lost (as in Jesus' parable of the one lost sheep in Luke 15), he or she would believe that the Church's energies are to be consumed only on those outside of the fold. It would appear that *the Great Commission* is the only mission of the Church.

To avoid this "either/or" absurdity, we must accept the whole counsel of God and believe that both are absolute imperative for Christ's Church. Every Christian is to be committed to both. However, no one can be productively engaged in both at the same time. It is not humanly possible for any one person to give himself or herself concurrently to both of these demanding, all-consuming ministries.

God knows this, therefore, He gives a variety of gifts and calls, each Christian to a chosen ministry. The idea is: support both; do one. Paraphrasing Romans 12:6-8 illumines this:

If a man's gift is *making disciples*, let him use it in proportion to his faith; if it is *pastoring*, let him care for God's people diligently.

God gives for one stream to some people, and gifts for the other stream to other people. His plan for keeping a balance between the two and

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getting both done is to mobilize the *laos*—all the people of God—to assist them in discovering their ministries, to equip them, to commission them and to release them to do what God has called them to do. It takes all the people of God to do all the work of God.

The idea of the Great Charter is new to many churches. For example, my vocation travels took me through a city in which a church famous for its evangelism program was located. On the spur of the moment I stopped in, but I was able to visit with his secretary. As I inquired about their program for pastoral care, hoping to pick up some ideas for my

**Pastoring follows evangelism in the
spiritual order just as nurturing
follows birth in the biological order.**

own ministry, she became tearful. She began to pour her heart out as she told me a story she had needed to tell somebody for a long time.

In order to pastorally care for the hundreds of people who were joining the church as the result of their effective evangelism programs, only one person was ministering. It was her boss, and he was burning out. Consequently, people were not only joining the church, but they were also leaving it.

The church was remarkably successful in evangelism, recruiting hundreds of people to visit in homes, share the gospel and assist people in making their decision to receive Christ and join the church. Without question God had given hundreds of other members of the church pastoral gifts, but because of the Great Commission dominated, the Great Charter didn't have a chance. The result was that the back door of the church, as they say, was nearly as busy as the front to door. The two mighty ministries of the church were woefully out of balance.

The apostle Paul brought these two into balance in his ministry. But in the Church as I know it, we don't hear about his pastoral work. His fame as an evangelist and church planter overshadows what I call his "second ministry." His first ministry, of course, was preaching the gospel to those who had never heard it. His second ministry (second, not in importance, but in sequence) was caring for those who became believers. Pastoring follows evangelism in the spiritual order just as nurturing

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follows birth in the biological order.

Paul followed his evangelism with pastoral care. He established churches wherein people could be nurtured and cared for and he then kept in close touch with them. He did this by visiting and writing. His first venture into caring for his converts may have been his recommendation

**Only a nurtured and cared for church
will be strong enough to continue
making new disciples.**

to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers [and sisters] in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing" (Acts 15:36).

Even though Paul and Barnabas split over a disagreement about a third traveling companion, the record shows that Paul, accompanied now by Silas, "went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (v. 41). He was bringing the Great Charter into balance with the Great Commission.

Acts 20, as we discovered previously, tells of Paul's visit with the elders of the Church in Ephesus. His single focus was on caring for the people:

- Keep watch over all the flock;
- The Holy Spirit has made you overseers;
- Be shepherds of the Church of God; and
- Help the weak

Not a word is mentioned about making additional disciples. His strategy must have been that only a nurtured and cared for church will be strong enough to continue making new disciples. Visiting people was one way he cared for them.

Paul also pastored by writing. He exposed his soul to the Church in Philippi by telling them he remembered them and prayed for them (see Phil. 1:4). He assured them that he had them in his heart (see 1:7). He counseled the church in Colossae to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness and love. Giving counsel is a

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pastoral act.

To the Thessalonians Paul revealed is love. Not only did he share the gospel with the Thessalonians, he also hared his very life because "they became so dear to him" (1 Thess. 2:8). What a pastor! What care! Finally, a pastoral benediction: "May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you" (2 Thess. 3:16). Notice that these words are addressed exclusively to Christians and do not contain any reference to witnessing or evangelizing.

The record of Paul's pastoring initiatives makes our case for the Great charter. Paul accepted responsibility for the care of the people who had become Christians through his preaching.

Tom Parrish one of a growing number of second Reformation pastors striking a balance between the Great Commission and the Gret Charter. Tom is senior pastor of the Vision of Glory Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis.

In the final chapter of my book, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*, Tom Parrish told his story of starting the Lay Pastors ministry in his first pastorate, Bethel Lutheran Church, Bellbrook, ohio.

The church was experiencing significant growth for a "small" church. Tom's concern for the pastoral care of former and new members alike compelled him to implement the Lay Pastors Ministry. I had the privilege of equipping the church's first lay pastors. It flourished and met the need.

His call to be the senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis, Minnesota, left Bethel without vocational pastoral leadership for 18 months. The volunteer pastors did the pastoral care of the congregation. Fourteen years and three pastors later, laypeople are continuing to provide pastoral care.

Shortly after arriving at Trinity, Tom began laying foundation for what proved to be an effectively lay pastoral care ministry.

Tom is now pastor of Vision of Glory Church. As the spiritual leader of the congregation, he is leading is people on two parallel tracks: rapid membership growth and pastoral care. They are presently planning a new building to accommodate the growth and will soon hold their first lay pastors training seminar. They are seriously and equally committed to both the Great Commission and the Great Charter.

Hear Tom's testimony about his three-church experience with one of

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the two parallel tracks, pastoral care: "After 18 years of ordained ministry I do not know of any other approach to congregational care that comes close to the effectiveness, efficiency and fulfillment of the priesthood of all believers than the Lay Pastors Ministry."

Let's reflect again on the imagery of the two mighty rivers. Both water are joined as one in the great Atlantic Ocean, just as the two mighty rivers of the New Testament—*the Great Commission* and *the Great Charter*—are joined as on in the ocean of God's great love.

A more apt metaphor at this point may be the two great mountains on the island of Hawaii, Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea. I saw them daily for the seven years I was the pastor of Haili Church in Hilo. They appear to be two separate 14,000-foot formations. They are separate; their peaks are many miles apart. But they are also joined together as one, rising to their lofty heights from a common base, the whole island of Hawaii.

In the same way, the Great Commission and the Great Charter, thought they are two separate ministries, rise to their lofty heights from a common sources: the massive love of God—love for the world and love for His people. Hat God has joined together, the Church ought not to put asunder.

But the Church is splitting the Great commission and the Great Charter. Some churches are majoring in one and some in the other, not realizing that both are equally called for the by God. Others are ineffective in doing both. The reality is that great numbers of churches are not honoring the Great Charter. And they never will be able to honor it as long as The Pastor is the only pastor in the congregation.

But when pastorally-gifted laypeople are affirmed, equipped and given the ministry, the Greater Charter will be honored. All of God's people will than have pastoral care. Bring your church into balance.

"He who has an ear, let him what the Spirit ways to the churches."
Do both the Great commission and the Great Charter.

chapter 5

A Biblical Church

**"WHOEVER PRACTICES AND TEACHES
COMMANDS WILL BE CALLED GREAT."
—Matthew 5:19**

"I have been saying in recent days that maybe, just may be, God designed a truly biblical Church. Maybe He designed it to be led by leaders and taught by teachers and administrated by administrators and shepherded by shepherds. Is that a possibility in your thinking?" So spoke Bill Hybels at The Church in the Twenty-First Century conferences sponsored by Leadership Network in 1991.¹

My first assignment in seminary was to write a paper about "the Source and Norm of Theology." Two words summarize my paper: the Bible. God's holy word is the source of what we believe and the norm by which we appraise our behaviour. In other words, the Bible is our reliable guide for faith and practice.

The church in which the Lay Pastors Ministry can happen is the church that hears God by knowing, believing and practicing biblical truths. It is a word-driven church. The Bible, however, is not a Christian idol, it is the medium through which God reveals Himself and His will to His people.

Jesus' barbed response to the Sadducees' trick question in Matthew 22:23-32 applies to many twentieth-century church leaders: "You are in

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error because you do not know the Scripture or the power of God's" (v.29).

Two Scriptures that many leaders seem to be unfamiliar with are Ephesians 4:11, 12, instructing pastors to equip God's people to do ministry, and 1 Peter 5:1-4, changing laypeople to pastorally care for God's people.

The ancient error of the Sadducees in the modern error of leaders who build on the same sands of tradition, reason and arrogance. They perpetuate the *tradition* that the pastor's role is to do ministry while the people's role is to receive ministry. They *reason* that the best handbook for church life and growth is written by credential people whose studies and programs are based on tradition. Their arrogance makes them unaware of their delusion, comfortable with the status quo and resistant to a paradigm shift. They have "paradigm paralysis," the inability to break out of ingrained patterns of thinking and acting.

This error explains why the expenditure of human resources, energy and money continue without corresponding results. It also explains the frustration, disillusionment, anger and burnout or so many vocational ministries.

The good news, however, is that an ever-increasing number of church leaders are seeking the guidance and inspiration of the Scriptures. They are experiencing the truth of Hebrews 4:12: "The word of God is living and active." It works!

During one of my first trips to Nassau, Bahamas, to conduct a Lay Pastors Equipping Seminar, the bishop of the Anglican Church told me, "If our people can see that it is in the Bible and if they can understand it, they will do it." That is what I called "biblical."

Seeing that lay pastoral care is in the Bible is the key to having it happen in your church. To be a biblical church is to be participating in the second Reformation: giving the ministry to the people. It is to experience what Isaiah meant by his prophecy, "See, I am doing a new thing!" (Isa. 43:19).

Let's look to three Scriptures for three pivotal truths, expecting to correct the Sadducees' error. The first is Ephesians 4:7-12, *The Pivotal Doctrine*:

But grace was given to each of us....he gave gifts....And his gifts

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were that some should be...pastors and teachers, [to equip] the saints [God's people] for the work of ministry (*RSV*).

The doctrine is that every Christian is a minister: Five words shine like the five points of a star to set forth this doctrine: grace, gifts, equip, saints and ministry. This doctrine fuels the second Reformation. Let's closely examine these five words:

Grace: This word means God's favor, generosity and goodness. God gives His grace in three forms: (1) salvation (see Eph. 2:8); (2) revelation (see 3:2,3); and (3) ministry (see 4:7). Grace is powerful because it saves, reveals and gives gifts for ministry.

Gifts: Many kinds of spiritual gifts have been given, and not one Christian in the whole world and in all of history has ever been overlooked. The cluster of gifts for pastoral care includes mercy, encouragement, exhortation and serving. Just as we all intended that people use the gifts we give them, God expects the same of us. We do not choose our gifts for ministry, Christ apportions them (see Eph. 4:7,8).

Equip: Preparation for ministry is an essential part of the formula. God would not think of sending His people out to do His work without adequate preparation. He has assigned pastors and teachers the task of equipping His people to do their ministries.

Saints (*Laos, God's people*): God's first call to us is to be His. Through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ we are born into His family. We are no longer our own (see 1 Cor. 6:19,20). As His people, we have the privilege of access to Him and the honor of doing work for Him. We may not always behave and talk like His people, but by His grace we are.

Ministry: God's second call to us is to do ministry. Ministry is

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some special service we do for God. Why do we resist? Moses was glad to be one of God's chosen, but when God called him to a certain task, he stubbornly resisted with some familiar reasons: not worthy, not credentialed, frightened and not competent. His final resistance was a desperate appeal to God to send someone else (see Exod. 3—4). Every Christian is a ministry by virtue of the fact that God gives gifts (special abilities) to every Christian with which to do ministry and calls every Christian to a special task that utilizes those gifts. If God gives you a ministry (your special task), it follows that *you are minister*. Many do not know this; and many who do know it are not doing it. But neither ignorance nor disobedience changes the fact that every Christian is a minister.

I have been preaching and teaching this doctrine in scores of settings for two decades, discovering again and again that it is truly *a pivotal doctrine*—the central point on which "the second Reformation" turns.

If I were the only one heralding this doctrine, or if the Lay Pastors Ministry were the only ministry laypeople were doing, my voice would never be heard. But by adding it to others, all orchestrated by God's Spirit, it is loudly resounding through to the world. This sound is nothing less than the voice of the Spirit, energizing the Church with new life and energy as it motives into the twenty-first century. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The second of three Scriptures is I Peter 5:2,3—*The Pivotal Charge*:

Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. (RSV)

The charge is to "tend the flock of God." The *New International Version* reads, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care."

This charge is pivotal because it was given to laypeople. They were elders of churches in five Roman provinces. It was true them, as it is

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today, that no one credentialed person or staff of credentialed people can "tend the flock" (pastorally care for all of God's people). Please note that the word *charge* is used twice. I take this to be God's way of underscoring the urgency of caring for His people.

All seven chapters in Part 1 of this book focus on this charge. It takes a need-conscious, gift-oriented, egalitarian, ministry-balanced,

The *spirit* is which the charge [to tend the flock] is to be carried out is a spirit of willingness, not obligation; a spirit of eagerness, not greed for money

biblical, mobilized and failure-resistant church to pastor God's people.

As we look closely to this Scripture we observe that the charge is noticeably positioned among a cluster of other items: (1) the people, (2) the spirit, (3) the motive and (4) the payoff.

The *people* in which the charge is given are laypeople. You can imagine who they are: shopkeepers, shippers, farmers, builders, shepherds, fishermen, wives, husbands, neighbors and other very common folk.

The *spirit* in which the charge is to be carried out is a spirit of willingness, not obligation, a spirit of eagerness, not greed for money.

The *motive* is to serve by being the best example possible, not to hold a position of power with which to lord it over others.

There is a *payoff*. For faithfully executing the charge, the laypeople will receive a crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd appears, a crown that will never fade away.

Our third Scripture is Exodus 18:13-26—*The Pivotal Model*. I call it the Mosaic model of pastoral care:

What you are doing is not good...Select capable men...and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens...That will make our load lighter, because they will share it with you.²

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This model demonstrates what decentralizing pastoral care will do for both the pastor and the people. The people will receive adequate care and the pastors will have time to do with God called them to do as spiritual leaders.

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, observed that both Moses and the people were wearing themselves out. Moses was trying to do the impossible: care for all the people himself. The people were expecting Moses to do the impossible: give personal attention to each one. It was not working.

The passage rapidly moves from the *condition* through the *solution* to the *betterment*. As I cite the following three movements almost verbatim, I invite you, my readers, to prayerfully consider where you are in the changing scenes. Every time I do this for myself, I am both affirmed and reprovved. This may be the moment of paradigm shift for someone.

The Condition:

- What you are doing is not good.
- You will only wear yourself out.
- The work is too heavy for you.
- You cannot handle it alone.

The Solution:

- You must be the people's representative before God.
- Teach them.
- Show them the way to live.
- Show them the duties they are to perform.
- Select capable people, appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens; have them serve.
- Have them bring the difficult cases to you.

The betterment:

- Your load will be lighter.
- They will share your load with you.
- You will be able to stand the strain.
- The people will be satisfied.

Whether a vocational minister or a volunteer minister, each of us is located somewhere on this continuum. From wherever we discover

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ourselves to be, we are changed to take the next step; or, if we discovered that we have already progressed from *the condition* through *the solution to the betterment*, we are challenged to strive for excellence in the solution scene.

I have enough faith to believe that for some readers this moment is a dramatic moment of Christian formation in your lives. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

If a church is to be biblical, it must deal with the problem of mythology, for mythology grows alongside theology like tears grow alongside wheat. Mythology has the appearance of biblical theology, assumes the authority of biblical theology and is accepted as biblical theology.

A simple example of this is the Christmas story about three wise men. Scripture simply records that Magi (traditionally wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem (see Matt. 2:1). Mythology numbers them (the words of one of our Christmas hymns are "We *three kings* from orient are") and, in some cases, even names them.

In a similar way mythology has grown alongside the theology of ministry! For centuries, in fact, the growth of the unbiblical myth about ministry—that only clergy are ministers—was widely accepted as biblical truth. This tare looked so much like wheat that it was (and continues to be in traditional-minded churches) substituted for the biblical teaching that all Christians are ministers.

The Church emerged from the New Testament as a "body" in which each part is given gifts for ministry and all "parts" are equally important in doing ministry. The "body" concept prevailed in every large town of the Roman Empire and to such distant places as Britain, Carthage and Persia. After Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in A.D. 312,³ the "body" concept was covered over.

In the centuries following, mythology flourished. It identified ministry with an office rather than a *charism*. A *charism* (Greek, pronounced kar'izum) is a special gift or power divinely conferred upon a person. Prominence, privilege and power were attributed to certain people because of their offices. The Church gradually became more an organization than an organism.

In the centuries following, mythology about ministry that has grown

alongside theology these many centuries is:

- There are two classes of Christians, clergy and laity.
- The clergy are the ministers; the laity are receivers.
- A person becomes a minister by formal education and ordination.

One of the dynamics operating in this mythology is that *the people make the Church, and then the Church makes the people*. The people of

**When knowledge penetrates
a person's spirit, attitude changes.**

that era made the Church hierarchical and, except for some significant variances throughout history, the Church made successive generations of churches hierarchical.

But today, "things are a changin." The rediscovery of the pivotal theology, charge and model previously described is demythologizing the Church, giving it new life and returning it to the "body" concept. It is breaking free from its encumbrances. This is one of the most exciting times in the history of the Church!

Not all of the Church, however, is breaking free. Many individual church leaders, both clergy and laity, are not yet separating myth from truth. It is extremely difficult to break with tradition. How do we do it? How do we change?

Management consultant Ken Blanchard says that change can happen in four ways:

1. Knowledge: adding a new piece of information to your mind;
2. Attitude: changing the way you think about something;
3. Behavior: altering a habit or the way you perform a particular function; and
4. Organizational behavior: changing the way an entire group of people does something.⁴

Let's try to understand Blanchard's four ways of change.

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Knowledge

The preceding pages may have added significantly to what you already knew. I trust that it has. It is said that *knowledge is power*. Jesus taught, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Proverbs 24:5 reads, "A man [or woman] of knowledge increases strength." You have the necessary knowledge to change.

Attitude

When knowledge penetrates a person's spirit, attitude changes. Biblical knowledge about ministry shapes how pastors see themselves and how they see themselves. Pastors begin to see themselves as equippers and encouragers of ministers rather than the chief doers of ministry. The people begin to see themselves as having ministries of their own, believing that they too are ministers. They experience an attitudinal change.

Behavior

Changing how we do things is very difficult because of our formal training, tradition and ecclesiastical culture. For change to occur, it will come about by prayer and biting the bullet; we will pray, make the change, and let the chips fall where they may. Change is uncomfortable. Change puts us at risk. Change draws criticism. But change is also exhilarating, refreshing and renewing. It is the nature of everything that is alive. Changes in knowledge and attitude are significant, but nothing really changes until behavior changes.

Organizational Behavior

This is the most complex because enough of the members of congregation have to move through the other three to change the culture of a church. People do not all move at the same time nor at the same pace, so vision, prayer, perseverance and patience are required—and in that order. Know that if corporate behavior (the culture of a church) does not change, any changes taking place are not really changes. They are only temporary, short-lived alterations that eventually revert to the way things were previously done and lead to heartbreak for those initiating them.

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If you are looking for some practical, usable ideas to change your church, you will find change-power in doing the following things:

- **Create a favorable culture.** Preaching, teaching, writing, meeting and modeling contribute to creating a spiritual, emotional and rational climate. This, in turn, is conducive to successfully pursuing a vision that differ from the traditional. Culture must be defined to create a favorable lay ministry of any kind. "Culture" is that which most people in the church know is expected, permitted and appropriate. Ministries that are incongruent with the culture of a church will fail n matter how biblical, well organized, well promoted or heavily endorsed they are.⁵
- **Help people discover their ministries.** Gifts, passion, experience, personality, training and life situation all contribute to the ministry a person should be doing. Classes, seminars, workshops, publications and consultations can facilitate people in their search.
- **Create structures for ministry.** Set priorities for the church and move on them by designing ministries that will accomplish them. For most ministries, usable models already exist. By adopting or adapting them, you will not have to "reinvent the wheel."
- **Celebrate ministry.** Creative ways to focus attention on proposed ministries, new ministries, longtime ministries or just the idea of laypeople doing ministry will create a fun environment. It will help people to enjoy doing ministry. Some churches has a Sunday each year on which they recognize their "volunteer ministers." Some have an annual celebration event such as a dinner, banquet or picnic to affirm their "volunteer ministers."

"He who has an ear let them hear what the spirit says [through the Bible] to the churches!"

a biblical church

Notes:

1. NEXT (Tyler, Tex.: a publication of Leadership Network, August 1995).
2. See appendix A for two diagrams of the Mosaic Model: the first, Ministry Centralized; the second, Ministry Decentralized.
3. Bruce Shelly, Church History in Plain Language (Dallas, Tex.: Word Publishing, 1982), pp. 42, 108.
4. Ken Blanchard, Forum Files (Tyler, Tex.: a publication of Leadership Network, January 1994).
5. For a more complete treatment of "culture"—its controlling power and how to change it. Change of culture enabled them to launch a successful Lay Pastors Ministry.

Chapter 6

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EVERY MEMBER A MINISTER

It takes all the people of God to do all the work of God. I would like to see this statement become a common cliché in the Church. God's work is so important and so large that it cannot be done by the typical 20 percent of the congregation who do 80 percent of the work. Neither can it be done by paid staff. In fact, no church can hire a staff large enough to do it all. Much of God's work is left undone, even in terms of pastoral care.

A man complained through *Monday Morning*, a denominational magazine for Presbyterian clergy, about the lack of pastoral care at the time of his mother's death.¹ He told how "deeply bothered" he was. His longing for ongoing pastoral care was exacerbated by disillusionment.

A pastor's response to this complaint may seem unfairly defensive of the clergy, but he is right:

As I understand it from Ephesians 4: 11, 12, God has given the gift of leaders, not to do the ministry, but to equip the saints to do *their* ministry. How might this work out in instances such as you encountered? A story of contrasts helped me understand.

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First, he told of reconnecting with his former "ol' rommie" from seminary. This friend had left the ministry to enter the field of software engineering because he could no longer take the usual 10-to-14-hours day. His killer schedule was overcrowded thing to keep up with all that was going on in the lives of his people. He believed he had to be there for them 24 hours a day. In the midst of this sacrificial serving frenzy, his wife became seriously ill and was bedridden for nearly a year. Not one person from the church called or visited her.

As he shared this sad commentary about the church, "his words dripped with bitterness." The reason: "He had taught his flock that he and only he was responsible for caregiving—and they'd learned their lesson well. Too well. He soon became another casualty of the ministry."

He contrasted this by telling about what happened while was on vacation. A major accident hospitalized a member of his church. People visited her. Some asked what they could do to help: Did she and her husband have insurance? Were meals needed? How could they pray?

Upon returning, the pastor asked the husband how he felt about the care they had received. He broke into tears while telling what the visits, hands-on help and prayers did for them. The pastor concluded with these clarifying words from Ephesians 4:11,12:

Have I and the other pastors here responded at all hours of the day and night to emergencies? Of course. But this precious flock is willing and able to provide so much more pastoral care than we could ever dream of—and they're doing it! NO, we aren't abandoning our call as pastors when we let our congregation know isn't only *our* job to be available 24 hours a day. I think we're just learning how to fulfill that call.

THE MOSES PRINCIPLE

Moses, the leader of Israel centuries ago, gives the twentieth century Church a model for total mobilization of all God's people. Read about it in Exodus 24—30. God called him to construct a tabernacle. The only way this could be accomplished was by all the people giving materials and skills. They did it!

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First, let's examine Moses' role. Every congregation has a "Moses," the central spiritual leader. This person is commonly called the pastor. Moses' role in building the tabernacle parallels the pastor's role in building a lay ministry in the following eight ways:

1. He met with God (see Exod. 24:18, 34). He entered the cloud, staying there long enough to hear God out on a variety of things, all related to the tabernacle and worship. Inwardly, he had God's plan clearly in mind. Outwardly, his face took on a radiance, so much so that he had to wear a veil when speaking with the people (see 34:29-35). This visible change signaled the people to take his words seriously because he had been with God.

Parallel Principles:

- We need a place and time to meet with God regularly.
- It is imperative that we stay with God long enough to hear Him out if our words are to have meaning and our actions are to be significant.
- The inner conviction that we have heard God generates energy, confidence, competence and integrity.
- The "something different about us" that comes from our time with God authenticates our authority to mobilize, instruct and lead His people.

2. He got his vision from God (see Exodus 25). "Vision casting" is the common term for one of the major roles of the "Moses" of a congregation. His vision was quite specific: "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you" (vv. 8,9). The vision does not seem to be an ecstatic, other-worldly, mystical trance; it is concrete and rational. His mind must have reeled with the volume of construction details—27 pages in my Bible.

Parallel Principle:

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Happy are the pastors whom meetings with God are frequent enough, long enough and deep enough to know they are hearing God, and that the vision they cast emerged during their time with Him.

3. He taught the people (see 35:1,4). "These are the things the Lord has commanded you to do." What he should teach the people was revealed while he was with God. The communication was so compelling that Moses knew God had spoken and that he was obligated to teach the things God has commanded.

Parallel Principle:

Teach Ephesians 4:11, 12, a neglected part of God's Word, with the excitement, passion and power of freshly given revelation: Pastors and teachers are to equip the saints to do the ministry. Then, teach the specific ministry focus on this book—pastoral care of a congregation by laypeople. Teach these as "the things the Lord has commanded you to."

4. He led the people (see Exod. 33:12). Moses had no doubt that God told him to lead these people. Neither did he question that these people were God's people. His leading included providing structure for their participation in God's project. Some were to bring materials such as gold, linen and wood. Others were to use their skills in crafting metals, making curtain and braiding gold stands. Leading them included inspiring them to have willing hearts.

Parallel Principles:

- Provide structures for ministry. The Lay Pastors Ministry is a likely structure for pastoral care.
- Call all the people to use their unique giftedness to do their ministries.
- People are ready to minister when meaningfully challenged.

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5. *He corrected and disciplined them* (see Exod. 32-34). Forward movement in hearing and doing God's plan was interrupted by the impatience, skepticism and idolatry of the people. This happened—it's incredible—under the leadership of Moses' trusted associate, a priest named Aaron. Moses had to take quick and strong action to prevent God's plan from being derailed. The treatment was severe; their rebellion was crushed; the people mourned; and they continued God's project.

Parallel Principle:

Similar threats to God-ordered ministry are common in today's churches. At times, the modern "Moses" will have to call people to be accountable lest forward movement be obstructed.

6. *He inspected the work* (see Exod. 39:32-43). "Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded" (v. 43). Could it be that the excellence of their work was in part the result of knowing it would be inspected?

Parallel Principle:

A relationship exists between quality and accountability. The heavy truth is that God holds his leaders accountable for how well (or effectively) ministry is done; thus, it is imperative that leaders evaluate the work periodically. This way "in-flight corrections" can be made as necessary.

7. *He was with his people in worship* (see Exod. 40). He arranged all of the equipment: the ark of Testimony, table, lampstands, altar, basin, etc. He anointed the furnishings and the priests with oil. He was with his people as the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Leading the people into God's presence was task number one. Number two was teaching the people; number three was mobilizing them for action.

Parallel principle:

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Worship, teaching and mobilizing come together for us in Ephesians 4:1-12: "There is one God and Father of all (worship)...but to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned...it...It was he who gave some to bepastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service (teaching and mobilizing)."

8. *He completed the work* (see Exod. 39:32). It reads like the end of a formal report: "So all the work on the tabernacle...was completed." The writer of Hebrews cited the reason for Moses' success: "He persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). His frequent meetings with God kept him at it through all the discouragement and stress.

Parallel Principle:

The responsibility of pastors and all who respond to God's call is to finish the work God gave them to do, to stick with it through all the tough times and follow it through to completion. At the end of Jesus' earthly life he prayed, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4), Again, Paul to Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord" (Col.4:17). A common time-management principle applies here: It's not how much you *do*, it's how much you get *done* that counts.

One more thing must be said about this completed work. Moses completed it, but only as a building supervisor completes a project, as a coach wins so many games in a season or as a general wins the battle. It's really the people who do it. In fact, this is the only way it can be done. It takes all the people of God to do all the work of God. "Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The parallel principles in Moses' role help us to see the role of today's pastors:

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- Meeting with god regularly;
- Teaching the Word from God to the people;
- Leading the people of God;
- Holding people accountable;
- Being with the people in worship;
- Completing the work.

The second role to be examined is that of the people. It is only as the people fulfill their roles that pastors are able to fulfill their roles. Football illustrates this:

It is only as the players play well that the coach is able to coach well. By each doing his part well, the team plays a good game. The role of the *volunteer* minister fits hand-in-glove with the role of the *vocational* minister:

- Meet with God regularly;
- Hear God through His Word;
- Accept the leadership of the leaders and offer your own;
- Bring your spiritual gifts and energies to the Lord;
- Worship;
- Expect inspection;
- Complete the work.

God's role is the third role we must examine. Surprised? Does this come as an afterthought? Perhaps. We often get so caught up in doing our thing that we forget God is doing His thing. The fact is that if it were not for His role, our work would be for naught. Jesus understood this: "My father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working...the Son can do nothing by himself" (John 5:17, 19).

What did God do?

1. *He met with Moses.* It was God who took the initiative, descending to the top of Mount Sinai and calling Moses to meet with Him there. "So Moses went up" (Exod. 19:20). He could have refused God's initiative, but he didn't!

2. *He gave the vision.* "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (25:8, *NKJV*). He followed the big idea a

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sanctuary with the details—the size and material for the ark (acacia wood and gold), the lampstands made of hammered gold, 10 curtains of finely twisted linen, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn as well as hundreds of other details.

3. *He Himself was the motive.* "Motive" means "spring of action." The people knew God was worthy of the very best they had to give, whether skills or materials. It was neither Moses, nor the nation, nor the project, nor their religion that moved them to give themselves to this massive task. It was God who moved them. "To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain" (24:17). Awesome!

4. *He moved their hearts.* In addition to personally inspiring them to action and excellence, God gave His Spirit to form willing hearts and generous spirits. God's Spirit also bestowed "skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" (Exod. 35:20-36:1). So, it was not only their willingness that originated with God; their competence as from God. Our is too: "Our competence comes from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

5. *He provided the workers.* Moses was the leader of leaders. He led in carrying out the plan that God gave him. The project leaders were Bazelel and Oholiab. They led the workers. God revealed the plan, called the leaders, gave people willing hearts and filled them all with His Spirit.

6. *He provided the materials.* The ultimate source of all things is God. He provided them; the people brought them. In fact they brought so much that Moses had to stop them from being more (see Exod. 36:3-7).

The tabernacle was completed. God used it immediately by filling it with His glory (see 39:32, 40:34,35). It was time to celebrate! They had heard God and acted on what they heard.

The following are a few corresponding New Testament and twentieth-century realities I mined from this model:

- *God gives the idea for lay pastoral care.*
"Prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:12).
"Be shepherd of God's flock" (1 Pet.5:2).
- *Our Lord Himself is our motive for doing ministry.*
"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt.28:20).

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"The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

- *God provides the material for ministry.*

"But to each other of us grace [spiritual gifts] has been given as Christ apportioned it" (Eph.4:7).

"Our competency comes from God He has made us competent as ministers" (2 Cor. 3:5,6).

- *The workers are provided by God.*

"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:16).

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10)

It takes all the people of God to do all the work of God. *He who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says [through this model] to the churches!*

Commitment is the preeminent key to mobilizing a church. Earlier in this chapter, I told about the members of a church who cared for a

**Commitment assumes that the Spirit
gives the gifts for doing ministry
and, silently within a person's
conscience, sounds the call.**

woman hospitalized by an automobile accident. They were available because they were committed.

How many programs and ministries have failed because committed people were not found to do them! A pastor who delayed implementing the Lay Pastors Ministry for three years told me: "I have learned not to push a program until I have gifted and called people to do it."

By gifted and called, the pastor was talking about two essential components of commitment. Commitment assumes that the Spirit gives

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the gifts for doing ministry and, silently within a person's conscience, sounds the call Mobilization gives commitment the opportunity to surface.

The reality is that not every Christian is committed. This can make mobilization extremely difficult, if not impossible. In fact, the rule of thumb is the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the work gets done by 20 percent of the people. What could your church do with 50 percent of your people working; or to dream wildly, 75 percent working?

That a high percentage may be only a dream is documented in a formal study of seminaries, churches and pastors:

Lay members, despite fairly regular attendance by about half of the population, are generally ill-informed about the basic tenets of their faith, often lukewarm in their commitment (*italics mine*) to building a community of believers devoted to serving Christ with passion, urgency and abandon.²

Marginal commitment, which creates great difficulty in achieving ministry objectives, is an issue churches have to deal with. This is especially true in light of shrinking budgets for staff and increasingly less discretionary time for members.

Some churches are reaping the ministry benefits from strengthening the commitment component of their cultures. One such church is the First Evangelical Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Pastor Duane Litfin tells about it:

"We emphasize 'one member, one ministry.' If you ask one of our members, 'What's your ministry?' he should be able to answer...When you say, 'I want to join this church,' that is a statement of commitment. So, for members, I expect attendance at worship, close relationships and active ministry. One of our strategic goal is that by the year 2000 every member will be in some form of ministry."

His reply to the question, "Do people know these expectations when they join?" was, "Yes, the 'every member in ministry' is in our Target 2000 strategic plan. And in the new members' class, I'm up front about the expectations."³

Another church where commitment is a strong component of its culture is the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery,

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Alabama. They are able to identify 5,000 of their members doing specific ministries. On a Sunday I worshiped with them, the congregation was asked to stand and greet one another by telling what ministry they were doing. Pastor John Ed Mathison tells in the following words how important the "every member in ministry" theme is to their church:

The emphasis on the ministry of the laity is something that must be kept constantly before the church. An occasional sermon is not sufficient. It needs to be taught in Sunday School and preached from the pulpit.

We people join your church, they should be given immediately an opportunity to indicate where they feel led to serve.⁴

Mobilization for ministry, activated and sustained by commitment, is the engine that drives ministry. At least seven signs mark an every-member ministry church:

1. An intentional, well-defined strategy.
2. A programmatic provision to enable people to discover their gifts, to hear God's call and to come forward to commit themselves to a ministry.
3. Publicizing specific equipping opportunities and schedules.
4. A process for presenting a "menu" of ministries from which people can choose. This process replaces using delegation, appointment or election to determine where individuals should serve—"filling slots" as someone called it.
5. An every-member ministry preaching and teaching priority, thereby making the biblical teachings on spiritual gifts and divine call well known by the members.
6. Communicating the high-level expectation to new members that every member of the church will be serving God in some specific ministry.
7. Lay leaders model their every-member ministry orientation.
8. Clergy and other staff leaders relinquish ministry to gifted and equipped laypeople.
9. People are comfortable with the goal of every-member ministry—the

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expectations, procedures, theology and terminology—as characteristic of the culture⁵ of their church.

We have seen that mobilization of the congregation is the key to ministry, and that commitment is the key to mobilization. It's time to ask, Just what is commitment?

Commitment is that compelling force with the self that drives one's decisions for action. It is generated by the simultaneous activity of the Holy Spirit and the human mobilizer—the call of the Holy spirit being heard by a person's spiritual ear while the call of the mobilizer is being heard by the person's physical ear.

Because this commitment is deep within the person, it can be quite an emotional thing, but not necessarily so. In fact, we need to be aware of the difference between a feeling-driven assent and Holy Spirit/human spirit-driven engagement. Paraphrasing a humorous plaque I read in a novelty store helps me understand the difference: "Kissin' don't last. Cookin' do." My rendition: "Feelin's don't last. Commitment do."

Commitment, then, is that life-controlling energy deep within one's self, generated as the Holy Spirit bonds with the appeal. The Holy Spirit continually nourishes that ministry energy to the degree we continue to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

Without commitment a person may intend to do ministry, but may not follow through, just as the son said to his father, "I will, sir," when told to go work in the vineyard. But he did not go (Matt.21:30).

Without commitment a person may do ministry for a time but not continue, like Demas who, according to Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24 was Paul's fellow worker and "dear friend," but according to 2 Timothy 4:10, deserted Paul "because he loved this world."

When a person is committed he or she will do ministry and, though wavering at times, will continue doing it. This is Peter. He "left everything and follow him" (Luke 5:11). Though sometimes weak, he was committed. We read of Peter's continuing commitment throughout the Gospels and the book of Acts.

These three—the son, Demas and Peter—shed new light on commitment. Making a commitment is one thing; continuing a commitment is another. The act of commitment *sets* the course; acts of

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renewed commitment *stay* the course.

When members are weak in commitment, it is usually the church that is at fault. If the church is not strong enough to call its people to commitment and then again to renewed commitment, it will be too weak to mobilize its people for ministry. We must call our people to commitment. The energy of the Spirit will be in these calls, thereby releasing the energies of the congregation into ministry.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." *Let laypeople do it!* by mobilizing your congregation.

Notes

1. *Monday Morning*, a magazine for Presbyterian leaders, P.O. Box. 635. New Palestine, IN 46163 (December 18, 1995): 1-16.
2. "The M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust," *Renew of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest*, P.O. Box 1618, Vancouver, WA 98668.
3. *Leadership Journal*, 465 Grunderson Drive, Carol Stream IL. 60188, Summer 1989, p. 26.
4. John E. Mathison, *Every Member in Ministry*, Discipleship Resources, P.O. Box 189, Nashville, TN 37202 (1988): 6.
5. Culture is that which most people in the church know is expected, permitted and appropriate. Ministries incongruent with the culture of a church will fail no matter how biblical, well organized, well promoted or heavily endorsed.

Chapter 7

A Failure Resistant Church

**"A WISE MAN BUILT ...HIS HOUSE ON THE
ROCK...IT DID NOT FALL."**

– Matthew 7:24, 25

A Kentucky pastor accepted my invitation my invitation to explain in one of my training seminars what his church was experiencing with the Lay Pastors Ministry. Two years earlier he had shared glowing reports of success and delight with its effectiveness.

He began to relate how the ministry blasted off like a rocket. Lay pastors were excited and those they pastored were grateful. His facial expression and voice changed, however, as he now told of the ministry's failure.

He proceeded to give the reason for the failure so those attending the seminars could avoid making the same mistakes

1. He had managed the ministry by himself;
2. He had not organized a Ministry Leadership Group;
3. Problems arose and he was too busy with other demands to deal with them

TWELVE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL LAY PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

TO START A LAY MINISTRY FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF YOUR CHURCH AND TO TEST ITS STRENGTH LATER, YOU MUST BUILD IT ON THESE FOUNDATION BLOCKS. THEN, PERIODICALLY, USE THEM TO CHECK YOUR MINISTRY FOR POSSIBLE SIGNS OF SHIFTING AND EROSION.

Like a building, a strong ministry is strong because first, it sets on a solid foundation, and second, it is built with quality material, If the foundation is weak at the beginning, or if after starting with a solid foundation we see it beginning to erode, we can fear for the future of the ministry, It is imperative that we use these twelve blocks as the foundation of our ministry at the start and then periodically review them (conduct an evaluation) to see that they are in place.

If you are beginning a Lay Pastoral Care Ministry, ask yourself these questions about each Foundation Block:

1. Shall we include this one? Why?
2. How shall we do it ?
3. How well shall we do it?

If you already have the ministry on line, do not be afraid to ask the following tough questions about each block, Asking them is a productive way to conduct a evaluation of the present state of your ministry.

1. Are we doing this? Why?

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2. In what way are we doing it?
3. How well are we doing it?
4. How can we do it better?

We shall now proceed to the TWELVE FOUNDATION BLOCKS. Each one is followed with some suggested building material, a few "bricks."

V I S I O N FOUNDATION BLOCK #1

"Where there is no vision the people perish." (Prov. 29:18) A good definition of "vision" is: "Something seen by other than normal sight." I have on the wall in front of my desk one of Bill Gothard's inimitable definitions. This one has a picture of three Giraffes with their long necks stretched as high as they will stretch. Then this definition of "Leadership": "Seeing farther down the road than those around me can." Not many people are leaders, people of vision. This often causes misunderstanding between leaders and followers but such friction is "the cost of doing business."

Somewhere I read, "Vision without a task is but a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision and a task is the hope of the world." Now, on to the materials to place on this part of the foundation.

A BIBLICAL BASE AND CALL I refer to I Peter 5:1-4 as the Magna Charta of our Lay Pastors Ministry. The operational part of this passage is, "Tend the flock of God which is your charge." This is both the Biblical base and the call of God to church leaders to see that every member of their people is loved and cared for. The Biblical model is in Exodus is where Moses divided God's flock into thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens and set "able men" over each segment. He got pastoral care down to bite-size so it could actually be done. See pages 25-44 in *Can The Pastor Do it Alone?* where this "brick" is developed more fully.

NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION Reviewing the membership

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list by either the pastor or envisioned lay person is all it takes to document the need for pastoral care. I did a survey of 50 of our 2500 members at Hope Church, a cross section which ranged from active to inactive. Those to whom I reported the results were shocked at the critical need. The reality is that many members of every church, both small and large, are not being cared for, God would have every one of his people prayed for regularly, known well enough so struggles and pains are not suffered alone, and close enough to another so they are assured that someone cares. What has led many churches another so they are assured that someone cares. What has led many churches to begin a Lay Pastoral Care Ministry is a study of their needs and priorities.

PRAYER Time spent with God in prayer will keep the vision bright. it fixes the focus on God and what he has called you to do. A weakening ministry is usually preceded by a dimming vision and a dimming vision is the result of failure to pray. Conversely, a strong ministry is sustained by a vision which is regularly renewed and even enlarged in prayer. We don't wonder why Jesus was so strong in ministry when we see him so often at prayer. It's this simple: the clarity and energy of our vision is in proportion to time spent in prayer.

SHARED WITH LEADERS Vision must be shared. I know of churches which now have a strong Lay Pastoral Care Ministry because of a lay person, who had a vision for it, shared it with the pastor, I know of churches which have a strong Lay Pastoral Ministry because the pastor, who had the vision, shared it with a few lay people, It, then, spread to others, The circle of people sharing the same vision grew larger. I know churches where a lay person or two who had the vision proceeded to launch the ministry alone, It failed, I know of churches whose pastor had the vision and proceeded to launch the ministry alone. It failed. This leads us to the next foundation block.

O W N E R S H I P FOUNDATION BLOCK #2

"God want this ministry in our church so we have to make it work."

a failure-resistant church

Someone has to "own" the ministry. That is, someone must be responsible for it, manage it and be accountable for it's state.

A SMALL GROUP WHO SHARE THE VISION AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY Moses was told by Jethro what he must have already known, that it was foolish to try to do the job alone. This is true for caring for the congregation and it is true for managing the ministry which cares for the congregation in our church of 2500 members we have a Ministry Leadership Group of eight people who share the vision and give leadership to our Lay Pastors Ministry. What are the signs of ownership? There are at least five:

1. Attending meetings regularly.
2. Thinking about it at times other than at meetings.
3. Talking about it at home, with friends and others.
4. agonizing over the problems. Even lose sleep over them.
5. Feeling the joy of success.

THE PRIORITY MINISTRY FOR EACH IN THE GROUP This is not a ministry people can add to what they are already doing in the church. for some it will require that they drop other commitments so they can focus on this in prayer and consultation they will need to discover what God has gifted them for and what he is calling them to do. Our zeal often carries us into more-commitments than our Lord calls us to make. He was focused. No matter how much there was to do in the world Jesus established a limit to what his disciples were to do: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." He even limited their message. Read it in Matthew 10, Each member of the Leadership Group must set this as his or her priority ministry in the church.

COMMISSIONED BY THE PASTOR AND OFFICIAL BOARD Since this ministry is basic to all ministries of the church, it needs to be treated as such publicly. Setting aside by prayer those who are

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responsible for this ministry establishes the members of the Leadership Group as partners with the vocational pastor in fulfilling the charge in I Peter 5, "Tend the flock."

□ SCHEDULED MEETINGS No one likes meetings for meetings sake but meetings for ministry's sake is palatable. Our Ministry Leadership Group (called "Ministry Group" in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*) at Hope Church meets twice a month, the second and fourth Thursday evenings. The meetings include four parts: worship, koinonia (sharing what is going on in our lives), nurture and ministry. The ideal is to do all four each meeting, and at times we have. But, more often we will expand one or two of the parts at the expense of the others. Sometimes a personal problem in the life of one or two members will. take priority over nurture and even ministry as we listen, counsel and pray. Other times the ministry business will be so pressing that a meeting or two is spent on only that. If a balance cannot be achieved in each meeting, it should be sought over a period of time. It is the worship (usually very simple - a song, Scripture of devotional thought to focus us on God, and prayer) and sharing our lives which bonds a group together and makes ministry business both pleasant and productive.

D E S I G N FOUNDATION BLOCK #3

"Wherever the grace of Christ is present, it is in search of a form that will adequately express what it is." Avery Dulles in *Models Of The Church*.

Organization is not a necessary evil but the part of ministry the Lord has left up to us. He charges us to "Tend the flock." We are to try to understand what that means and create the strategy for doing it. He gave the great commission but left it up to us to develop plans and mobilize people to do it. If our people are to be adequately and effectively cared for we need to have a way of doing it. Hundreds of churches have adopted or adapted our Lay Pastors model, even though they call it something different. This model is set forth in my book, *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*

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DETERMINE PURPOSE, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES Our stated purpose is to provide pastoral care for every household in the church family. Or, in your situation, your purpose may be tailored differently or stated differently, One of the goals might be to "call forth" a certain number of people by a certain date to pastorally care for a stated number of households. The objectives would be the actions you would take to accomplish your goal. One objective might be to send letters to the members of your congregation who seem to have a pastoral heart, inviting them to consider and to pray about coming Ministry Leadership Group would develop clear statements of purpose, etc. The acronym "SAM" tells us one, imperative about goals, they must be Specific, Achievable and Measurable.

CREATE AN ADEQUATE STRUCTURE The Mosaic model in Exodus 18 gives the basic principles for a lay pastoral care ministry structure. Chapter 10 in my book, *Can The Pastor Do It Alone? "In Search of a Form"* is helpful, Whatever your organizational structure, it must be seen to be as important to your ministry as the skeleton is to the body. And it performs the same functions, giving it shape and enabling it to move.

DEVELOP JOB DESCRIPTIONS We call them "Position Accountability Write-ups," You must determine who is to do what and the "what" needs to be written. It is interesting to see how getting an idea down on paper harmonizes different perceptions, clarifies the ambiguous, defines expectation and significantly reduces future misunderstanding. The Lay Pastor's job description is very clear - P.A.C.E. The tasks of the individual member of the Ministry Leadership Group need to be clearly written, as well as the tasks of every person involved in the ministry in any way.

BUILD ON ALL TWELVE FOUNDATION BLOCKS Each one is so very important that to overlook any one will weaken the total

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structure. Taken all together they make one strong foundation for a strong ministry. Consider them on at a time and ask the questions suggested above. It may take several month to get your ministry on line this way, but when you get it on line it will be there to stay.

C A L L FOUNDATION BLOCK #4

"You have not chosen me but I have chosen you...(John 15:16) I have found that lay people seldom think of themselves as being called by God to a ministry They have no problem believing that we vocational ministers are called. But they are cheating themselves out of something tremendously significant by no believing they also are called by God. There is need for some Biblical teaching on this.

ACCEPT SPIRITUAL GIFTEDNESS AND DIVINE CALL AS ESSENTIALS FOR THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE The call to ministry is included in our call to salvation. Some denominations other than mine put it this way: "The call to ministry is in the baptism." Elton Trueblood puts it very strong: "To be a Christian and not to be in ministry is a contradiction of terms. To be a Christian is to be in ministry." He, of course, being a layman, can get by being that blunt. The refrain in Romans 12:4, "Just as each of us..." is repeated in a similar way in I Corinthians 11:7 & 27, and again in I Peter 4:10, These passages each deal with the spiritual gift and make it clear that every one in the Body, every Christian, is given gifts for ministry. The Holy Spirit, then, enables each of us to know whether we are an ear, an arm or an eye-a pastor, an administrator or a teacher It makes a great difference in a Lay Pastor's, an administrator or a teacher ability to know he or she is called by God to pastorally care for people.

CONFIRM THE CALL OF EACH PARTICIPANT Not every person wanting to be a Lay Pastor is gifted or suited for this ministry. We have had to turn people down even after they have been through an equipping seminar This is difficult and requires some pastoral work with those refused. I know one church which limits the equipping seminar to

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only those whom the elders give prior approval to be Lay Pastors, Qualifications are essential and have Biblical precedence. It is very important that a Lay Pastor's the church leadership. It is good to hear, "We, too, believe you are called by God to be a Lay Pastor." That affirmation, given privately and publicly will help one persevere when the going gets tough.

PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC RECOGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE We call this "Commissioning." John Wesley's formula for Lay Preachers fits Lay Pastors as well: (1) The gift; (2) The call; (3) The training; and (4) The sending. The "sending" was to correspond in some way with the ordination of vocational ministers. At a Sunday morning worhipt service we have a special time for the laying on of hands by the elders during a time of prayer, setting them aside for this ministry.

E Q U I P P I N G FOUNDATION BLOCK #5

"Equip the saints for the work of the ministry." (Ephesians 4:12) The New International Version says it another way, "Prepare God's people for works of service."

ADOPT THE BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EQUIPPING The call to equip the people who are going to be ministers is given in the passage above. Equipping enables one to minister with confidence and competence. God must know our need for being equipped for he has given us three equippers: (1) people-Ephesians 4:11 & 12; (2) Holy Spirit-Acts 1:8; and (3) Scriptures - II Timothy 3:16 & 17. Some churches have tried to establish this ministry without this foundation block because of a false belief that their people either did not need it or that they would not take it. Those who sense the call of God want to be equipped so as to do the best job possible for their Lord.

DESIGN A COURSE You will need to determine in what

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subjects you want your lay pastoral caregivers to be equipped. What will they need to do the ministry you have in mind? There are two areas to lead them through: (1) Equipping them to be; and (2) Equipping them to do. Since what they are is more important than what they do, a fair amount of time needs to be given to growing as a person of faith, a servant of Jesus Christ. They need to know the place of prayer and the power of the, Holy Spirit in their personal lives. Their personal relationship with Jesus Christ cannot be taken for granted. It is imperative that they understand the principle of "Being with the Lord before doing for the Lord." Isaiah Muita, an African Christian leader says, "We cannot reach out to people unless we reach up to God." Another leader wrote, "God is more concerned about your relationship with him than your ministry for him."

Pastoral principles and skills are not unimportant just because they are second in priority. Because what we are is more important than what we do does not mean we can slight the practical hands-on skills. The fact is that if one truly loves the Lord he or she will do all that can be done to excel in the skills. In addition to pastoral skills they will need to know the organizational structure, rationale for reporting, the reasons for coming together frequently to share their experiences, plans for further equipping and what to do when they get in over their heads with people's problems. *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* was written to be a text for equipping people to give pastoral care. I still use the 12 units of equipping in the book for equipping our people at Hope Church and in seminars I conduct around the country.

One important equipping principle is stated by John Ed Mathison, senior pastor of the rapidly growing Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, in his little book, *Every Member In Ministry*; "The training gives people direction, but allows them to make their own decisions about the best way to outstanding lay pastoral care ministries in North America.

IDENTIFY THE EQUIPPERS According to Ephesians, pastors

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and teachers are to equip God's people for ministry. In II Timothy 2:2 we encounter another practice: pastors equipping other people to be equippers, "And the things you have heard me say . . . entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." There are not only people in our churches gifted with pastoral gifts, there are people gifted by the Spirit of God with equipping (teaching) gifts. We have at least two people who do not feel called to pastor but who feel called to equip those who are called professionals to give units on listening, pastoring the sick, confidentiality, family life, problem ownership, etc. One final thought on equippers, we found it extremely helpful to our trainees to invite seasoned lay pastors to share their experiences and to field questions.

PROVIDE ONGOING EQUIPPING This can be formal or informal.

It can be done in hour-long, half-day, whole-day workshops or week-end retreats. The forms can range from special classes to providing resources such as books, audio and video tapes, magazine articles and such for individual use in their homes. They can be given information on community opportunities for classes, workshops, seminars or meetings on subjects which will enrich their pastoral skills or spirit. You can instill an awareness that worship services, organized Bible studies, preaching missions and other special events in your church, though not designed as equipping events, will enrich their pastoring heart.

A C C O U N T A B I L I T Y FOUNDATION BLOCK #6

"It's not what is expected that gets done, it is what is inspected." Dr. Gary Sweeten, Founder and Director of Equipping Ministries International. Ronald H. Sunderland, creator of ELM(Equipping Laypeople for Ministry), writes, "Oversight or supervision is essential to the health of any lay ministry. Experience has shown conclusively that when oversight lapses, the active commitment of lay people to their ministry fades." Accountability has to be built into the ministry. We do this in three major ways: monthly reports, "pastoral supervision" and ministry-sharing times.

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PROVIDE REPORTS AND POLICY REGARDING REPORTS The ministry Leadership Group needs to determine what they will do regarding reports, set the policy implement it. Not everybody likes to make out reports. This will always be a sticky, albeit important, part of the ministry. Giving the people the rationale for reports helps them to be faithful in making them. The rationale is admittedly accountability, but it is also to keep those responsible for the ministry in touch with how the ministry is going. It is important to respond to the reports in some fashion. If people turn in reports and never get any feedback, they will never know whether they were received or if anybody reads them. No response results in no reports.

PASTORAL SUPERVISION Each lay pastor has a lay pastor, The first responsibility of this person is to pastor the lay pastor. The first interest is in him or her as a person. The second interest is supervision. The tern, "pastoral supervision" was coined by Dr. Kenneth Poholy at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. The role is explained on pages 71-78 in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* In its simple form, this person makes an appointment with the lay pastor for the purpose of getting to the question, "Tell me, how is your ministry going?" This is a moment of accountability. But instead of the supervising person having to "supervise", the lay pastors. in telling how their ministry is going, are supervising themselves. They know what they have done or not done. They know how well they have done it. By the time they have finished telling their story they have supervised themselves. This is a comfortable time for both shepherd and lay pastor and will usually end in affirmation and a time for prayer.

A F F I R M A T I O N FOUNDATION BLOCK #7

"Words of encouragement and appreciation with a pat on the back ignite the spirit."

Affirmation, the act of giving credit, praise, honor and recognition to

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another greatly helps establish the worth of. another in his or her mind and, if done publicly, in the minds of others. Affirming a Lay Pastor for excellence is always in order, Affirming one for ministry well done, for a compassionate spirit, for a generous act, for growth in the use of their gifts, for handling a difficult situation with sensitivity and skill is a way of declaring the truth about a brother or sister in Christ. And it can be done in private or in public.

Affirming a person or group is Biblical. Romans 13:7 calls us to "Give everyone what you owe him... if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." The ultimate affirmation will be given by Jesus in that future day, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful ... "(Matt. 25:23). Affirmation can even include a gift if we take I Peter 5:4 literally, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." That is, of course, conditioned on our fulfilling the previous charge in verse two, "Tend the flock of God." We should withhold neither private nor public affirmation but rather try to be creative in affirming people with appropriate words, gifts and acts.

GIVE PUBLIC RECOGNITION This is to be done for both the ministry and the individuals doing the ministry. Some ways it can be done is by articles and pictures in the church paper, by pulpit announcements and by posters. The Ministry Leadership Group can come up with creative ideas to appropriately give honor to whom honor is due.

PLAN AN ANNUAL MINISTRY CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION EVENT A ministry may be on line for years before the leaders realize that they need to do more to celebrate the ministry, before they realize what a celebration of the ministry will do for the morale of their people. At Hope Church we have annually what we call a "Ministry Celebration Dinner." This is without cost to the Lay Pastors and their spouses. It is a gala event with an emcee, music, prizes and testimonials from Lay Pastors and from people receiving pastoral care. It is amazing how affirming it is to a Lay Pastor to be asked to do this. We recognize those who have been pastoring for certain numbers of years and give recognitions for

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other reasons. We conclude with a "Circle of Love", forming a circle around the room, joining hands for singing and prayer.

PASTORAL SUPERVISION The response to the supervisor's question when doing pastoral supervision, "How is your ministry going?" will include some pastoral activities and attitudes for which the lay pastor can be commended. Affirmation is a natural for the supervisor. He or she must not forget it.

ONE-ON-ONE AFFIRMATION Occasional notes, cards or letters to recognize one's faithful ministry is an excellent means of affirmation. A phone call from a ministry leader, pastor or pastoral staff will bring a lot of joy and a warm glow in one's spirit. This takes a very little time, but it is a case of a little being as lot, a little by the one doing it but a lot to the one receiving it.

S U P P O R T FOUNDATION BLOCK #8

"Many persons can do most of what we pastors do ... The task of pastors is to equip these persons for ministry and support them through administration and example." Samuel Southard in *Comprehensive Pastoral Care*.

We vocational pastors are notorious for getting a person to volunteer for a job and then leave them high and dry. They need support and we need to give it. Lay people doing significant ministry need the security of knowing they have those to whom they can turn for help and/or mentoring. The following "bricks" will give some ideas of how we can give the necessary support.

AVAILABILITY OF STAFF AND LEADERSHIP Lay Pastors are participating in the pastoral care of the congregation, not solely responsible for it. They are partners in ministry, unsalaried volunteers

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who share in tending the flock. The pastor, or pastoral staff, needs to understand that since the lay people are participating as partners that they need to commit themselves to being available to deal with problems and answer questions. A research which was conducted among social workers found that they needed support in these three ways: (1) Shared responsibility for cases; (2) support in difficult cases; and (3) Help with problems. What is true for salaried social workers must be as true or more so for unsalaried lay pastors.

PROVIDE FOR CONTINUING EQUIPPING Just knowing that additional equipping opportunities for growing in their ministry are available gives support. They know there is help, that their ministry is taken seriously.

ARRANGE FOR PRAYER PARTNERS The desire and will is there. All that is needed is to provide some plan for them to pray for one another. In my camp directing days I used the "buddy" system for swimming. Every swimmer had a "buddy" who kept track of him or her. The same plan works for prayer support. This makes it possible for them to provide support for one another. I know one church which assigns new prayer partners every two months. This provides new relationships and freshens up the prayer experience.

PASTORAL SUPERVISION We focused on this earlier for other purposes but we can see that, in addition to other uses for pastoral supervision, it gives support to lay pastors. For them to know that they have one who is praying for them, who is interested in them and who will be meeting with them regularly gives strong support. They know they are not alone in bearing the burden of pastoral care. This means that the "supervisors" will need to be committed to their people and faithful in carrying out their commitment.

F E L L O W S H I P FOUNDATION BLOCK #9

"The community which ministry creates must come together for sharing, growth and renewing."

If people who are involved in the same ministry have an opportunity to come together frequently their lives will bond in an amazing way. The bonding will keep them in the ministry and produce faithfulness. In addition to their faith, they have their ministry in common. It is the responsibility of those who lead the ministry to provide for this. All who minister must be able to move from ministry to community, then from community back into ministry. This essential cycle is more clearly seen in this diagram.

Our lay pastors come together for regular meetings quarterly for two hours.

The evening includes five segments: (1) Worship - a brief time of singing and focusing on the Lord with the help of some scripture, (2) Ministry news - and announcements, policy changes, etc.; (3) Equipping - reviewing basic material from the equipping seminar (Note: the basics need to be repeated often!), videos on pastoring skills and principles, teachings by experts in listening and other skills; (4) Sharing - dividing into small groups to share with one another how their ministry is going (the "agonies and the ecstasies"). This has prove to be the most interesting part of the evening for the lay pastors and the most around the room, joining hands to sing and pray.

PLAN SOCIAL EVENTS Creativity is the key here. An annual picnic Christmas party or other excuses to get together help to make the ministry fun and bond their lives in Christ and in ministry. know that one reason people offer themselves for ministry is to be together with others. The you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

C O M M U N I C A T I O N FOUNDATION BLOCK #10

The ministry cannot be strong without frequent verbal and printed contact. Did you ever hear this, "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark; you know what you are doing but nobody else does." The Ministry Leadership Group knows what they are doing but unless the ministry, its purpose, goals, needs and accomplishments are articulated and/or printed the ministry will not flourish.

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER Most lay pastoral care ministries I know of publish a newsletter either occasionally or monthly. We title ours KEEPING P.A.C.E. The purpose of a newsletter is to maintain a meaningful printed contract with all who are involved in the ministry. The content should (1) Encourage, (2) Equip and (3) Inform. Our newsletter is one 8 1/2 x 11 sheet, both sides. Some churches produce longer ones. It does not need to be voluminous. Again, it is a case of a little doing a lot. Many people will read a paper if it is brief but lay it aside to read "later" if it is long. Rather than getting read, it gets to the bottom of the "stack."

CHURCH PAPER ARTICLES Almost every church produces a monthly publication of some kind. Ministry leaders, church staff, lay pastors and others can contribute to a regular section in the paper. It is important to keep the ministry before the congregation for two reasons: (1) You will need to be calling people from the congregation into the ministry; and (2) it will make it easier for the lay pastors to be accepted by the people because they will know about it and think well of it.

SPECIAL MAILINGS Occasionally you may want to accentuate some milestone in the ministry or some special event. A letter to the congregation by the pastor or lay leaders would be an effective instrument for this. A critical need for additional lay pastors may warrant the effort and expense of a letter to either specially selected people or to

the whole body.

PERSONAL WITNESS AT WORSHIP SERVICES If your church has lay people sharing either regularly or occasionally as part of the worship service, you have a ready-made opportunity for the lay pastors to share their experience occasionally. If that is not being done in your church, you could introduce it. A good three-point sharing outline can be: (1) What I am doing; (2) Why I am doing it; and (3) How I feel about it, or what this ministry is doing for me.

BE IN TOUCH WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND THE NETWORK Regular correspondence with other churches which have a lay pastoral care ministry will keep your ministry freshened up and you, in turn, will contribute to their strength. This can be done by exchanging newsletters, speakers, publications, etc. raised up this ministry and we are to get strength from being in touch with one another rather than going it alone.

E V A L U A T I O N FOUNDATION BLOCK #11

"Taking time to see how the ministry is doing will keep it moving ahead."

After the ministry has been on line for a time it is essential to evaluate it so as to see if it is being done the way you planned and it is performing as you expected. Evaluation is monitoring your ministry in the light of your goals for the purpose of making it as effective as it can possibly be. We need to know four things about what we are doing:

1. Are we doing what we set out to do?
2. Are we having the results we projected?
3. Are we using the methods and means we planned to use?
4. Do we need to make some changes? if so, what?

Evaluation, of course, assumes that we have a stated purpose, goals and

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objectives against which we can measure the current state of the ministry. If these have never been clearly written, that would need to be done before you can do an evaluation.

DESIGN INSTRUMENTS FOR EVALUATING THE MINISTRY This may take some special help from someone experienced in this skill. Or it is possible to adapt evaluation forms from organizations or agencies you are acquainted with. Samples of forms we have used are in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* To design your own, determine first what you want to find out and then proceed to the questions which will give you this information. You should do at least one evaluation a year.

UTILIZE THE RESULTS FOR MINISTRY IMPROVEMENT The hard work begins after getting the forms returned. They will need to be interpreted and collated. You will discover where your ministry is strong and where it is weak. Then, formulate plans for making the strong parts of your ministry stronger and the weak parts strong. The first evaluation we ever did indicated that the ministry was about seventy percent effective. The questions revealed that some of the lay pastors were not fulfilling their commitment regularly, too well. To raise this percentage we provided additional equipping opportunities and gave incentives for them to take advantage of them.

M A I N T E N A N C E FOUNDATION BLOCK #12

This is the nuts and bolts of day-to-day office and administration work. When we would come to this topic in our national seminars on the Lay Pastors Ministry, my ministry assistant, who usually taught this unit, would invariably say, "Goodie, I get to talk about the "yucky stuff" There is nothing glamorous about the smoothly. It is something like the difference between selling a new TV set to a customer and repairing it. The sales person has an up-front position. The repair technician is a behind-the-scenes person, doing what needs to be done to make it work right. Unless the maintenance is done the ministry will come apart sooner or later.

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DO ESSENTIAL OFFICE WORK There is essential office work such as keeping records, processing reports, getting out the newsletter, and much more.

REVIEW THE FLOCKS REGULARLY The size of the pastoring groups will diminish because people move away, transfer to other churches or die. Unless the flocks are gone over regularly, the number of people being pastored will decrease. For example, a lay pastor could be down to two households from the original six or eight over a period of time. When one household is gone, another assignment has to be made. Someone has to have this maintenance responsibility.

PROVIDE MATERIALS Another behind-the-scenes task is getting the materials together for a workshop, equipping seminar, fellowship meeting and other events. The supply of report forms, and getting them into the hands of the lay pastors has to be done by someone. There are so many things!

REVIEW AND UPDATE THE STRUCTURE, POLICY AND PARTICIPANTS This is the task of the group which has ownership of the ministry. If the ministry is alive, and it better be, it will be changing. This calls for changing how things are done, updating the policy, revising the mission statement, struggling to find solutions for the problems and counseling with those lay pastors who are discouraged or whose life situation has changed to such an extent that their participation needs to be modified or discontinued.

These twelve foundation blocks were discovered over the years rather than devised at the beginning. We created the Lay Pastors Ministry over an 18-month period, conducted a pilot project for the next six months with five lay pastors to see if it would work and, finding that it did, began to implement and maintain it. In looking back over the years it became very clear that these twelve blocks were there, some of them put

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into place only after irreparable damage had been done. Hopefully, knowing the essential nature of these foundation blocks will help others make their ministry strong fight at the beginning, that it will save many from the waste of the "trial and error" process.

Notes:

1. The complete copy of *The Twelve Foundation Blocks*, a 14-page *Monography by Mel*, is available from Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc., 7132 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55423.
2. Quoted from a review of the book, *Fit Over Forty*, by Dr. James Rippe in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, (May 30, 1996): p. 2-B.
3. Avery Dulles *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 66.
4. Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books 1987), pp. 93-124. These 12 units are also on videocassettes, *A Complete Lay Pastors Equipping Seminar*. When used with the accompanying guide, it makes an 8-to 12-hour equipping seminar. The book and videotapes are available from Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc.
5. A more complete explanation of Pastoral Supervision can be found in *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* (Ventura, Cali.: Regal Books, 1987), pp. 71-78.
6. Samuel Southard, *Comprehensive Pastoral Care* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1975), p.7.
7. A sample of Hope Church's monthly newsletter, *Keeping PACE*, is available from Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc.
8. There is network of churches in the United States, Canada and Australia. They publish a quarterly newsletter, sponsor an annual conference on lay pastoral care and distribute resources. Contact them through Lay Pastor Ministry, Inc.

PART II:
What Kind of People
Does It Take?

Chapter 8

Conclusion: The kind of Church It Takes

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

As I began to write the conclusions about the kind of church it takes, I was interrupted by a phone call from a church that had previously contacted about starting the Lay Pastors Ministry. They had decided to delay the ministry until the congregation had completed a gift and ministry-discovery adventure. "People who are to do pastoral care need to get some idea about their gifts and have sense of call," the person explained. They were absolutely right!

These church leaders, having identified pastoral care as their priority need, plan to lay the foundation for an effective and lasting ministry rather than rush to the front with a hastily-put-together Band-Aid program. Their plan allows time to incorporate all seven of the qualities delineated in the preceding chapters. These qualities are hallmarks, not only of lay pastoral care, but also of every form of effective and lasting lay ministry.

The following is a brief review of the seven qualities:

Needs-Conscious: Awareness of the need for pastoral care.

Gift-Oriented: Focusing on spiritual gifts by preaching, studying and using gift-assessment helps.

Mobilized: Creating a "ministry-friendly" environment for volunteer ministers by concentrating on laypeople doing ministry.

Ministry-Balanced: Committing to *the Great Charter* as well as *the Great Commission*.

Egalitarian: Entrusting the grass-roots ministry of pastoral care to laypeople will transform the spirit-level church into a one-level body of believers. The title "Minister" will now be related to gifts and call rather than office.

Biblical: Accepting 1 Peter 5:2, RSV ("Tend the flock"), Ephesians 4:11, 12 ("[Equip] the saints for the work of ministry," *NKJV*) and other Scriptures as words from God.

Failure-Resistant: Taking time to do things right to increase the probability of success.

DEVELOPING THE SEVEN QUALITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LAY MINISTRY

How do you go about developing those qualities? The question really is How do you change a church? We get some helpful insights from management consultant Ken Blanchard, who has been a consultant and trainer for Chevron, Lockheed, AT&T and other major corporations. Leadership Journal met with him in his offices in Escondido, California, to find out how church leaders can create lasting, effective change:

1. *Change is difficult.* "It's tough enough to start a church, but it's murder to turn one around. Do you know how long it will take to make a major change in the way your church operates? Anywhere from two to five years of concentrated effort, depending on the size and complexity of the organizations."
2. *The person at the top has to have a clear vision.* "Moses didn't go up the hill with a committee; if he had, he would never have come down. My advice to ministers: be clear about the vision."

It is important to find out what the congregation wants. "But notice," Blanchard said, "this is second." The congregation usually does not have the large picture. the goal is to get vision of the congregation and the vision of the pastor to

conclusions: the kind of church it takes

match.

3. *Be willing to work.* Blanchard quotes famed football coach, Don Shula: "I've won more games because I'm willing to roll up my sleeves and do whatever it takes to make it happen."

Blanchard continues, "Sure, it's coming up with the vision and the direction, but then the vision must be implemented: coaching, supporting, giving direction, praising, progress and redirecting."

He expands the willingness to work principle: "But vision

**"Leadership is more of a
partnership; unless the follower is
willing to follow, you don't have
much leadership."
—Ken Blanchard**

alone can't it done. Too often we spend all our time on vision and none on implementation. At some point, you've got to move."

He points to Jesus as the model for this active involvement. In fact, he told Peters and Waterman, who wrote *In Search of Excellence*, "You didn't invent management by wandering around. Jesus did."

He obviously sees in clergy and other leaders a relationship between willingness to work and ego: "Managing the journey of change is servant leadership. We must get our egos out of the way and praise, redirect, reprimand—anything it takes to help people win." (Someone defined ego by using the letters to make an acronym: Edging God Out)

4. *Know where the people are.* Leaders (vocational and volunteer) cannot just announce a change and expect people to support it. Until people have their first-layer concerns answered (What is this and why? Where am I going to fit? How will it be done? What is the impact?) they are not likely to be open to the change.¹

Wise leaders are beginning to believe that leadership is not something you do to people, it's something you do *with* them. Blanchard reports: "Leadership is more of a partnership; unless the followers is willing to follow, you don't have much leadership."

To affect an individual's *will*, you must know where the person is and journey with him or her from that point.

The old rhyme applies: "A person convinced against his will remains unconvinced still." To affect an individual's *will*, you must know where the person is and journey with him or her from that point.

If change is to take place, a systemic view of the church is essential, i.e., seeing the church as a system. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins make this clear in their book, *The Equipping Pastor*: "Change takes place when it is not merely programmatic but *on the level of the church's systemic life and through a process consistent with its systemic life*" (italics theirs). They give their reason for this conviction: "Every church has a corporate 'feeling' that communicates to new and old members what is important and what is permitted." By corporate feeling Stevens and Collins mean culture.

To grasp Steven's and Collins's idea, we need some common understanding of the two words, *systemic* and *culture*. *Systemic* mans the inner-relatedness of every part of the church, so much so that when one part changes, all other parts change. Visualizing the church as a mobile helps understand the church as a system.

Culture can be conceptualized as the 'genetic code" of the church determining what new members are successive generations consider valuable, right and proper. In most churches, culture is the unresearched and unrecognized dynamic that drives the church. A former colleague of mine in Cincinnati, Dr. Gary Sweeten, maintained that you if you want to find out how something in the church works, try to change it. The hue and cry will tell you.

conclusions: the kind of church it takes

Every church is system and has a culture. To know all you can about both informs you where you have to start in making changes. For example: If the members believe that the ordained clergy person is the only person qualified to do pastoral care, the "Moses" will need to connect with the members where they are if he or she expects to turn pastoral care ministry over to the people. The members will need to journey from where they are to the biblical truth that they, too, are be a long and difficult journey, but it is th way to let laypeople do it. To make this journey together is to help people hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

In the next chapters we will focus on the person Ken Blanchard calls "the person at the top," the vocational minister. We'll consider what kind of pastor it takes for lay ministry to happen in a church.

Note: The Lab for these eight chapters can be found in appendix B.

Notes:

1. Ken Blanchard, *Leadership Journal* (Spring 1996), 114-118, adapted.
2. R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor* (Washington, D.C. The Alban Institute, 1993), p. 45. If you desire an in-depth treatment of system and culture, I recommend this book.

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Moses: OUR PROTOTYPE FOR LETTING LAYPEOPLE DO IT

Writing this chapter has caused me to feel like Moses at the burning bush (see Exodus 3—4):

"Who am I that I should do this?"

"What if they do not believe me or listen to me?"

"I am slow of speech and tongue."

"O Lord, please get someone else to do it."

God gave Moses to Israel. In spite of his inadequacy and resistance, God protected his life at birth, rescued him from the Nile, attracted him to the burning bush and called him to lead His people.

God provides every congregation with a "Moses" to whom He gives the same call He gave to Moses:

1. Journey with My people. Bring them from where they are to where I want them;
2. Teach them My decrees and laws and the duties they are to perform;
3. Select, appoint and train capable people who fear God;

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4. Have them bring the difficult cases to you;
5. They will share the ministry with you;
6. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests.¹

Moses made the one great mistake clergy have been making throughout the years: he tried to keep the ministry to himself. I say, "tried." Actually, he did keep the ministry to himself, but it didn't work because of the nature of ministry—ministry is to be shared. Jethro's counsel (read Exod. 18:17ff) to Moses is well suited for leaders today:

What you are doing is not good! It is too much for you and you are depriving the people of their ministries. Listen to me and may God be with you—decentralize!

Clergy, we have our ministry; laypeople have theirs. Let them do it. Jethro's counsel amplifies the message of this book, *let people do it!* In his book *The Disciple-Making Pastor*, Bill Hull gives "Let people do it" as one of the six steps expressing Jesus' teaching method.² Jesus came to the time in training His disciples when He sent the Twelve out on their first mission without Him. They were on their own. He is our model for letting laypeople do it.

LEADERS SPEAK OUT

I have been heard there is safety in numbers; therefore, I invite you to listen with me to what some of the finest leaders in the field of pastoring and pastoral care are saying:

JOHN PATTON, professor of Pastoral Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia and adjunct professor of Pastoral Care, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta: "[I view] clergy as 'generalist' in ministry, representatives of the 'whole' ministry of the community of faith, whereas the laity are more often than not 'specialists' in a particular type of ministry, such as...the ministry of pastoral care."³

PAUL STEVENS, academic dean of Regent College, Vancouver,

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British Columbia, and associate professor of Lay Theology and Empowerment: "It is helpful to think of pastor and laity as co-pastors of a church and co-equippers...Equipping the laity is not mobilizing the laity to help the pastor but helping people discover and develop their own ministries."⁴

WILLIAM EASUM, director of 21st Century Strategies, Inc., who formerly led Colonial Hills United Methodist Church of San Antonio, Texas, in unprecedented growth: "Pastors that have a need to be needed in order to find validation for their ministries will have a hard time giving up control of the actual ministry to the congregation. Pastors who need to keep laity dependent on them will avoid these forms of ministry...Pastors who are interested only in maintaining the status quo will not do well with [lay pastoral care] ministry."⁵

JOHN ED MATHISON, senior pastor of the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, one of the fastest growing United Methodist Churches in America (83 percent of the resident members are involved in a specific area of ministry): Part of our problem is stagnant churches today is that many people have a mind-set that ministry is to be done by the clergy and professional staff...The implication is that professional people are hired to do ministry and laypersons within the church are the recipients of that ministry...The misconception must be corrected! The biblical message is that every member of the church should be involved in ministry."⁶

PETER WAGNER, professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Missions, an authority in the field of church growth: "If clergy can believe that their primary role is that of equipper and if the laypeople will give their consent and open the way for their pastor to be such a person, churches can grow both in quantity and quality."⁷

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LOREN MEAD, former of the Alban Institute, an Episcopal priest with many years in parish ministry: "The church of the future must break the power of clericalism (the church's power system)...Clergy by themselves cannot and will not relinquish their power. There will be no change until the laity takes the lead. The church is too important to be left in the hands of the clergy."⁸

OSCAR E. FEUCHT, a Lutheran (Missouri Synod) pastor, churchman and theologian whose writing reached me at a formative time in my ministry and impacted me more in the areas of lay ministry than any other at the that time: "Consider the changes necessary if the church is to become what God intended it to be: A ministerium of all who have Christ in their hearts...Whoever has the gospel has also a ministry."⁹

Spencer Christian, the "Good Morning America" meteorologist, concludes the national weather, "That's what's happening on the national scene; here's what's happening where you are."

Let's paraphrase Spencer's transitional statement, "We've just read what leaders across the nation are doing and saying; now let's see what's happening where you are." Regardless of the good "weather" at Colonial Hills UMC in San Antonio, Texas, and Frazer Memorial UMC in Montgomery, Alabama, you are responsible as the "Moses" of your congregation for what is happening where you are.

All the meteorologist at the local station can do is report; he or she can't do a thing about the weather. But we can do more than report what's happening in our churches; we can do something about it. We can move the seven qualities in Part I from print to practice. In fact, God holds us accountable to do it.

THREE ESSENTIALS FOR PASTORS: VISION, ACTION AND SUPPORT

The kind of pastors it takes will have the *vision*, take the *action* and give the *support* required for authentic and effective lay ministry to happen.

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Having said this, I could close the chapter, but we need to spend some time with each of these three essentials.

VISION

"Church leadership must provide vision, and while recognizing the inevitable tension between vision and reality, never allow the vision to shrink down to the level of reality." This philosophy guides Kirbyjon Caldwell, the senior pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas. We should all be immersed in this kind of respect for vision.

My experience of being temporarily lost provides a good illustration of vision. While taking a walk in Northern Minnesota, I took what I thought would be a shorter route through the woods back to the resort where I was staying. I had walked beyond sight of the road and other familiar markers, and there was no path to follow. I became disoriented. The sun which could have given me direction was eclipsed by clouds. Turning to the right and then to the left to avoid troublesome undergrowth only took me farther off course. I had no idea where I was or in what direction I was going. Fear belted me. I shouted, "I think I'm lost!"

Even though I could not see where I was, a helicopter flying overhead could have easily seen *who I was*—a resident at the resort; *where I was*—about 800 feet into the woods; and *where I should be going*—by turning right and continuing north I could have walked out of the woods. The pilot would have had *vision*, the ability to see (1) who I am; (2) where I am; and (3) where I am going.

Nehemiah is an example of one who had vision:

- *He knew who he was*—a man upon whom God had placed His hand and in whose heart God had put what he was to do for Jerusalem.
- He knew where he was—in Babylon, far from where he needed to be.
- He knew where he was going—to Jerusalem to survey the ruins and mobilize the Jews to rebuild the city.

For one whom God has called to be the pastor of a church, vision is to ministry what life is to the body. A church in Sussex, England inscribed

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on its wall: "A vision without a task is but a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision and a task is the hope of the world."

So just what is meant by *vision*? Vision is the ability to imagine and prepare for the future. It is the power (or act) of perceiving abstract or inevitable subjects as clergy as if they were visible objects. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it as imaginative insight, statesmanlike foresight, sagacity in planning.

But vision is more than that. It seems to have a life of its own. Vision is that persuasive revelatory assignment from God, to which we give our lives and for which we work with all our hearts.

I heard David Yonggi Cho from Seoul, Korea, the pastor of the largest church in the world, say, "You will not make the vision., the vision will make you." He assumes that God gives the vision. He started with only five people to preach to, but when he closed his eyes he could see 3,000. His congregation now numbers more than 500,000. such is the power of vision.

Possessing a vision (or perhaps I should say *being possessed by a vision*) assumes a personal relationship with God, a continuing conversation with God, obedience to the Scriptures and a strong desire to fulfill a call from God in God's way.

Vision keeps us staying the course when the going is difficult. Samuel Zwemer paints a graphic picture of this Call to Prayer:

Th Alpine climber who is trying to reach the summit can, on the upward path, scarcely see his goal except at certain fortunate moments. What he *does* see is the strong path that must be trodden, the rocks and precipices to be avoided, the unbending slopes that become even steeper. He feels the growing weakness, the solitude and the burden. And yet, the inspiration of the climber is the sight of the goal. Because of it, all the hardships of the journey count for naught.¹¹

The supreme importance of vision for ministry is underscored by hearing about the importance of vision for corporate life. John Naisbit wrote in *Re-inventing the Corporation*, "The company's vision becomes a

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catalytic force, an organizational principle for everything that the people in the corporation do."¹²

Vision channels energies by enabling everyone to point the same direction.

I have taped these words on the panel of my word processor so I see them every time I write. I want them etched deeply in my being. Vision is power...power to do God's work! And the parr of God's work we are facing on in this book is the pastoral care of God's people" "Tend the flock of God."

Vision enables the "Moses" of a congregation to persevere with God's call to his people. If Moses had listened to his congregation and appeased them, they would have returned to Egypt and bondage. Never would they have arrived in the Promised Land! Pastors who give their

**Vision should unite,
not divide the church.**

congregation only what they want are seldom able to lead their people to new heights, We must go to the mountain often to refresh the vision, renew the energy and stay on course.

What if the manager of the Minnesota Twins baseball team did what the people want? for example, they want him to yank the pitcher because the Seattle Mariners have batted around and there is still only one out. The fans have vision, but it's *short-term* vision. They want to shut off the runs. The manager also vision, but his is a *long-term* vision. He sees that letting the pitcher get out of this jam will develop him into a good pitcher for next season. The manager sees the larger picture.

These two kinds of vision clash. Mutual love and respect between laity and clergy, long-range strategic plans, conflict-management skills and lots of prayer will be necessary to "keep the unity of the Spirit through

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the bond of "peace" (Eph.4:3). Vision should unite, not divide the church.

Most people do not see the large picture because it is usually not a part of their calls. But the pastor must. He or she needs to see both the smaller and larger picture, with the smaller giving way to the larger when necessary. A conference ad read: "The senior pastor is the one who is responsible to secure a vision from God that is so overwhelming that he knows it could not have come from his own mind."

This does not mean that the pastor is the only one with vision. When the vision originates with another, if the pastor believes it is from God, he or she has to "buy into" it, because it is the pastor who will lead the congregation in its acceptance and implementation. Such is the nature of pastoral authority and leadership.

The following six steps may help pastors to assess the vision and move it into action:

1. In an unhurried and prayerful moment, close your eyes for a time of silence.
2. Meditate upon these questions, remembering that the focus may become clear only after repeated times of silence throughout several days or weeks:
 - * *What is God calling my church to be?*
 - * *What is my part in making this happen?*
 - * *What are my people to be and do?*
3. This is your vision, your "imaginative insight." Seal it in your spirit with prayer. Write it down.
4. As soon as it's appropriate, share it with other leaders and/or friends.
5. If they confirm it, proceed to "cast the vision," as it is called. Formally present it to the official board for processing and by teaching and preaching it to the congregation. Remember: "Vision channels energies by enabling everyone to point in the same direction."
6. Give leadership to programming it and to mobilizing the people.

These six steps have already carried us into the second essential, *action*.

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Action

When I was young in the ministry, still "wet behind the ears," reading about translating vision into reality usually generated a queasy feeling. Not because I didn't believe in it, but because I *did* believe in it and therefore would have to do it. The "dis-ease" was caused by anxiety and fear. Fear because I had no in how to do it; anxiety because I would have to change my whole ministry orientation from clergy-centered to lay centered. I was trained in the clergy-centered model to preach the Word and to do ministry. That was it. And, sad to say, according to studies that have been made, that continues to be *it* for clergy being trained today.¹³

It was easier to be traditional, to stick with preaching the Word and doing the ministry. Occasional pricks of conscience, followed by surges of frustration, rattled my cage from time to time; but mostly I was comfortable in the traditional seminary-cast model. My people were not asking for more; they also were very comfortable in their tradition-cast model. They hired me to do the ministry and I was earning my salary.

I didn't know until years later what I had been missing by failing to translate my preaching about lay ministry into action. Worse than that, I didn't know I was cheating my people by not giving the ministry to them. And, even far worse, I was delinquent in my divine call.

"Just do it!" How many times you have heard and seen this Nike ad? God is saying the same. I, for one, need to hear it regularly because one of my negative habits is procrastination—putting things off to a more convenient time. The Spirit of God must have targeted me as a likely subject in whom He would build *action now*, because throughout a long period of time I had a steady diet of do in my morning times with God. The message seemed to cascade from every Scripture I read. See what a few of them do for you:

Whatever he *does* prospers (Ps. 1:3, italics mine). If you have ever received a letter from me, the last line reads, "May God prosper all you do." Such is the impact these four words have made on my life.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do* what it says (Jas. italic mine)

You see that his [Abraham's] faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he *did* (2:22, italics mine).

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Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:17, italics mine).

But as for you [Mel] (I wrote my name in my Bible before the comma), be strong and do not give up, for *your work* will be rewarded" (2 Chron. 15:7, italics mine).

The message from the Bible is simple, clear and powerful: God will prosper what we do, not what we don't do. The specific doing we are talking about on these pages is giving the grassroots, one-on-one pastoral care ministry to the people. Let laypeople do it! We have the vision. If we will act, the vision of laypeople pastorally caring for the members of the church will become reality.

We learn great things about carrying vision forward to visible form via action by reading the first chapters of Nehemiah. Nehemiah's invisible concern moves through action to newly-built visible walls. The year is 445 B.C. Nehemiah is in Susa, the capital of Babylon, held captive with hundreds of other Jews, Jerusalem, 750 miles away, lies in ruins.

Upon hearing a report of the city's desolation, Nehemiah at down, wept, fasted and prayed. In this time of deep anguish, God gave him the vision to rebuild the city. He was consumed with a passion to change a discouraging scene into a beautiful, secure and thriving city.

He moved the vision ahead by asking Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, for permission to go to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem. Upon his arrival, he surveyed the city, confirming that it was indeed in ruins. Then he shared his vision with the priests, the officials and "the rest of the people [who were to do the work]" (Neh. 4:19).

His next act was to mobilize the people by issuing a call: "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disagree" (2:17).

Can you visualize an informed and concerned pastor consumed with passion for changing a discouraging pastoral scene into a beautiful well-cared-for congregation? His vision has been proceed through the necessary channels and the people are being mobilized: "You see the trouble we are in; many of our members struggle alone with their

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problems because there is no one to care for them. Come, be equipped as lay pastors and help fulfill God's call to 'tend the flock.'"

Through his action, Nehemiah's vision—"the abstract, invisible subject"—was taking visible form. The people said, "Let us start rebuilding" (v.18). They came together; the walls went up. Nehemiah had promised, "The God of heaven will give us success" (v.20) and He did!

Have you been doing what I did as I reread this exciting adventure? Did you compare Nehemiah's journey from vision to reality with your own? Your passion for a lay pastors ministry may still be in the vision phase, or even in the pre-vision phase of awareness for the need of your people for pastoral care. You have become troubled by the condition and are praying about it. God is giving you the vision. Or, already having the vision (or the vision having you), you may be formulating plans in your spirit, bringing others into your confidence, getting formal approval (just as Nehemiah did, first from the king and then from the Jews), issuing the call and starting the ministry.

It may be helpful to retrace Nehemiah's steps so each one of us can see where we are on the continuum from vision to reality:

1. Awareness of the need (1:3).
2. Troubled by the condition (1:4).
3. Fasting and talking with God about it (1:4,5).
4. First action step: articulating the vision to another (2:5).
5. Second action step: doing the necessary things to get started (2:11-18).
6. Third action step: casting the vision (2:17,18).
7. Fourth action step: getting the people's response (2:18)
8. Fifth action step: beginning the project (2:18). Note that Nehemiah did not try to do it alone.
9. Reassurance that the vision was from God. "The gracious hand of my God was upon me" (2:8,18). "God had put [it] in my heart" (2:12). "The God of heaven will give us success" (2:20).

Now that you have pegged where you are on the continuum, hear Jesus: "Now that you know these things, blessed are you if you *do* them." And in a broader sense, hear again the refrain from Revelation:

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"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." If the Spirit leads, take time now to:

- See who you are;
- See where you are; and
- See where you are going.

Some basic elements to action need to be considered. One is *entrust*. Just as both God and Paul entrusted the pastoral ministry to Timothy ("Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care," 1 Tim.6:20), pastors must trust laypeople with ministry. The following story shows how one pastor entrusted ministry to a layperson:

For eight years, Bob Radatz and I frequently breakfasted together to talk about Hope Church's deacon ministry. It's important to get the whole picture: Bob is a layman, making his living refinishing furniture and painting. I am a member of the pastoral staff with special responsibility for the deacons.

One morning I said, "Bob, I have a word from the Lord for you." He grinned. I handed him scrap of paper on which I had paraphrased the words of Paul to timothy, "Bob, guard what has been entrusted to your care."

Throughout the years it became progressively clearer that Bob was to be entrusted with the deacons ministry. He had gradually moved into doing what I as a staff member was doing—one which I recommend to all clergy. As he moved step by step into more ownership, I moved step by step out of active participation.¹⁴ Under Bob's leadership, the deacons have increased their ministries to 12, with a ministry leader for each. Entrusting this important ministry to Bob made it "his ministry," releasing his creativity and energy to lead the deacons far beyond where I could have led them.

Entrusting, of course, assumes giftedness, call and equipping. It also assumes *support*, the third essential we will be discussing.

Now, however, let's move on to the basic part of actin, legitimize. The pastor is a "legitimator" (I think I've just coned a word!). The members of the congregation often project their feelings about God onto the clergy. A member of the church can encourage another, but in most

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cases only the pastor can give meaningful permission. Remember: the pastor is the "Moses" of the congregation. In words familiar to all of us, "If the top person is not behind it, it's not going anywhere."

Another basic part of action is *relinquishing*. If the pastor does not relinquish ministry when it becomes apparent that laypeople are ready to accept it, the vision for giving the ministry to the people will never become reality. I know of a committed and competent layman who wanted to keep his pastor from "working himself into the grave." He

**Relinquishing frees;
delegation freezes.**

offered to visit the people in nursing homes weekly. The pastor accepted his offer (without relinquishing it). After several months of faithful ministry, the man discovered that he was not reducing the pastor's crushing load because the pastor continued his same visiting schedule. You guessed it—the man quit.

What I did Bob Radatz is called *relinquishing ministry*. I must confess that the process was more intuitional than intentional. Only as I look back over the years and I able to see what I was doing. Now, knowing what was happening, I am in a position to do it intentionally with others.

Three cautions: first, don't pass off abdication of responsibility for relinquishment. Giving ministry to people too soon will frustrate them and result in failure. We clergy walk a narrow line between illegitimately skipping out of a ministry, leaving laypeople "high and dry," and timely relinquishment.

Second, don't confuse delegation with relinquishment. When you delegate, you retain ownership, expecting the person to do the work "as it ought to be done."

Howard Bell, president of Churches Alive!¹⁵, tells of correcting a man who bore a major responsibility under his overall direction. He felt the

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man was not following the preached way of doing things. "Howard," the man said, "you better make up your mind whether or not you have confidence in me. If you do, then get out of the way and let me show you how I can get the right things accomplished in the way I operate best." Relinquishing frees; delegation freezes.

Third, some laypeople misunderstand relinquishing ministry (or giving the ministry to the people) as laziness, shrinking your job, gold-bricking or "nothing more than getting someone else to do what you don't want to do." Pastors, we have to be prepared for this criticism because their charge reveals what relinquishing ministry looks like to those not biblically oriented. And, unfortunately, that is what it *is* for some few clergy.

The following story demonstrates how one pastor, Vic Winqvist, publicly relinquished the grassroots pastoral care of his congregation to the 38 people being equipped to receive it. Vic is the pastor of the Spring Lake Park Baptist Church in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota (a suburb of Minneapolis), where I had privilege of giving the equipping seminar. As I frequently do, I asked the pastor to spend 10 to 15 minutes explaining to the new lay pastors what this ministry would mean to him and to his congregation.

He told them about his daughter who refused to allow anyone to take care of her new born daughter. One evening, however, she and her husband needed to attend an event to which they could not take the infant. Reluctantly, this new mother phoned the grandmother, Vic's wife, to ask if she would care for her baby. That evening Vic's daughter brought the precious bundle to their home, carefully placed it into the grandmother's arms and slow retreated out the door.

In solemn tones and with moist eyes Vic told the people, "For the years I have been here, pastoral care has been my baby. Today I am handing this baby over to you." Before he sat down, he added, "One more thing, I expect one of you to be my lay pastor."

This took place four years ago and, at the time of this writing, their Lay Pastors Ministry continues to provide basic pastoral care for every household of the congregation.

Now that we've moved from *vision* to *action*, let's turn to what it takes to sustain the action. First it takes *authority*.

A pastor has authority, but it is a derived authority. All authority

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comes from God and we are accountable to Him for its use, disuse and misuse. Part of the nature of authority is that we have to reach out and claim it. It does not automatically come with the pastoral role.

Authority also comes from the people who recognize pastors as spiritual leaders and look to them for guidance. If the people do not give pastoral authority, pastors do not have it. One indication of people withholding authority is refusing to take the pastor seriously, not believing in him.

As with all the spiritual gifts, God gives authority to be used. Hebrews 13:17 is awesome: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men [and women] who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

As we've already seen, part of the nature of authority is that you have to reach out and claim it. In the United Methodist ordination service, the bishop says to each person ordained, "Take thou authority." The bishop doesn't bestow authority, but offer it to be claimed. If any pastor fails to claim it, he won't have it—not by design, but by default. You have it; use it!

Authority is sometimes erroneously thought of as power. Power relies on credentials, integrity, respect and the worthiness of the effort to get a job done. We have the same kind of authority Jesus had, the kind that inspires people to take us seriously because of our love, servant spirits, selflessness, integrity and truth. The scribes had power, but when people heard Jesus, they "were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matt. 7:28, 29).

Occasionally, a pastor will abuse his or her authority. The consequences are serious. Some abuses are:

1. Making decisions without consulting the people who are affected by them.
2. Introducing changes or new policies without the group or person who is responsible for its implementation being in on the formulation.
3. Failing to acknowledge good work done; carelessly failing to affirm people.

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4. Not being available to support people when they are in trouble or struggling with their ministries.
5. Wanting to maintain a hold on everything, or at least keep a finger in the pie.
6. Taking the credit for what others have done.

Laypeople also have authority, but they will claim it only when the pastor relinquishes it. Just as pastors have authority over their Moseslike ministry, laypeople are to have authority over their ministries. Until laypeople cease projecting authority for their ministries onto the pastor, they will not be able to function on their own. The pastor must come to the place where he or she refuses to be the authority for people doing their ministries.

Action is also sustained by *courage*. It takes courage to begin moving from vision to reality, and it takes a steady flow of courage to continue. Courage is required to break with tradition. Courage is necessary to call people, not only to commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but also to call them to commitment to ministry. Preaching about it is not enough.

It takes courage to call your people to accountability, to rebuke, correct, discipline or deny when necessary, and to do it in love. Because you have a Moseslike ministry, you will often feel a Moseslike loneliness. The reason is that many times you are alone.

It also takes *patience*. Just as a rose will be destroyed by permanently opening the pearls, so too, lay ministry requires right timing. A pastor, lout of enthusiasm for starting the Lay Pastors Ministry in his church, scheduled me for an equipping seminar. He had to cancel because people did not register. He was discouraged. But my counsel to him was to consider starting at square lone with his people, preaching and teaching about spiritual gifts and God's call to every Christian.

Perseverance is also crucial to sustaining action: keeping at keeping at it. The Scriptures prod us: "You need to *persevere* so that when you have done the will of god, you will receive what he has promised" (Heb. 10:36, italics mine); and "Let us run with *perseverance* the race marked out for us" (12:1, italics mine).

The bottom line to sustaining action is *hard work*. Taking authority and using it is hard work. Courage is hard work. Patience is exhausting.

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Perseverance will wear you out. Some covet a leadership role but are not ready for the "blood, sweat and tears."

The year I participated in Robert Schuller's annual Institute for Successful Church Leadership (I gave Lay Pastors ministry workshops), Dr. Schuller gave six autobiographical statements about success in leadership:

1. I don't know how to succeed in a hurry.
2. I don't know how to succeed alone.
3. I don't know how to succeed painlessly.
4. I don't know how to succeed aimlessly.
5. I don't know how to succeed permanently.
6. I don't know how to succeed without sensitivity to human need.

Each one separately spells **HARD WORK**

Together they spell **CONTINUOUS HARD WORK.**

Sometimes I feel like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*: "God, if we are your chosen people, would you mind choosing somebody else for a while?"

My pathetic cry is a paraphrase, "God, if you have called me to do this ministry, would you mind calling somebody else for a while?" It's hard work! But God provides adequate strength to go distance.

Success is ministry and Jesus's words, "Well done, good and fruitful servant!" (Matt. 25:21) are adequate compensation.

Support

A third essential for the kind of pastor it takes to have a Lay Pastors Ministry is *support*. Volunteer ministries are not like the battery-operated rabbit we seen in the TV ad that "just keeps going and going and going." They need the support of their spiritual leader, the vocational minister. They need him or her to encourage them and to help them out of trouble when they get in over their heads—to have a watchful interest and concern without trying to control. Briefly stated, one of the main tasks of the vocational minister is to help laypeople succeed in their ministries.

Included in *support* are: affirmation, nurture, assistance and advocacy.

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A relationship of love and trust will enable the pastor to fulfill this part of the shepherding role without paternalistic overtones. A few simple but powerful ways of giving support and building that relationship are (1) on-the-job visits, (2) well-timed phone calls and (3) written notes and/or faxes.

In this chapter we have looked at the three essentials for the kind of pastor it takes to have a lay pastoral care ministry in his or her church: vision, action and support. Before we move on, I feel I should sound a warning: Watch out for *inertia* and *homeostasis*.

Inertia is the tendency of a person at rest to remain in a state of rest. Most people have difficulty getting going. This is especially true when vision is still only a vision, and action has not yet been taken. It's too easy to remain inert. scriptures exhorts, "Discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Homeostasis is the springlike action that return an object to its former state. In changing the culture of a church orkeeping a ministry going, a person must constantly resist the power to revert to previous practice. Again, Scripture prods., (Paul to Archippus) "see to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord" (Col. 4:17).

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Pastors, let laypeople do it!

Note: For a Lab on this chapter, see appendix C.

Notes:

1. Exodus 2 and 3. An in-depth study of this passage should yield a unique message to you from God regarding your ministry.
2. Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor* (Old Tappen, NJ.: Fleming H. Revell, 1988) p. 90
3. John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context* (Louisville, KY.; Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) p. 8.
4. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor* (Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1993) pp. xxiii, 34.
5. William Easum, *Dancing With Dinosaurs* (Nashville, Tenn.: Discipleship Resources, 1983) p. 77.
6. John Ed Mathison, *Every Member in Ministry* (Nashville, Tenn.: Discipleship Resources, 1998) pp. 1,2.

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7. C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1984) p. 79
8. Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (Washington, D.D.: The Alban Institute, 1994) pp. 95-97.
9. Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone A Minister* (St. Louis, Mo. Concordia Publishing House, 1974) pp. 8,51.
10. Kirbyjon Caldwell, "Jesus as the New Paradigm," *Forum Files* (August 1994).
11. Quoted by Rowland Crocher, *Rivers in the Desert* (Sutherland, NSW, Australia: Albatross Books, 1991) p.115.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
13. The M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust (Vancouver, Wash.) commissioned a Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest. The Preview Copy" was printed in 1994. "May pastors said they left seminary with tools for preaching but had to find other resources to learn needed leadership skills..."
14. *Op.Cit.*, (Stevens and Collins), pp. 64-69, 156. "Active Participation" is one of four styles of leadership taught by Paul Stevens and Phil Collins.
15. Churches Alive! Address: Box 3800, San Bernardino, CA 92423.

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What Kind of Person Does It Take?

DO WHAT YOU CAN, WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, WHERE YOU ARE

I once saw a cartoon of a man standing in shoulder-high snow trying to shovel his way free. The caption read, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." This caption not only fits the man shoveling the shoulder deep Minnesota snow, it also fits a person pondering and praying about being a lay pastor; or a person who has taken the training and is ready to make the first contact.

It fits church leaders (vocational and volunteer) whose task it is to enlist, equip and deploy lay pastors. They are looking, not for ideal people (they do not exist), but for real people, *people who do what they can with what they have where they are*.

As we have clearly seen, lay pastors are making a difference in the lives of members of hundreds of churches. What kind of people are these lay pastors? What kind of person does it take?

THINK *DIRECTION*

The kind of person it takes to do pastoral care is one who thinks *direction*, not *perfection*. Direction is what Jesus looked for in disciples: people who were willing to follow Him.

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He alone is *perfection*. Like you and me, the disciples were faulty. But their direction was faultless; they followed Him!

Jesus never gave up on His disciples no matter how imperfect they were because they continued to go in the right direction. I found the following imperfections recorded in Matthew's Gospel:

1. On five occasions, Jesus told them they had 'little faith" (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 17:20).
2. He had to rebuke and correct them often (16:23; 19:13,14; 20:22, 23).
3. After teaching them for three years He asked, "Are you still so dull?"; and later, "do you still not understand?" (15:16; 16:9).
4. At a crucial time, Jesus found them sleeping and asked, "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?"(26:40).
5. Mark reports that they were jealous with selfish ambition, arguing about who among them was the greatest (see Mark 9:34).

You and I can identify with these flaws, right? But Jesus does not reject us because of them.

One of the Twelve disqualified himself—Judas, not because he was imperfect, but because he reversed direction. So, when you ponder your suitability for significant ministry, think *direction*, not *perfection*. As follower of Jesus, you qualify!

Jesus saw more of the disciple' faults than they did, but He also saw more of their potential. Peter and Andrew saw themselves as fishers of fish; Jesus saw them as fishers of men. Matthew saw himself as a tax collector; Jesus saw Matthew as a people collector. No matter how you see yourself, Jesus sees you as a minister, perhaps a lay pastor who will care for some of His people. He looks beyond your faults and sees your potential.

Jesus renamed Simon "Peter," which means "rock." But Peter was not a rock at the same time, and he was still not a well-formed rock three years later. Jesus enlisted Peter because He saw what Peter would become with Jesus' presence, teaching and Spirit at work in his life. He was far from perfect, far from being fully ready for ministry; but he was

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headed toward it. Again, as you ponder whether you are the kind of person it takes to do this ministry, think *direction*—following Jesus—not *perfection*.

As you read through this chapter, learning more and more about the kind of person it takes to give pastoral care, know that if you have responded to Jesus' call, or are ready to respond, you qualify. You are ready to do significant and effective ministry.

Doing ministry with competence and confidence is a life long, ongoing, ever-perfecting process for all of us. From a purely human perspective, the disciples were not the right kind of people to carry on Jesus' mission. I have no idea who wrote the following "Open Letter," but I have used it to communicate to thousands in my seminars that it is Jesus' call, and that alone, which qualifies us to minister for Him.

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop
Nazareth 25922

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests. We have not only run the results through the computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles for all tests are enclosed. You will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service and for your guidance, we make some general comments. These are given as a result of staff consultant and come without any additional fee.

It is the staff's opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have a team concept. We recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no leadership qualities. The two others, James

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and John, the son of Zebedee, place person interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We believe it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings. They both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,
Jordan Management Consultants
Jerusalem 26544

A *PASSION* TO DO MINISTRY

"Why are you doing it?"

The question was being asked of three people doing pastoral care ministry in our church. Their answers were for the benefit of new recruits. One responded, "I have received so much from people in the church. I *wanted* to give something back."

Another, "I really *wanted* to be a lay pastor for a long time before I became one, but I had to straighten out something in my life first."

The third, "When I first heard about the chance to make a difference in people's lives, I *wanted* to do it."

Wanted is the common denominator.

Bruce Bugbee, in *Networking*, calls this common denominator passion.¹ *Passion* is where your heart is. Call, gifts and *passion* converge. Any one of them may take the lead in helping an individual discover his or her specific ministry. What kind of person does it take to do this ministry? One who *wants*—has the desire, the passion—to do it.

Passion for the ministry gives birth to commitment. A lay pastor's fundamental commitment must be to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The designation, Savior, is central to salvation. The designation, Lord, is central to ministry.

what kind of person does it take?

Jesus taught commitment to His 12 disciples:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62).

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be (John 12:26).

All the churches in our network ask their lay pastors (sometimes called "shepherds," "lay ministers," "care partners," etc.) to commit themselves to P A C E. This acronym is the job description for people who give pastoral care. (See page 4 in the introduction of this book as well as pages 63 through 66 in my book *Can the Pastor Do It alone?* for a detailed explanation of P A C E). The lay pastors must make a commitment to be faithful in Praying for their 5 to 10 households, being Available to them, Contacting them and being an Example for them.

Other commitments we ask of our lay pastors are:

1. Commitment of time and energy;
2. Commitment of years, as long as the Lord leads;
3. Commitment to continue being equipped;
4. Commitment to accountability;
5. Commitment to the church and its leaders;
6. Commitment to the regular meetings of lay pastors.

Commitment is essential, first to the Lord; second, to the church (ministry organization and leaders); and third, to the 5 to 10 households. The Lay Pastors Ministry promises to PACE the members of the church. If this promise is not matched by the commitment of the lay pastors, the ministry will lose integrity.

THE PHASES OF COMMITMENT

Wanting (or passion) to be a lay pastor must pass through the *decision* phase on its way to *commitment*. Marriage illustrates the course. A man

has a interest in a certain woman; he finds her attractive, delightful and charming. Her mystique and personality hold his interest. The chemistry is right; he feels comfortable her. He moves on to a decision. He wants here for his wife; he pops the question. The answer is yes. Now for the commitment, the marriage.

With this example in mind, it is easy to understand the transition from wanting to be a lay pastor through the decision phase and on to commitment. The layperson finds the ministry attractive, delightful and charming. He or she can see possibilities in being a lay pastor. To stop at this point to be like Hank and Lucille who courted for 20 years. Lucille, on a warm moonlit night, asked Hank if he didn't think it was time they get married. "Sure, but who would have us?" was his puzzling reply. If there is to be a marriage, the relationship has to move beyond wanting. However, wanting will always be a part of the marriage.

The same is true for ministry. The initial passion is in perpetual need of rekindling. The "flame" of Timothy's pastoring must have flickered because Paul wrote, "fan into flame the gift of God" (2 tim. 1:6). He also had to remind the Christians in Rome, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). The desire must always be there.

What kind of person does it take to be a lay pastor? One who has a passion to do it, a man or woman whose wanting metamorphoses into commitment.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF COMMITMENT TO THE LAY PASTORS MINISTRY

Commitment generates the energy to do ministry, and the core of commitment includes five elements.

Action

The first is *action*. God has promised to prosper what we do, not what don't do. Psalm 1:3 reads, "whatever he *does* prospers" (italics mine).

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with an emphasis upon doing: "Everyone who hears these words of mine *puts them into practice* is like a wise man" (Matt. 7:24, italics mine). Know that everything you do, even the least significant, such as giving a cup of cold water, will be carried to great heights of effectiveness by God.

what kind of person does it take?

One of baseball's greats, Matt Williams, third baseman for the San Francisco Giants (at least at this writing), said of his sport, "Baseball is a great game. I love to play it; but I can't watch it. it's boring." This is also true about ministry; there is more joy in doing than watching.

Maturity

The second element is maturity, or maturing (the process is ongoing). Commitment moves us in the direction of maturity. Some do not believe they are mature enough to be lay pastors, but commitment, not maturity, is the entrance-level requirement. Commitment, which is a process, not a fixed state, carries us forward to greater maturity. I'm not talking about age, how long a person has been a Christian or how experienced he or she is in Christian living. I'm talking about growing, about the process of maturing.

Owning the ministry does not warrant ignoring the leadership of the pastor any more than playing the violin warrants ignoring the leadership of the conductor.

How mature was Peter when Jesus told him, "Take care of my sheep" (see John 21:16, 17)? How many of the 72 (see Luke 10:1, 17) were mature when Jesus sent them out? How many of the Twelve (see Mark 6:7)? Not many. But they were all committed, and they were all growing in maturity.

Acknowledging Leadership

The third element is *acknowledging leadership*. You move from passive participation in the life of the church to active involvement when you make a commitment to be lay pastor. Someone compared this radical change to moving out of the symphony audience, picking up the violin, and beginning to make music yourself.

The ministry is yours! Owning the ministry, however, does not warrant ignoring the leadership of the pastor any more than playing the violin warrants ignoring the leadership of the conductor. Leadership is of God.

Leaders furnish vision, unity, direction and vitality. This is not a ministry for mavericks, but for those who will work "hand in glove" with the leaders.

You Will Have to Do It

If not you, then who? The fourth element is believing that if pastoring is going to get done, *you will have to do it*. Vocational ministers have neither the time nor the energy; and in many cases, neither the inclination nor the spiritual gift to care everyone. More often than not their hearts are only with people in a general or overall sense. The lay pastor, however, is there in a specific and continuing sense.

The vocational minister can be compared with the manager of a baseball team. He relies on the players, the pitching coach, batting coach, first base coach, trainer, equipment manager, scouts and others. He cares about the players and the others in an overall sense. His best energies, however, are given to strategy, morale and public relations. Can you imagine what would happen to him, to the team and to the fans if he tried to do it all? If pastoral care is going to happen in a church, the "players" (volunteer ministers) will have to do it.

The *Pastoral* and the *Care* of "Pastoral Care"

The final elements of commitment are the *pastoral* and the *care* of "pastoral care" What makes care *pastoral*? Jesus gives the answer:

I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water *in my name because you belong to Christ* will certainly not lose his reward (Mark 9:41, italics mine).

The following are three ways to be sure your care is distinctively pastoral.

1. **Just be you.** Because you are a Christian, your presence will emit your unique Christian aroma so don't try to be like someone else.
2. **Be intentional about initiating a sense of the presence of God:**
 - Articulate faith. For example: When problems surface say, "I believe God will help you." Give words of encouragement.

what kind of person does it take?

And when blessings come, share words such as "I believe God has chosen you for a special blessing."

- Pray *for* and *with* people. Either assure them you will pray for them, or pray with them on the spot. Immediate prayer is the better of the two. We have a lay pastor who, in the process of talking with a person, will ask, "Would you like one of my 30-second prayers?" Then he places his hand upon the person's shoulder and prays. When he does this with me, I really feel pastored.

3. **Accept the stake you have in the spiritual lives of others.**

- Desire their spiritual growth, and do what you can to help them along.
- Grieve over their known weakness and sins. Note: Be careful about being judgmental; be pastoral!
- Concern yourself with their church participation.
- Never forget that you are a member of your church's pastoral team, not just someone trying to do good. As an authentic pastor you are concerned for the spiritual lives of those you are called to shepherd.

Now, let's look at the care of "pastoral care." Your caring attitude can caring acts demonstrate that you desire the best for your people. Your sense of call, that God is calling you to be His "love with skin on it" to them, creates the right attitude and acts. Your loving and caring spirit will penetrate their inner atmosphere like your cologne penetrates their outer atmosphere.

The visible acts of caring take the forms of "A" and "C" in PACE.

"A": you are *available* to them in whatever way you can be. This might range from baby-sitting or helping with wallpapering a room to providing transportation. On the other hand, your availability may be referring the person to others rather than doing these things yourself. It may even be saying, "I know what you are facing and though I can't be the one to help you, I can pray for you and be on the lookout for someone who can help."

"C": you contact them regularly. This takes the place of what vocational pastors used to do. They called on their people once or twice a year. As good as this was, it was only a token of what was needed.

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The pastor usually had his favorites. An older couple told me how Pastor Jones came to their house often. How would make himself at home, pour a cup of coffee and look in the cookie jar. He would swap stories, laugh and cry with them and worry about their children as though they were his own. There were obviously among his favorites.

Pastors do not do this today. That age is past. But God wants each of His people to be treated like His "favorite." Thus lay pastors today give His children special care in a way superior to the old-time visits. Each lay pastor has 5 to 10 "favorite" households. This way every household in the church is given special attention.

The lay pastor who is trusted with this ministry must determine the kind of contact he or she has time to make. It maybe a personal home visit, phone call, card or letter, invitation to a backyard barbecue, chatting at the grocery store or after the church service. We ask that our lay pastors make two home visit contacts a year.

What kind of person does it take to do pastoral care ministry? The person who *wants* to do it, the one who has the passion for it.

A Sense of Call

One of the members of our National Lay Pastors Advisory Group was deciding whether he should continue on the team. My simple off-the-cuff formula was challenging to him. "There are two issues," I said. "First: Does God want the ministry? Second: Does God want you to be doing it?" These two questions are the bottom line issues for any person who is trying to determine what God wants her or him to do.

Regarding a lay pastoral care ministry in your church, does God want it, and does God want you to be doing it? Let's say that the answer to both question is *yea*. *This is you call!* I have discovered that of all the missing links between laypeople and ministry, a sense of *call* is the most common.

Why do we use the term *call*? This word is an integral part of the history of the Christian Church. Jesus started it. He *called* to Peter and Andrew while they were casting their nets into the lake, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Again, He saw Matthew at the tax collector's booth and *called*, "Follow me" (9.9).

The Greek word translated *call* in the New Testament is *kaleo* (pronounced kal-eh-o), meaning:

what kind of person does it take?

- Called or invited by God.
- Called to some office.
- Invited to participate in it and to enjoy it.
- Summoned to do something.

Kaleo is the word used in Matthew 18:2 to tell that Jesus called a little child to Himself, and in Acts 23:17 to tell that Paul summoned the centurion to send him on an errand.

When I was questioned by Presbytery as a candidate for ordination, I was asked, "Why do you believe you are called to be a minister of the gospel?" I had no visible or audible experience to report.

My reply was a quotation I remembered from somewhere, "The heart has reasons that reason does not understand." They accepted this.

Every layperson (volunteer minister) should have as definite a call as every pastor (vocational minister). We clergy have no monopoly on call. Most laypeople erroneously believe we do. God invites every Christian to participate in His work and reveals what that work should be. He would neither cheat nor deny of His people nor assign them to second class by choosing not to call them or failing to make the call known.

Hearing the Call

"How can I hear God's call?" you ask. It's seldom easy, for me anyway. But His Spirit communicates with our spirits, and being quiet in His presence allows that communication to happen.

Many times God speaks to us through others. We need one another. It may be that some hear God best and have the clearest sense of call when they are in a dialogue with brothers and sisters in Christ.

He often speaks to us through our leaders, through hearing about needs and opportunities, through the church newsletter, pulpit announcements or other common means. If we mistake one of these voices for the voice of God, and find ourselves in the wrong ministry, that's okay. We can get out again. By trying something, we may discover what God is *not* calling us to do.

It is every Christian's responsibility to discover what God wants him or her to do. And we should not quit prospecting for this gold until we find it. It's well worth the search.

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Seek help if you need it. Many fine spiritual gifts and ministry inventories and programs are available to help you do this. Among the most simple and yet effective is Dr. Kenneth Kingdom's six-step self-administered test included in my first book.³ Because so many have been helped by it, I have included it in this book, too:

1. Open yourself to God as a channel for His use.
2. Examine your aspirations for Christ in service.
3. Identify the needs you believe to be most crucial in the life of your church
4. Evaluate the results of your efforts to serve and to minister.
5. Follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as He leads you into obedience to Christ.
6. Remain alert to the responses of other Christians.

It may be time to ask, "Where are you regarding your call to ministry?" Let's look at how five people became His disciples. this should alert us to ways He distinctively engages each one of us.

- * Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. He offered himself to Jesus. Jesus accepted him. His acceptance constituted his call (see John 1:35-39).
- * Peter was brought to Jesus by his brother, Andrew. Jesus accepted him also (see vv. 40-42). His acceptance was his call.
- * Philip was founded by Jesus, who took the initiative in calling him to follow (see v. 43).
- * Nathaniel was skeptical. His friend Philip, was so excited about finding Jesus that he invited Nathaniel to "Come and see." This soon-to-be disciple was sure that nothing good could come out of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown. However, when he met Jesus, he became an instant believer (see vv.44-46).
- * Matthew was called while working, Jesus spotted him at the table collecting taxes and called him. Matthew got up immediately and followed (see Matt. 9:9).

Whether you are already spirituality committed and take the initiative to enlist as did Andrew, or follow another's urging as did Peter, or are sought out by Jesus as was the case with Philip, or approach Him with skepticism as did

what kind of person does it take?

Nathaniel, or have non previous thought or inclination as did Matthew, know that Jesus is calling you, and He is Lord of the process.

PASTORAL GIFTS

We all have cars. If a car is to get anywhere, the power has to be transferred for the engine to the wheels. The gears - a set of toothed wheels - form the central mechanism to transfer this power. If the gears do not engage one another (or "mesh"), the engine can run at high speed, but the car will not go anywhere.

Christian ministry operates in much the same way. The two gear wheels that have to mesh are *call* and *gifts*. When they mesh, the energy we expend moves our ministries forward, creating results that far exceed our best human efforts. The ministry power released when call and gifts engage is colorfully sketched by the following words:

God uses what you have to fill a need you never could
have filled.

God uses where you are to take you where you never could
have gone.

God uses who you are to let you become who you never
could have bee.⁴

I wrote several pages about call. Now, what about the other gear wheel, *spiritual gifts*? Paul almost insults when he confronts us about our knowledge of spiritual gifts: "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers [and sisters], I don not want you to be ignored." (1 Cor. 12:1).

Is his assumption that we are ignorant of them? This reminds me of what the popular comedian Bill Cosby (Dr. Huxtable on the old Bill Cosby TV show) told his son-in-law. It became clear to him that Alvin did not understand women. "Young man," he said, "You are a smart, intelligent young man, but you are dumb!"

Could Paul be saying to those who do not understand spiritual gifts, "You are a smart, knowledgeable, bright Christian; but you are dumb"? Many of God's wonderful people admit that they are "dumb" when it comes to spiritual gifts. One Presbyterian elder confided to me at a rereat

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that she wished she knew with her spiritual gifts were. Many Christian grope for a sense of their spiritual gifts.

Because "spiritual gifts" are *spiritual* their essence is love, joy, peace, and other inner qualities (see Gal. 5:22). *Spiritual* also indicates the source - the Spirit of God. Their origin is neither genetic nor environmental; we neither inherit nor learn them. Their distribution is determined by the Giver, not by our choice and not by the Church's practice of assigning, delegating or electing.

Gifts indicate that they are given. They are not earned, merited or planned. They cannot be generated by our wills, produced by our zeal or conferred by church leaders. Gifts differ from skills in that gifts are abilities we are given; they cannot be taught. Skills are abilities we acquire through learning and practice. The two are related in that skills enhance the effectiveness of our spiritual gifts.

Paul spends three chapters educating us about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12—14. He makes a list of them. Then he tells us that they won't work without love. Next, he gives some counsel about the use and misuse of them. He also write about spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. Peter writes about them in 1 Peter 4. (By the way, *spiritual gifts* can also be called *ministry gifts*, or just *gifts*. One teacher coined the word, *giftabilities*. I like it.) The following grid on the four scriptures show six elements they each have in common:

Scripture	Everyone	Source	List	Use	Love	Benefits
Romans 12:4-9	"Each of us" v.4	"Grace given" v. 6	seven vs. 6-8	"Use it" v.6	"Love" v.9	"The will of God" v.2
1 Cor. 12-14	"To each one" 12:7	"The Spirit" 12:7-11	thirteen 12:7-10,2 8	"Given for" 12:7	"Love" 13:1-13	"Build up the church" 14:12
1 Peter 4:8-11	"Each one" v. 10	"God's grace" v.10	three vs. 9,11	"Do it" v.11	"Love" v.8	Others served v.10
Ephesians 4:7,8, 11-13	"To each one" v.7	"Christ" v.7	five v.11	"Prepare God's people" v.12	"Love" v.2	Body of Christ Built up

what kind of person does it take?

Three simple sentences tell it all:

- God gives gifts for ministry.
- God gives gifts to every Christian.
- God expects His gifts to be used with love.

Three of the 27 spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament make up a cluster of gifts for pastoral care: *mercy*, *encouragement* and *service*. If a person has any one of the three, he or she will be able to be a lay pastor.

Mercy is an inner awareness or feeling of compassion for others; wanting to bring help; being sympathetic or empathic; the feelings and/or thoughts ignited by another's life situation.

Encouragement is to come alongside of another to comfort, console, embolden, inspire, reassure, cheer, give courage. It includes a touch of admonition, confrontation and exhortation for the purpose of strengthening or helping.

Service is attending as a servant, to aid or relieve another, to offer care, to express Christian affection in practical ways, bestowing comfort and help.

If, while reading the descriptions of the pastoral gift cluster, you said to yourself, *That's me!* your next thought must be, *I can do this!* You *can* do it!

The sure way to discover your gifts is to begin doing a ministry for which you think you may have the *call* and *gift*. Be alert to how the gear wheels within you engage each other. If you sense the gears grinding rather than meshing, you may want to consider and pray about changing to another ministry.

One of our lay pastors opted out of the Lay Pastors Ministry to devote himself to the music and worship ministry in our church. That's okay. Why grind the gears? Someone from the music and worship ministry whose gears are grinding in that ministry may give himself or herself to the Lay Pastors Ministry.

If a person is not doing ministry it is likely to be for one of three reasons: (1) the gears—call and gifts—have not yet engaged; or (2) they are "stripped"—call and gift do not match; or (3) overuse—burn out. The kind of person who can do pastoral care ministry is one who is *called* and *gifted*.

Asking To Be Equipped

A former colleague of mine, a genuine in creating acronyms, maintained that we need FAT people for ministry:

- Faithful
- Available
- Teachable

Faithful available speak for themselves. Teachable means a person is open to being equipped. Ephesians 4:11, 12 "[to equip] the saints for the work of ministry" (*NKJV*) makes equipping an indispensable part of God's formula for ministry.

"My job is to make men do what they don't want to do so they can become what they want to be."

-Vince Lombardi

We don't rush into ministry with only enthusiasm and faith. The Greek word is *katartismos*, which has a cluster of meanings that compel us to be prepared for doing God's work. This cluster includes:

- To be perfected;
- To put in order, adjust;
- To be trained, instructed;
- To make one be what he or she is created to be;
- To outfit with necessities;
- To completely furnish.

The equipping *program* may take only a few hours; the process continues throughout life. For example, the equipping program at our church gives lay peoples between 10 and 15 hours of training. The program is soon over. The process goes on while they do their ministries.

Equipping must not be taken lightly. I have known some churches

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that treated as optional, allowing people to become lay pastors without any equipping, and other churches that lowered their standards. This makes for a weak ministry and often a failed ministry.

It is God who calls Christians to care for His people and to be equipped! Therefore, we must do it, do it well, and require it of all who do ministry. Equipping calls for discipline on the part of leaders. Vince Lombard, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, was asked by a person seated next to him on a plane, "What is your job?"

His reply: "My job is to make men do what they don't want to do so they can become what they want to be." Lay Pastors want to be successful ministries, so we dare not shortchange them either by not requiring equipping or by doing it poorly.

Equipping is so important that vocational ministers are required to get basic (or seminary) training, followed with "continuing education" annually. Most churches write this into their terms of call with a budget item to make it possible, being equipped is just as important, and the church is just as obligated to provide and require both the program and process.

"Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches": pastors and teachers are to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

READY TO OBEY AND SERVE

At one of my seminars in Pennsylvania, a man stood to his feet and exclaimed, "Sir, in the Church of Jesus Christ there are no volunteers! We are either obedient to God or disobedient!" He said this with conviction. He is right.

Moses, when called by God, had five good reasons *not* to do what God was calling him to do. He was attracted by the bush which, though burning, was not consumed. God used the phenomenon to get his attention so he could call him to go to Egypt and liberate his people. God has his ways of getting our attention, doesn't He!

The account of Moses is given in chapters 3 and 4 of Exodus. (The following is my paraphrase of the account.)

God said, "I have come down to rescue my people from slavery." Moses was thrilled to hear this, but his thrill was short-lived. It turned

into a chill when God told him how he was going to do it: "I am sending you."

Moses pulled back. He resisted God on five fronts: identity, authority, acceptance, competence and volition. Do these sound strangely familiar? I have resisted God on all these fronts, and unless you are very different, you have too.

The word "but" must have alerted God to Moses' strong objections. Moses' response should have been, "Okay God, what do I do first?" But who can fault him? The task was huge.

The first resistance:

"Who am I that should do this?" He felt unworthy and unprepared. Not bad reasoning. He *was* unworthy and unprepared for such a task. But that was not the issue. The issue was that God called him to do it. It was an *identity* issue. The question, "Who am I?" (3:11) is not the right one. The right one is, **Who is calling me?** Moses missed the fact that God has the right to call anyone. He chooses. Moses was God's servant. God, being understanding and patient, promised, "I will be with you" (v.12).

The second resistance:

"I don't have the authority. They will ask, "Who sent you?" Of course, he didn't have the authority in and of himself. No one had commissioned him — until now. The issue was one of *authority*. God gave him authority on the spot: "Tell them I AM [Jehovah] has sent me to you."

The third resistance:

"What if they do not accept me?" This issue was one of *acceptance*. No one wants to enter a situation where rejection is a risk. The likelihood of being rejected was real. But so what? A lost battle doesn't mean a lost war. God gave Moses two signs to assure eventual acceptance.

The fourth resistance:

"I am not competent." This was no flimsy excuse; he was not competent. On the issue of competence, you and I need Paul's admission followed by his assurance to the Corinthian Christians, "No that we are competent in ourselves...our competence come from God. He has made us competent as minister" (2 Cor.3:5,6). God's promise, Now go; I will help

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you speak and will teach you what to say," should have brought him to obedience.

The fourth resistance:

"Oh, Lord (he still called him Lord), please send someone else to do it." The issue now was *volition*. He didn't want to go. This angered God. Then we read, "Moses went."

God's anger did it! Moses must have still felt uncertain, but he knew God meant business. By being obedient throughout the ensuing months, Moses discovered how much God meant business. The Lord *was* with him. Moses *did* have authority—his people and the Pharaoh took him seriously. He *was* accepted, he *was* competent—he got the job done.

All of Moses' objections are very real for people called to be lay pastors. Who is worthy to pastor others? Who has authority to be a pastor? Who does not fear rejection? Who is competent to do God's work? Who would not prefer someone else doing the really hard tasks? Our objections can seem valid, because they are born of the first part of these two-part truths:

- You are not worthy; however, God's call makes you worthy.
- You do not have the authority; however, God gives you authority.
- You may not be accepted; however, God will use you anyway.
- You are not competent; however, God is your competence.
- You want someone else to go; however, God has chose you.

I do not believe God minds hearing our objections. He has been listening to peoples' objections for millennia. In fact, whatever our rue thoughts and feelings, we need to get them out. God will not chasten or shame us. He will listen carefully, then graciously assure us of His presence and provisions. He just wants us to hang in there until all the reasons are out. Then we are ready to obey with our whole hearts.

Returning to the words of the man who said, "In the Church, there are no volunteers. We are either obedient to God or disobedient" and remembering that every Christian is a minister, let's look at the difference between a volunteer and a minister:

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A *volunteer* offers himself or herself for service;
A *minister* responds to a call from God for Service.

A *volunteer's* service is an option at his or her convenience;
A *minister's* service is not an option, but is a matter of obedience to God.

Obey and serve are two sides of the same coin. Obedience is the inner attitude. Serving is the outer act.

A *volunteer* is master of his or her own life and time;
A *minister* acknowledges Jesus as Lord of his or her life and time.

A *volunteer* is accountable to the organization and its leaders;
A *minister* is accountable first to God, then to the organization and its leaders.

A volunteer reserves the right to choose what he or she will do;
A minister relinquishes the choices of what he or she will do to the higher principle or spiritual gifts and divine call.

So...the man was right. We are not volunteers; we are obedient servants. And by being obedient, we experience what Jesus meant by, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever lose his life for me will find it" (Matt. 16:25). Losing one's life equates with obedience to God's call.

Obey and serve are two sides of the same coin. Obedience is the inner attitudes, Serving is the outer act.

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READY TO GROW SPIRITUALITY

A comic who conducts humor workshops across the country equipped, "I once heard the expression, 'Simon runs the water when the brook is deep.' I'm deep, but down deep, I'm shallow." This might not be as much quip as truth. One who is to do ministry must be committed to deepening his or her spiritual life. Do Posteman, in *Space For God*, says it best:

The world really doesn't need more "busy people," maybe not even more intelligent people. It needs deep people, people who know that they need: solitude, if they are going to find out who they are; silence, if their words are to mean anything; reflection, if their actions are to have any significance; contemplation, if they are to see the world as it really is; prayer, if they are going to be conscious of God, it they are to "know God and enjoy God forever."⁵

My time with God: reading the Bible; sitting back to reflect upon it (sometimes making notes, writing in the margins or underlining with green, red and black ink) and praying...does four things for me:

1. It helps me *believe*.
2. It helps my *discipleship*.
3. It helps my *identity* as a servant of God.
4. It helps in my *relationship* with God.

Reading the Bible, meditation and prayer have been known as "discipline" throughout the centuries because discipline is required to persevere. The kind of person it takes for this ministry is one who is committed to disciplined spiritual growth.

If you are a lay pastor, your time with God will impact your people in ways you may not even notice. (Let's call them "your people" because God gave them to you to care for.) Moses is a prime example of this.

After spending 40 days and 40 nights with God on the mountain, the record in Exodus 34 reports: "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (v. 29).

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When you connected with your people, they will know you have been with the Lord. How? They just will. There is a mystery about this. **소나** must be what 2 Corinthians 3:18 means:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into his likeness with an ever-increasing
glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Evidence of being with the Lord was seen again on the Day of Pentecost. The 120 believers came together to pray, wait and worship. The Holy Spirit descended upon them. Their behavior was changed. What happened to them dismayed the unbelievers so much that some thought they were drunk. Because these Christians were so unaware of what the Spirit was doing in them, they even asked each other "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:12).

Later, two of the apostles unknowingly amazed the rulers, elders, teachers of the law and priests with another from of the same phenomenon:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and *they took note that these men had been with Jesus* (Acts 4:13, italic mine).

Moses' face was radiant; the apostles spoke in other tongue; Peter and John astonished the religious leaders with their charisma—all because they spent time with God. If you will covenant with God to spend quality time with Him each day, you will favorable influence your people in ways far beyond what you could plan. Your part in pastoral care is to spend time with God and with your people. His part is to make your caring initiatives effective. It will happen!

The following story illustrates what you have just read. A prominent Bible teacher was invited by a church to give a series of lectures. At each gathering, he noticed a delightful, flowerlike fragrance permeating the room. After the second evening, he asked the pastor where that delightful aroma came from. The pastor explained that a few people who worked at the perfume factory had to come directly from their work to the meetings. Unknown to them, their cloths, having absorbed the

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fragrance of their environment, were releasing it into the room.

We may not be absorbing God's "aroma" when we are with Him and releasing it when we are with people, but we do; and because we do, our ministry is effective. Knowledge and skills are useful tools, but they alone will not do the job of caring for God's people in the way He wants. This principle was championed way back in the 1920s by Evelyn Underhill, a lay woman who gave a series of talks to Anglican priests in England:

Attention to God must be your primary religious activity, and this for the strictly practical reason that without that attention to God, all other religious activities will lose their worth...Other things, intellectual and social aptitudes, good preaching, a capacity for organization.....help this work and help it much. None of these, however, is essential. Prayer is!

READY FOR 'WHATEVER'

The delights, joys and fulfillment while doing ministry are far greater than one anticipates when starting. However, pain is also a part of ministry. Jesus promised that our joy would be full, and He assured us that we would find "life" in doing ministry. But He also talked about taking up our cross. Christian ministry is both pleasurable and painful. One who is to be a lay pastor has to be ready for both.

Paul experienced the pain of caring: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of children until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). But his pain was more than offset by joy, for the Christians in the church at Philippi were his "joy and crown" (Phil. 4:1). Jesus also knew both joy and pain in ministry. So will lay pastors. They have to be ready for "whatever." They have to be willing to be "at risk," to venture beyond security, convenience and comfort.

Somewhere I read, "If you have no anxiety, the risk you face is probably not worthy of you. If you create a life that is always comfortable, always without risk, you have created a fool's paradise."

Rejection

Three sources of pain are common for those who care for others, The

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first is *rejection*. A compassionate, loving person will always risk pain because of the possibility of not being accepted. Being rejected hurts! As we saw earlier, one of Moses' chief reasons for resisting God's call was, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me?" (Exod. 4:1). Most lay pastors fear this and in some cases the fear is warranted.

But you are in good company. Jesus is the ultimate sufferer of rejection: "He came to that which was his own, *but his own did not receive him*" (John 1:11, italics mine). The pain of rejection is the cost of doing business. The business in our case is caring for God's people. Nonacceptance, or even a cool rejection, really penetrates tender hearted, sensitive, self-giving and loving people. It hurts!

Trauma

The second cause of pain is trauma. I recall one lay pastor who was assigned a person who happened to be in the hospital at the time. What an opportunity to get acquainted. As she walked down the hall to make her visit, she heard over the intercom, "Code Blue! Code Blue!" Nurses and doctors were pouring into the room where she was going. This was the first time in her life she had seen a person die. She experienced trauma, emotional shock. She hurts! And she continued hurting for some time.

This, of course, is quite an uncommon occurrence. But lesser traumatizing experiences are also so painful. Accidents, terminal illness, miscarriages, amputations, divorces, financial collapses and other such unnerving tragedies cause pain. When you become a lay pastor, you open yourself to the risk of pain inflicted by traumatic events.

Failure

The third is failure. You will occasionally make mistakes and, because of them, feel you have failed. This hurts to the quick. It is humiliating. But wait! All is not lost. Failure in its various forms of mistakes, incompetence, stupidity, misunderstanding and delinquency can be positive. Some failures are only perceived failures and therefore not really failures at all. Other failures are true failures (even disasters), but these are excellent teachers. By learning from our failures, we convert them into successes.

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Jesus our best model for ministry, never failed; but His disciples, also excellent models, did fail in many ways and on many occasions:

1. They could not help a boy in his affliction. His father was in despair. This form of failure is *incompetence*.
2. They didn't see how they could possibly feed 5,000 famished people. This form of failure is error in *judgement* and *ignorance* of what Jesus could do.
3. They didn't hear Jesus well because they argued about who would be the greatest. This form of failure is *pride* and *jealously*. They lapsed into their pre-disciple lives.
4. They really missed it when they returned away the parents of little children. This form of failure was their *authoritarian* and *officious spirit*.
5. They became angry with the Samaritans who would not accept them. They wanted to destroy them with fire from heaven, calling down the wrath of God. This form of failure was *vindictiveness*.
6. They slept while Jesus agonized in prayer. This form of failure might have been only *physical weakness*, but more than likely they *lacked empathy* and did not read the seriousness of Jesus's struggle.
7. Peter struck out with a sword, wounding one of those who had come to take Jesus captive. This form of failure was *over-defensiveness* in a threatening circumstance.
8. They went back to fishing after Jesus' crucifixion. This form of failure was *loss of vision* and probably *self-pity*.
9. After Jesus' resurrection and even after Pentecost when he had the advantage of the Holy Spirit's presence, Peter continued to discriminate against non-Jews. The form of failure was *lack of understanding* for the width of God's love, the extensiveness of Jesus' sacrifice and the inclusiveness of the Church.

What a bunch of failure, these disciples! One of Peter's failures caused him such great pain that he went outside and wept bitterly. Failure hurts! It can demoralize a lay pastor and ruin his or her ministry. The disciples obviously recovered from their failure, learned from them,

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put them behind and moved on to found the Church and fulfill the Great Commission.

So there we have it, a profit of the kind of person it takes to be a lay pastor. One who...

- Thinks "direction," not perfection;
- Wants to do the ministry;
- Has a sense of call;
- Has the pastoring gifts;
- Asks to be equipped;
- Is ready to obey and serve;
- Is growing spirituality;
- Is ready for "whatever."

Please don't wait for these qualities to ripen in your life before you begin ministering. If you do, you will be like the couple pictured in a cartoon who waited until they could afford to get married. The groom with the aid of a cane was pushing the bride down the aisle in a wheelchair.

Seriously consider the first paragraph of this chapter. It shows that you probably have what it takes right now to be a lay pastor. You will grow in maturity as you minister, just as the disciples did, and just as every Christian since then has done.

If you are mature enough to have read this far in a book about lay ministry, you cannot use, "I'm not ready yet," as an excuse not to be equipped for ministry. The issue is not ability; it is obedience. Commit yourself and go for it!

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." People, if pastoring is your call, then for God's sake, do it!

Notes:

1. Bruce L. Bugbee, *Networking*, (1989): 4, 106-108.
2. Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1987)
3. *Ibids.*, p. 68.
4. Tim Hansel, *Holy Sweat* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987) p. 25
5. Quoted by Rowland Croucher, *Rivers in the Desert* (Sutherland NSA, Australia, Albatross books, 1991) p.58

Chapter 11

Why Laypeople Can Pastor?

WHO IS THE PASTOR?

Who is Brian's pastor? Is it the ordained pastor or the lay pastor?

Brian is "mentally challenged." Hope Church had a large pastoral staff, but no one was giving Brian pastoral care on a regular basis.

I did not fault them; there could not have been a more committed and competent staff anywhere. They were doing all the caring they could do. It was not humanly possible, however, for any vocational pastor or group of pastors to give the kind of continuing care Brian needed and deserved as a member of God's family.

Al Taylor became a lay pastor for years ago, and Brian became one of his charges. Al began to contact him almost weekly, and continuous to attend his swimming meets, pray for him, read the Bible with him, connect with his parents and occasionally take him to lunch. Brian's and Al's lives have bonded. Brian is happy. His parents are relieved. Al is fulfilled. Again the question: Who is Brian's pastor? Al Taylor, to be sure.

Who is Scott and Kathy Cartwright's pastor?

They were devastated when Kathy gave birth to a child with Down's syndrome. Ruth Connors, who had just become a lay pastor, took them into her flock. She also took them into her heart. Early in the relationship Ruth wrote an encouraging letter which, in reading between the lines,

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assured both Scott and Kathy that she understood their plight. Ruth had been there. She visited them, sat with and for them as needed and kept in touch by phone.

An amazing level of understanding was evident. Scott and Kathy know she knew. Their testimony is that Ruth comforted them with the comfort she had received from the Lord (see 2 Cor. 1:4). Ruth had requested that they be in her pastoring group. Her availability at the time of their need indicates that the timing was of God.

A member of the pastoral staff was also of special help at this time, being at the hospital often and ministering in other ways. Another pastoral staff person gave Schoo and Kathy needed support through visits and prayer. Those two pastors and Ruth made an ideal pastoral team, each giving their unique form of loving care. The result was well-rounded pastoral care.

As you would expect, the staff members needed to give attention to the steady procession of other critical needs, but Ruth continues her supportive and helpful caring. She provided an unbroken flow of love and care through the days and weeks. It is clear that she is the continuing pastor of all four Cartwrights (their family also includes a lively three-year-old daughter).¹

I hear similar stories often. In my position as founder of Lay Pastors Ministry and president of Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc., I talk on the phone with ministry leaders from all across the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, Australia and South Africa. I also read many of their newsletters, conduct training and information seminars and have the privilege of visiting with those stop by. It is moving to hear what they are telling me.

Let's visit one of the churches in our network, Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Statesville, North Carolina. This congregation started its Lay Pastors Ministry in 1991. The ministry includes 337 families. (Within my acquaintance, churches have the Lay Pastors Ministry range in size from 35 to 7,000 members.)

Stint John's lay ministers (as they call their lay pastors) made 2,717 contacts in 1996. One of their members prepares a computer-generated graph periodically that shows not only the number of contacts, but also the kind of contacts.²

In a typical month, February 1996, its lay ministers made a total of 17 home visits, 110 other face-to-face visits, 107 telephone calls and mailed

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64 cards or letters and connected in 26 other ways This adds up to 324 quality contacts in one month, 2,717 in one year. The graph cannot show the daily prayers for the people, the perpetual availability for times of need or the mutual bonding of lives by the cumulative value of continuing contacts. By the way, they post the graph on the lay ministry bulletin board for the entire congregation to see.

Imagine what the effect of this ministry will be when they have enough lay ministers to include all the households of this congregation. How many significant contact could one or two vocational pastors make in a year? How many people could they meaningfully and daily pray for? How many people could they get close to and know as well as the lay ministers know them?

And the Lay Pastors Ministry is just one lay pastoral care model among many being used by churches today. Others are the Stephen Ministries, BeFriender Ministry, People's Ministries and more.³ Each has its unique approach; the common denominator equipping the laity to pastorally care for God's people.

Do pastors of churches who give the congregational care to qualified laity not care about their people? Just the opposite. The care for the people so much that they shepherd the system that makes every member care possible. Like Moses, they give their immediate attention to the leaders, turning the day-by-day, person-to-person pastoral care over to qualified people.

Vocational pastors and volunteer pastors are truly "partners in ministry," literally "copastors." The vocational pastor is the generalist, caring for the large matters: preaching, teaching, counseling, crises intervention, marrying and burying. The volunteer pastor is the specialist, giving grassroots, customized care to a manageable number of households. Vocational pastors are informed about the large things happening in people's lives, but they have no way of knowing the difficulty Joe is having at work, the Smith's pain caused by their prodigal son, the stress in the Peterson's marriage or Linda's anxiety about her upcoming outpatient surgery.

Nor does the vocational pastor know about new cars, new recipes, new landscaping, individual graduation, vacation trips, beginning pregnancies, birthday, anniversaries and other celebrative events. While the volunteer pastor is praying for each of his, her or their people (some are

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husband-wife caring teams), the vocational pastor is praying for issues such as next Sunday's sermon, the board meeting, the leaders of the lay ministries and the plans to enlarge the sanctuary.

The basic task of the vocational pastor is not to pastor the individuals, but to pastor the church. If the pastor will give spiritual leadership to the church, lay ministries will flourish. But pastors can't do this effectively if their energies are given to person-to-person pastoral care.

Stevens and Collins write: "This gives the pastor a new job description. 'I see the pastor,' Mansell Pattison says, 'as essentially a shepherd of systems. The pastor functions to nurture and guide the subsystems of the church.' Pastoral care is 'care of the living systems,' not just the care of individual saints."⁴

The following descriptions designate the kind of caring attention given by volunteer lay pastors (the specialists) compared to that given by vocational pastors (the generalists):

Volunteer Pastors

Grassroots care
One-on-one care
Basic congregational care
Ongoing pastoral care
"One anothering" (1 Thess.5:11)
Regular care
Care on a continuing basis
Hands-on care
Frontline care

Vocational Pastors

Overall care
Care of all members
Nurture, mobile, equip
Emergency, short-term care
Emergency, short-term care
Crisis and special needs care
Seriante care
The larger matters
General care

The three reasons laypeople can be the frontline pastors of the congregation are:

1. God gives the ministry to them;
2. Their church gives the ministry to them;
3. They have the passion and skills.

God Gives the Ministry to Them

God gives the ministry to ordinary people. Along with the assignment, He gives the power to succeed. We tend to attribute a larger-than-life stature to people to whom God gives ministry. We think of the patriarchs,

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prophets and kings of Old Testament: people such as Abraham, Moses and David. We think of the apostles of the New Testament: people such as Peter, John and Paul. We think of church figures throughout history, people such as Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Mother Teresa and Billy Graham.

A close look, however, reveals that God gives ministry mostly to ordinary people. Gideon, to whom God gave the task of liberating Israel from the possessive control of Midian, was the least in his family and his family was the weakest clan in the tribe of Manasseh. A very ordinary man indeed; unknown, unlikely, untrained and inexperienced. This is how he saw himself and this is how he was (see Judges 6—8).

But God saw Gideon as a "mighty man of valor" (6:12, RSV). The record tells us that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon" (v. 34). His success was not in his outstanding ability, but in his obedience to God's call.

Amos was an ordinary shepherd when God called him to be a prophet to the northern cities of Israel. His effectiveness was not in his great insights and oratory, but God's call (see Amos 1:1-11). By listening to God, he was able to proclaim, "This is what the Lord says" (v.11).

We have already seen the unlikeness of the apostles to whom Jesus committed the building of His church. Their success, which continues in our era and will continue until "The Coming, " cannot be credited to their expertise and natural resourcefulness, but to the power of the Spirit that came upon them (see Acts 1:8).

These people are like most of God's ministers, just ordination people. The same God who gave ministry to them is giving the pastoral care ministry to members of our churches. The same resources God made available to them are available to you and me.

Both Robert Slocum and I believe in ordinary people. He wrote: "I am convinced the effective church for the twenty-first century will be the church that mobilizes, equip, empowers and support *ordinary Christians* in ministry."

And Slocum defines *ordinary Christians*. "By *ordinary Christians*, I mean the laity, the lay men and women who are not church professionals, yet who make up more than 98 percent of the people of God." He continues, "It is of critical important for us the *ordinary Christians* to understand who we are, what we are supposed to do and where we are supposed to do it."⁵

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The foundational Scripture for lay ministry, which I have cited often, Ephesians 4:11,12, makes the point clear: It is God's "ordinary" people who are to be equipped to do the ministry.

There we have it. Laypeople can pastor because God has given the ministry to them. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Let laypeople do it!

Their Church Gives the Ministry to Them

The church is not acting on its own authority when it gives the ministry of pastor care to the people. It is only carrying out God's plan.

"We are not as smart as the laity think we are; and they are not as dumb as we think they are." — John Wesley

God gives ministry to all Christians, but the Church also must give ministry to its people if lay ministry is to happen.

The church where I serve on the pastoral staff as a part-time member is giving the ministry to the people. The rationale in the Session (official board) Structure Overview is:

In our commitment to "prepare God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11,12), one of the spiritual duties of an elder is to recognize and affirm spiritual gifts for ministry in members of the Body. Mobilizing and training for ministry and mission is a central goal. We need to give permission rather than restraint because the job of Session is to inspire people to take risks for the kingdom of God in new and exciting ministries.

The church has awakened. Both clergy and laity are redrawing what has traditionally been a very small circle of ministries, making it large enough to include all Christians. Some churches are finally "letting" laypeople do it. History records many attempts at this. Martin Luther had the

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"priesthood of believers" theology, but lacked the strategy to implement it as far as ministry was concerned.

John Wesley trained 653 laypeople to preach and pastor in the eighteenth century. He was severely criticized for doing this by other Anglican clergy. His response to them was, "We are not smart as smart as the laity think we are; and they are not as dumb as we think they are."⁶

Only pastors who genuinely believe that laypeople are as authentically called as they themselves are can give the kind of support laypeople need.

Support from the pastor is an integral part of the church giving the ministry to the people. Only pastors who genuinely believe that laypeople are as authentically called as they themselves are can give the kind of support laypeople need. Any tongue-in-cheek acceptance of lay ministry will covertly signal lack of support.

On the other hand, once pastors have been freed from any doubt that laypeople are equally called by God, their conviction and confidence will covertly signal support. Pastors can give support by affirming and celebrating lay ministry, commending lay pastors from the pulpit, giving them opportunities to tell about their ministries in worship services and being available to personally counsel and encourage them.

Commissioning laypeople during a worship service by the laying on of hands announces to the members that the church is giving the pastoral care ministry to their peers. It prepares the members to receive from lay pastors. It also confirms in the minds of the lay pastors that the ministry is theirs, that they are authentic members of the pastoral team.

Lay pastors are bona fide pastors because of what I call their "ministryfolio." Whereas a "portfolio" is the office and function of a minister of state, a "ministry folio" is the office and function of a minister of Christ. The concept comes from Matthew 10, the record of Jesus giving the ministry to His disciples, sending them out on their own:

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- * Called (v.1): Lay pastors are called to pastor people.
- * Authority (v.1): Lay pastors are authorized to pastor people.
- * Sent (v.5): Lay pastors are commissioned to a specific ministry.
- * Relationships (v.6): Lay pastors are to build relationships.
- * Competence (vv.19,20): Lay pastors' competence is from God.
- * Courage (v.26): Lay pastors do not fear rejection.
- * Sacrifice (v.38): Lay pastors bear whatever crosses they must.
- * Obedience (v.38): Lay pastors are servants.
- * Incarnational Principle (v.40): Christ is in lay pastors.
- * Reward (v.42): Lay pastors shall receive a reward.
- * Equipping (11:1): Lay pastors shall be instructed.
- * Accountable (Luke 9:10): Lay pastors will be asked to report.

They Have the Passion and the Skills

This is the third reason laypeople can pastor. In 1978 when I saw the first laypeople in Cincinnati begin to make their pastoral visits, I was surprised by their delight. They exuded unexpected passion for what they were doing. They looked forward to their next contacts and developing relationships. They had found a new Joy in the Christian lives. One-on-one pastoral care had always been one of the most fulfilling parts of my total ministry and now I saw laypeople as passionate about it as I.

This was ministry! Their ministry! The ministry for which God had given them gifts, to which He had called them, for which they had been equipped and commissioned.

I can imagine some vocational pastors reading about these excited people and saying, "They can have it." The reason is that many professional pastors do not have pastoral gifts. God did not write them with mercy, patience and encouragement. He gave them other gifts: preaching, teaching, administration or evangelism. No one has all the gifts, not even credentialed ministers.

I can imagine many laypeople reading about these excited people and saying, "Let them do it. That's not for me." The people saying this have gifts for other ministries. It goes without saying that no one

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would have the time or energy to use all the gifts even if he or she had them.

But because of their passion, they can give to people the most valuable thing they have —themselves. Overlooking this lay pastors will often unnecessarily think they are responsible for changing people. But as my friend, Ken Haugk, founder and executive director of the Stephen Ministries proposes; "Christians are responsible for care; God is responsible for cure."⁷ We plant and water, God gives the increase (see 1 Cor. 3:6,7). Giving themselves to others is pastoral care.

This is what Irving Berlin did with music. He only had what he was by nature because he never had formal training. He never learned to read or write music and his piano playing was confined to the key of F sharp. He just gave what he had and what he was —himself. More than 1,000 songs came from giving himself, two of which are *God bless America* and *White Christmas*. Laypeople can pastor because they can give themselves to their people, a small segment of the total congregation. What Irving Berlin did with music, laypeople can do with pastoring.

In addition to passion, lay pastors have skills. Just as vocational pastors possess both natural and acquired skills.

And according to my years of seeing them in action, many laypeople are better at pastoring than professionals. In fact, this professional pastor has seen laypeople outstrip him in their ability to accept people, stick with people, emphasize with people and build authentic and lasting relationships. They P A C E people more effectively.

Hear and remember

Laypeople can *hear* and *remember*. These are two activities that constitute pastoral care. When I recently read this simple determination of pastoral care in John Patton's book *Pastoral Care in Context*,⁸ I paused, lifted my eyes from the page and said out loud, "That's it! That's what pastoral care is: *hearing* and *remembering*," they are the essence of P A C E.

When people are *heard*, they know that someone finally understands them and truly what they are going through. They "feel" pastored; somebody really cares. When they are *remembered* —greeted on their birthdays, visited or phoned on the anniversaries of their spouses', childrens' death, prayed with about their illnesses or upcoming surgeries or underachieving

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children —they know someone truly cares. They are not alone. They have not been forgotten. They "feel" pastored.

Laypeople can do this. They can hear and they can remember because they know what it means to be heard and remembered, or not heard and not remembered. Of course; it helps to have a course in listening skills and a workshop on the significant occasions for connecting with people, but that will come in time. Have you heard, "Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly..until you can do it better" or "You don't have to know everything before you can do anything"?

Counsel

Laypeople can pastor because they can counsel. Counsel? They can counsel because they can listen, and listening is the key to all counseling...lay or professional. Let me illustrate:

Two Saint Paul, Minnesota police officers were killed by a gunman in August, 1994. The widow of another officer killed five years earlier, who was active in the national organization of such widows, said on a special TV program the day of the funerals with a touch of anger in her voice, "We don't need advice; *we just need someone who will listen to us!*"

Lay Pastors can do what the widow asked for: listen and refrain from giving advice. The following is an example of lay counseling:

Dolly Parton, country music star and actress, was asked on the "Donahue" show if she had psychological counseling during her chronic depression, a very painful time in her life. In uncharacteristically firm voice, I heard her say she did not. She proceeded to tell about her loving and supportive family and friends who helped her get through it. She said "They *counseled* me in a way that God and I were able to work it through."

For decades the Billy Graham crusades have used the designation *counselor* to identify the lay people who guide seekers to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

It is difficult to use the word *counselor* in referring to a lay pastor because our society is conditioned to think only credentialed, professional counselors can be effective in helping people who are struggling.

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It's time to rescue the word counseling from exclusive use by professionals. Two psychologists help with the rescue: Andrew Christiansen, Ph.D., professor of psychology at UCLA, and Neil Jacobson, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Washington. They concluded: The outcome of therapy is not enhanced by training, education or years of experience. It may not even matter whether there is a live therapist present!"

Virginia Rutter reported the surprising stance of these two psychologists in the March/April 1994 issue of *Psychology Today* in an article titled, "Oops! A Very Embarrassing Story." She continues: "Christiansen and Jacobson contented that no one has made much of an effort to look at therapy delivered by nonprofessionals, despite the fact that it proves just as effective, or more effective, than therapy performed by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and family therapist."

She then quotes Dr. Christiansen: "In psychotherapy; it is not clear that the skills of the therapist are any more helpful than the skills of people with life experience in dealing with a problem."

Lay pastors have the "life experience in dealing with a problem." And the potency of "life experience" is heightened by the gifts from the Spirit, the power of the Spirit and the lay pastor's passion to love, hear, remember and care. My belief that lay pastors can counsel is grounded in Scripture:

Personally I am satisfied...that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and *counsel* and instruct one another also (Rom. 15:14, *Amp.*, italics mine).

I believe that lay pastors, being in a Christian environment, have two advantages over professional therapist. First, they can reach out to people in need and continue to pursue them inspite of avoidance, while therapist must wait for clients to initiate the contacts. Our model is the shepherd in Jesus' parable who went out to search for the one lost sheep.

Second, lay pastors learn from Scripture that they are called to influence the lives of people with Christian values and morals.

The "E" of P A C E—Example—is operative in the relationship

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Professionals, on the other hand, being in a secular environments, are required to be value-free and morally neutral.

Lay counseling is not therapy; that is left to the professionals. Nevertheless, lay counseling is therapeutic.

People ask if lay pastors risk litigation for themselves and/or the church. Life is a risk; ministry is a risk. The best counsel I receive is that the chances are minuscule. When the question came up at our last Lay Pastoral Care International Conference, an attorney recommended checking locally for laws, and said that court actions vary from state to state.

Because we live in a litigious culture,⁹ four wise actions can be taken to reduce the already long odds of legal action:

1. Do not refer to yourself as a counselor at any time.
2. Avoid using the words "counsel" and/or "counseling."
3. Never permit impropriety in physical contact or closeness.
4. Respect confidentiality; keep private matters private.
5. Ask to be equipped to know when and how to refer a person to a professional.

Laypeople can pastor because they can *counsel*. They don't have to use the term, but they need to know that they can do it.

What's in a Name?

Is the name *lay pastor* appropriate? Many raise this question. In many minds it is an oxymoron. One of our lay pastors explained to me, "I don't think of myself as a pastor; I think of myself as a friend."

By renaming herself, she redefined her ministry role. Pastor was above and beyond what she perceived herself to be. Friendship has rich value (Jesus called His disciples friends, John 15:15), but friendship is only one part of pastoring, not the whole.

Self-definition is the issue. My concern is not as much about what name lay pastors carry, it is more about their self-perception. If we believe these people are gifted and called by God to be members of the pastoral team, does not *lay pastor* say that most clearly? A bigger team challenges people to fill it, just as parents buy larger size garments for their children to grow into.

"The name of a business can spell the difference between success

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and failure. That's why it's critical to choose your name carefully," write small business columnist Jane Applegate. "Choose a name that reflects your business" she concluded.¹⁰ What name best reflects the business of pastoral care by laypeople?

More churches using Lay Pastors Ministry model do not use the name *lay pastors* than churches that do. We do not try to control anything churches do with this ministry, including what they call their people. We recommend that they get to know the principles and either use the model as is, modify it or build their own to fit their context.

It's at this point minister leaders choose a different name. And that's ok as long as choosing another name does not dilute the kind of pastoral care God wants for His people.

I would like to make a case for calling people *lay pastors* so that even if they know themselves as shepherds, lay ministers or care partners (these can all be appropriate designation), they will know what God has called them to be and do.

My case for calling them lay pastors has four points:

1. The lay pastor's care is the same as all members would like to receive from their ordained pastors if there were enough of him or her to go around —P A C E. People would like to have their pastors *pray* for them, their families, their needs and problems daily. They would like their pastors to be *available* (on call), *contact* them by personal visit or phone, know how they are doing, affirm them, inquire about their children, etc. They want to know that they are special in the minds of their pastors, that their pastors remember them. They need an *example* of one who lives close to God, giving himself or herself in service. This is pastoral care. Laypeople are doing it. Shouldn't their name reflect what they do?
2. Laity are called by God to tend the flock, "be shepherds of God's flock." They are partners with the vocational pastors in carrying out this charge. What constitutes tending? Think of a shepherd tending sheep. Tending is being with, listening attentively, loving, being concerned about, nurturing and protecting. These acts translate into

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pastoring well.

Laypeople are doing these things for microcongregations of 5 to 10 households.

3. The New Testament Greek word translated "pastor" is *poimane* (pronounced *poy-main'*). It means herdsman or shepherd. The words of the small business columnist quoted earlier apply: "Choose a name that reflects your business." Tending the flock is the lay pastor's business.

4. Lay means non-ordained; it does not mean non-gifted or non-called. The word is from *laos*, as we saw before, which means the people of God. Therefore the name, lay pastor, is appropriate. It is an oxymoron only to those who: (a) do not understand fully what lay and pastor mean; (b) have a difficult time believing laypeople are given spiritual gifts for ministry as well as clergy; and (c) do not believe laypeople are called by the same Lord to do ministry.

I rest my case. Having made it, I need to say again, because I am aware that in some denominations and some churches the name lay pastor is not the wisest choice, my concern is that people know who they are, and understand what God calls them to do. Choose the name wisely because a name makes a lot of difference in how people think of themselves and in how they are received.

Once a name is selected and used, it is almost impossible to change it and seldom wise to try. Churches starting the ministry will want to determine specially what they will ask their people to do and select the name that most adequately says that. A rose (if it is truly a rose) called by any other name still smells the same; and a lay pastor (if he or she is truly a lay pastor) called by any other name still ministers the same.

I have given three reasons why lay people can pastor God gives the ministry to them; the church gives the ministry to them; and they have the passion and skills.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Scripture says to the churches." Laypeople can give pastoral care: Let them do it!

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Notes:

1. These are the real names of real people, all members of Hope Presbyterian Church. They gave permission to be identified by name.
2. See appendix E for the graph that includes January 1994 through March 1996. (Permission given by James H. Hook.)
3. Stephen Ministries, 8016 Dale, St.Louis;
BeFriender Ministry, 2260 Summit Avenue, St.Paul; People's Ministries, 2704 Old Point Drive, Richmond.
4. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, The Equipping Pastor
5. Robert Slocum, Miximize your ministry
6. James Garlow, Partners in Ministry
7. Kenneth Haugk, Christian Caregiving
8. John Patton, Pastoral Care in Context
9. Thomas Taylor, Seven Deadly Lawsuit
10. St.Paul Pioneer, St.Paul, Sept 13, 1989

PART III

What Kind of Effort Does It Take?

Chapter 12

How to Give Ministry to the People

A Tower To Build, A Batter To Win

Desert Hope Wesleyan Church in Phoenix, Arizona, broke the 200 attendance barrier for the first time in its 69-year history only after beginning the Lay Pastors Ministry. It is an exciting story.

From its start in 1926 until 1986, the church seldom averaged more than 65 people in attendance at Sunday worship. The present pastor, Paul Gilbert, was installed on its sixtieth anniversary.

Within three years, the attendance grew to an average of 140. For the next four years, in spite of trying everything Pastor Paul Gilbert and congregation knew to do, they were never able to break the 200 attendance barrier. Many new people came, but eventually left.

Then they adopt the Lay Pastors Ministry. During the first year of training and commissioning lay pastors, they passed the 200 mark. The church grew by nearly 100 people in one year. This was in 1995 and they are continuing to grow.

Paul Gilbert draws two substantial conclusions from this experience:

1. A church cannot grow past its ability to care for people;
and
2. The pastoral care through laypeople had a crucial effect upon the growth.

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This historical adventure excited me as I read about in his Doctor of Ministry dissertation during the days I was writing chapter 1 of this book.¹

A major reason members are available at Desert Hope and other churches to be trained and deployed into ministry is that laypeople want a significant piece of the action in their churches. It's a new day in the Church. When Betty Moore was executive director of Presbyterians for Renewal, she made this observation:

In the past, Presbyterians loved the wonderful stories of what God was doing around the world, but today's Presbyterians are hands-on people. They want to participate. There's something exciting about...making mistakes, correcting them, learning...that whole growth process just seems to release an excitement and a dedication.²

This is not a new phenomenon; it is a return to how things were done in the formative years of Christian Church. Jesus gave His ministry to the disciples. When he prayed, "I have brought you [God] glory on earth by completing the you gave me to do" (John 17:4). He was only 33 years old. He had carried His ministry as far as He should before passing it on to those He was discipling. It was time, not only because He was about to leave the scene, but ...just because it was time.

This was not an unplanned handover; it was a planned strategy. He had introduced them to doing ministry without Him earlier by sending them out on their own. He had prepared them by teaching about the Holy Spirit who would enable them to do even greater things than they saw Him do.

Paul did this with Timothy and then instructed him to pass it on to others who were "reliable and qualified" people (2 Tim. 2:2). It's a divine process ...passing the ministry on to the people. This is what we did in Cincinnati in 1978. This is what Desert Hope Church did in 1995, and hundreds of other churches —large, medium and small—have been doing. And it continues.

I asked a 12-year-old boy in Hawaii how he learned to play the ukulele so well: "Did you have lesson?"

He reply, "Just by lookin' on," is what we are going to be doing for the next few pages.

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This is the way we're going to learn how to give the ministry to the people...just by lookin' on. We are going to look over Paul Gilbert's shoulder in Phoenix to see how he, as pastor of the church, gave the hands-on, grassroots, frontline pastoral care to his people. He provides us with a model that, except for some specifics, parallels many churches I have had a chance to observe or help through the years.

Their adventure starts with an idea: lay pastors providing pastoral care. A leadership team was formed a year before starting the Lay Pastors Ministry to consider that model as a viable option. Their goal was to find the way to grow larger and yet keep the intimacy and warmth of Desert Hope.

Gilbert preached the biblical truths regarding lay ministry. We need to note, at this point, that it was the larger truth of *lay ministry* he taught. Lay ministry is the all-inclusive, full range of ministries carried on by a church. The term can be compared to, shall we say, *sports*. That generic term includes baseball, swimming, golf, soccer, marathon running and other sports. Selecting swimming out of the long lists is the same as selecting *lay pastoring* out of a list that includes teaching, missions, youth work, leading worship, administration and more.

Nine months before the first Lay Pastors Institute in which some members would be equipped to be pastors, Gilbert began to preach specifically about the concept of lay pastors being trained and commissioned to actually provide pastoral care.

Six weeks before the Institute, he added the truth that God's desire for His flock was that they be shepherded. In those messages, the concept that a church cannot grow beyond its ability to care for people was introduced. The traditional paradigm, that only the paid professional can minister, was challenged. His preaching began to mobilize those with pastoral kinds of spiritual gifts. He summoned them to do "something great for God." He appealed to them not to put the whole burden on the shoulders of their pastor.

Simultaneously, six weeks prior to the Institute, he began to identify people he believed to have the spiritual maturity and gifts to serve as lay pastors. He personally recruited them. He told them of both the cost and the reward. Most of those he personally contacted seemed eager to receive training in their gift areas.

Paul Gilbert's report reads, "Many showed up to be trained and the

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congregation as a whole received it well." The Lay Pastors Ministry was under way. He was giving it to the people. Haven't we learned a lot "just by lookin' on!"

IN THE LARGE CHURCH..

In large churches, the procedure is much more complex. What Desert Hope did — focus on the launching of one ministry for several months —is not possible in large congregations.

Let's look briefly at how at 7,000-member church —the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama—started its lay pastoral care ministry. Earl Andrews, pastor for Congregational Care, had the idea of laypeople doing pastoral care. At that time he discovered my book. Reading it, he realized how his vision could become reality.

He wanted to share his vision with the staff of the church and the 100-member administrative board, so he invited me to tell the story of the Lay Pastors Ministry. A few months later Andrews invited me to conduct a seminar for 35 select people on how to start the ministry. Frazer Memorial's staff eventually customized their own ministry by adapting our model.

They equipped a sizable group of lay ministers (the name they choose for their lay pastors); assigned flocks to them; and had pulpit supported by senior pastor on the Sunday they launched the ministry. The pastor used P A C E for his sermon outline. They added a "point person," Marie Parma, to their staff to manage the ministry, and gave the ministry of pastoral care to the people.

They did it so well that in 1997, 10 years later, the ministry is still flourishing. It is being passed on to the other churches through the lay ministry workshops that are offered twice a year in Frazer's popular Church Growth Seminars. As a result of this church's success with these seminars, Marie Parma and some of her people are often invited to assist other churches in starting their lay pastoral care ministries.

The dynamics observed while "lookin' on" at both Desert Hope and Frazer are the same even though the great difference exists in their sizes. Identifying these seven principles will be extremely valuable to the church leaders (volunteer or vocational) who either have or are beginning to receive the vision for giving pastoral care or any other ministry to the

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people. Specific references will be to the Desert Hope Church only because more readers will identify with smaller churches than large.

Vision: Someone saw possibilities in laypeople doing pastoral ministry and began to share that idea.

Ownership: A leadership team believed in the vision. They considered the Lay Pastors Ministry model and brain-stormed ideas and goals. The pastor's "total involvement" will ultimately segue to "passive involvement" so he can give the same leadership to others yet-to- be-started ministries.³ A leadership team will need to continue to "own" the ministry as long as it exists.

Enculturation: The culture of the church needs to be seriously considered. By *culture* we mean paradigm, perception or belief pattern that is assumed to always be true. Unless the ministry fits into the culture, the ministry is doomed from the start. Gilbert bravely confronted the traditional paradigm that controls many churches —that only ordained clergy can pastor. His months of preaching the biblical teachings about lay ministry and lay pastoral care made the Lay Pastors Ministry acceptable to the congregation, motivated those with pastoral gifts to step forward and in other ways changed the culture of the church.⁴ Note his schedule: intentional preaching started at the nine-months mark and shifted at the six-week mark.

Need: There was a felt need to grow, but also the belief that it is not possible to grow beyond the number for which care can be provided. The heavy burden on the pastor had to find other shoulders.

Structure: They adopted the Lay Pastors Ministry model, persuaded that it would work in their church. They added to some part and modified others to fit their congregation's needs. The ministry was ready to go when the first people were equipped and commissioned. They had planned the equipping curriculum, set policy

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for assigning people and provided for the ongoing management of the ministry.

Mobilization: The pastor set the stage for this in his preaching and began making the appeal. He personally selected people and approached them individually. (Moaes was instructed to select people with certain qualifications in starting his plan to care for all of God's people under his care, see Exod 18:21).

Management: Although not mentioned previously, maintenance requirements include office work, flock updateing, recruitment, supervision, celebration and evaluation. Frazer added a staff person to manage its ministry.

Think of the Lay Pastors Ministry as a tower to build and a battle to win.

Consider the cost of giving ministry to the people, and consider your ability to do it. These are the points of Jesus' two parables about building a tower and a king going to war (see Luke 14:28-32). The tower builder was to consider the cost to determine whether he had enough resources to finish what he started; the king was to consider whether he was able to win. Think of the Lay Pastors Ministry as a tower to build and a battle to win. You will want to consider these six points:

1. *Consider to whom you are giving the ministry.* Laypeople are not volunteers; they are ministers.⁵ Granted, people are more familiar with the word volunteer and the concept of volunteerism than they are with minister or ministry. These labels are the vocabulary of our secular culture. My wife, for example, was a hospital volunteer for several years, delivering mail and flowers to patients. Everybody understands that terminology and concept.

However, we Christians do not participate only in the secular culture

culture; we have a priority commitment to our Christian culture. The "politically correct" terms and concepts in our Christian culture are minister and ministry. Our vocabulary and understanding are to be formed by Scripture, not by secular culture. The fact that God sees us as *ministers* doing *ministry* indicates that He puts far more value on us than secular culture does. He, the Creator, calls us to work with Him, and he gives us His Spirit to guide and empower us in accomplishing the tasks He assigns. Consider that you are giving the ministry to the laos, God's servant people.

2. Consider setting process goals as well as an arrival goal. An example from the early American westward movement helps us understand this consideration and do something with it. The arrival goal was Oregon. The process goals were securing wagons and horses; providing basic supplies such as water, food and fire; coping with sickness and injuries; and confronting the Indians. The preacher must consider that people do not move from a good sermon about lay ministry to doing ministry. The arrival goal of doing ministry is necessary, but it must incorporate many process goals. One major process goal is the formation of a leadership team.⁶

3. Consider the many barriers. We can't anticipate all of them; but we cite a few: Clergy who won't let it happen and laypeople who won't accept it; clergy who do not know how to give the ministry to the people; endorsing the principle, but not proceeding with actions. Matching antidotes are: The paradigm shift; learning from others what was not taught in seminary; and leading in action, not just theology.

4. Consider that it takes time, patience and perseverance. I have the following clipping, but I do not know its source:

The person who looks for quick results in seed planting will be disappointed. If I want potatoes for dinner tomorrow, it will do me little good to go out and plant potatoes in my garden tonight. There are long stretches of darkness and invisibility and silence that separate planting and reaping. During the stretches of waiting, there is cultivating and weeding and nurturing and planting other seeds.

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That takes care of time. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5. God counsels us from Hebrews 12 about perseverance: "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (v.1). These are significant considerations.

Since my first book gives the specific action steps to take in giving the ministry to the people, I'll not repeat them in this book. However, I have included an updated list in appendix H 7

5. Consider what you are giving. It is pastoral care. The Lay Pastors Ministry, or any other lay pastoral model, is a system of congregational care that has been the pastor. That system is not working. The new system is.

6. Consider passing this ministry on, not down. The way pastors perceive ministry will be the way people will perceive it. Many clergy will require a complete paradigm shift to pass it *on* rather than *down*. Unless people also undergo a paradigm shift, the pastor can pass it on, but the people will perceive it as being passed down.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
Ministry belongs to the people: Find a way to give it to them!

Notes:

1. Paul A. Gilbert, "A Strategy for Equipping the Laity for Pastoral Care in the Wesleyan Church," (1996).
2. reNews, published by Presbyterian for Renewal.
3. For a complete teaching about active and passive involvement.
4. See Appendix F.
5. For a list of differences
6. See Appendix G
7. See Appendix H.

Chapter 13

How This Ministry Fits in Your Church

One piece of the puzzle

Two years after moving into our new home in Apple Valley, Minnesota, we began to think about adding another room. We met with the builder to see how it would fit—fit on the lot, fit the architectural design and fit our needs.

The room was built. It fits on the lot perfectly, fits both our exterior and interior designs and fits our needs. It has become the most-used room in our house.

Your congregation has been built. You begin to think about the need for more pastoral care. You meet with The Builder, the one who said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). You discover what looks like a workable model, the Lay Pastors Ministry.

Questions arise:

- How will it fit in the total of the church?
- Is there room for it among the organizations and programs?
- Does the need for pastoral care warrant it?
- Will it fit our long-range plan?
- How does it compare with small group?
- How is it different from the Stephen Ministries model?

how this ministry fits in your church

If you intend to have a lay pastoral care ministry, it will have to "fit." A "misfit" is disappointing eyesore, whether it's an added room or an added ministry.

Many questions need to be answered and many factors must be considered. We'll take them one by one in this final chapter. Then, if you see that it will fit and if The Builder will build it, you can proceed with confidence.¹ If this ministry has already been added to your church and you are having problems with the fit, it's not too late to do some remodeling.

The Right Time for the Right Ministry

The first consideration is timing. Is this the time to start the ministry? The need does not determine the time, because the need is always present.

Timing is essential in the plan of God and the readiness of a congregation. If the builder suggested adding a room before we were ready, my wife and I would not have been interested. If he had tried to press us, we would have walked away. The need was present from the beginning, but just as with the need for a lay pastoral care ministry, we had to see it ourselves.

The timing must be right. The two churches I wrote about earlier knew it was time to start the ministry.² The first congregational Church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, realized the time had come from the groups that met to identify need and set priorities. Once they knew, they did not delay.

The Desert Hope Church in Phoenix, Arizona, knew the time was now because of its strong desire to grow. The congregation's readiness peaked at the end of a nine-month enculturation period. They started the ministry.

The prototype for the Lay Pastors Ministry developed by College Hill Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, took three sequential periods of time:

1. The need for more pastoral care indicated the time had come to get a ministry group together to pray, study and determine what could be done. The group invested 18 months developing the ministry.

2. *The time* had come to launch a pilot project to see if the ministry would work. This took six months.
3. The success of the pilot project indicated that *the time* had come to launch the ministry full scale. We did not delay.

COMPLETING THE PASTORAL CARE PUZZLE

The second consideration must be other kinds of pastoral care happening in the church. The Lay Pastors Ministry maybe the major pastoral effort in one church and the minor one in another. Whichever it is, the ministry has to fit into the total picture like one piece of a jigsaw puzzle has its place in the whole. To do this, the group responsible for the ministry will need to identify the other kinds of pastoring to see where this place fits.

In some churches, the pastor may be the only other source of pastoral care. In this church there are only two pieces of the pastoral care puzzle, the pastor and the Lay Pastors Ministry. But even the two must be positioned to complement each other so they neither overlap nor creat gaps

Most churches will find many pieces: small groups, organizations, and program departments such as Christian Education or Family Life. Three criteria determine whether pastoral care is happening in groups, organizations and departments:

- **Sharing:** People are encouraged to share their needs and have an opportunity to be prayed for something during every meeting. I know churches where this is a regular part of choir rehearsal, board meetings and planning meetings.
- **Accountability:** Persons participating know one another si welk that if one is missing or facing difficulties, at least one other person will notice and contact them.
- **Bonding:** They mutually share concerns about spiritual growth, health and relationships.

Fitting a lay pastoral care ministry into this picture requires compiling lists of people receiving pastoral care from other sources. Lay pastors are not assigned to them. Someone will have to update these

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lists regularly because people will be moving in and out of the groups. When a person leaves a group, the pastoral care ministry pick them up or they will "falk through the cracks."

RECOGNIZING REALISTIC GOALS

The third consideration is your goal. At Hope Church, the Ministry Leadership Group set the goal of providing pastoralcare for every household. After a couple of years, the group did a reality check. The church consisted of 1,100 households. The flow of members into the ministry indicated the goal was unrealistic; all these households would not have lay pastors in any foreseeable future.

With this new insight, the Ministry Leadership Group accepted the challenge to fit the Lay Pastors Ministry into the new picture by changing the goal. The group would now be responsible to assure (rather than provide) every household that it would receive pastoral care in some form.

They began by identifying those who were cared for in small groups, organizations and program departments. They acknowledged pastoral care from other sources to be adequate and did not assign those people to a lay pastor. Their highest priority was "fringe people," those who were not active in any organization or ministry, and perhaps not even participating in church activities or worship. Now their goal was realistic. The ministry could fit.

LAY PASTORS MINISTRY AND OR STEPHEN MINISTRY

The fourth consideration emerges from an often-asked question: "What is the difference between the Lay Pastors Ministry (LPM) and the Stephen Ministry (SM)?"³

For some churches, the question is, How does the Lay Pastors Ministry fit in a church which has the Stephen Ministry? or How does the Stephen Ministry fit in a church that has the Lay Pastors Ministry? Leaders of both organizations are good friends. They believe God has raised up both ministries and that the two complement each other rather than compete. I see the differences to be:

1. SCOPE

LPM: A system of congregational care that includes all members of a church on a continuing basis.

SM: A system of congregational care that gives attention primarily to members who are experiencing difficulties.

2. DESIGN

LPM: Adaptable to each church's needs and culture; can be started by following the steps in appendix H of this book. (My book, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* gives an in-depth look at this process.)

SM: Required a prescribed structure and training. Materials available only to enrolled churches.

3. DURATION

LPM: Continues through good times and bad times. The strategy is to build a long-lasting relationship.

SM: Lasts through the crisis, then the ministering person is available to be reassigned.

4. QUANTUM

LPM: One lay pastor cares for 5 to 10 households.

SM: One Stephen Minister cares for one person.

5. ORIENTATION

LPM: Relational and spiritual within a Christian bond.

SM: Relational, spiritual and psychological within a Christian association.

6. TRAINING

LPM: Ten to 15 hours prepare lay pastors to be "love with skin on it."

SM: Fifty hours prepare Stephen Ministers with skill to care for troubled people.

Notice their commonalities. Both the Lay Pastors Ministry and the Stephen Ministry..

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- Recognize, develop and utilize the giftedness of people;
- Generate an atmosphere of loving and caring within the congregation;
- Require training, support and accountability;
- Utilize similiar skills, which include: listening, assertiveness, problem ownership, professionalism, confidentiality and the use of "traditional resources" (prayer, Scripture, witness and blessing);
- Benefit the church: Pastors are released from "overload"; they can sleep at night knowing their people are being cared for. Laypeople feel fulfilled using their gifts, to time, energy and faith to make a difference in the lives of others.

The two ministries complement each other, some churches have both. In churches that have both the Lay Pastors Ministry and the Stephen Ministry, Stephen Ministries are resource people for lay pastors who have individuals in their flock encouraging crisis. Those in crisis will have a lay pastor *and* a Stephen Minister for a period of time. Lay Pastors are resource people for Stephen Ministers to give continuing pastoral care when the crisis has passed.

Many churches, after examining both, opt for one or the other, depending upon their priorities, finance and people-potential. The ideal situation is to have both ministries. Togethet, they provide quite complete grassroots pastoral care coverage.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

A big consideration is how the Lay Pastors Ministry fits with small groups. Many organizations are assisting churches in starting, growing, resourcing and sustaining small group ministries. Some churches have a staff person responsible for administrating a Small Group Ministry.

Small groups, where they work, are an effective form of pastoral care; that is, if they include a time of sharing personal needs and joys, followed by prayer for one another about the specifics shared.

Small groups have fared well in some churches. David Trawick, senior pastor of Northwest Hill United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas, tells about his church's small group ministry —some are Bible study groups, some supports,

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some recovery. They are based on common interests and life situations. Hear him:

These small groups do a terrific job of teaching people to minister to each other, rather than to assume it is the pastor's job. My pastoral care load has dropped noticeably since we developed this ministry, because people are truly taking responsibility for the ministry of Christ. Our dream is to increase the number of groups and participants until the entire congregation is involved.⁴

There is always the other side of the coin, however. The February 7, 1994 issue of *Christianity Today* focused on "The Small- Group Takeover." It reports that all is not positive about the movement, and that according to research specialist George Barna, the small-group movements until may be waning.

Be that as it may—positive; negative or neutral —not all the members of any church will be in small groups. One large 3,000-member church of my acquaintance, though it promoted small groups for years by assigning every member to a group, training leaders, producing great materials and programming one night a week in the church calendar for small group meetings, still had only 65 percent of its people active in groups. What can a church do about caring for the people who will not or cannot be in small groups?

First, the church must be realistic. Some people cannot be in small group because of their work schedule, busy agenda, family responsibilities or traveling. Some will not because of their personalities, threatened feelings, spiritual immaturity or indifference.

Coaxing or trying to press people into a small-group mold is not the loving thing to do. The loving is to provide another form of pastoral care for them, as did the previously mentioned large church. They invited us to lead them in starting the Lay Pastors Ministry for the 35 percent who were not active in a group. The lay pastors were selected from active small group participants.

With a little creativity, some discussion with concerned people and a lot of prayer, ways can be found to combine a variety of pastoral care forms. The goal for all of us is to fulfill the Great Charter to assure that every household is adequately pastored.

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EVERY MEMBER COUNTS

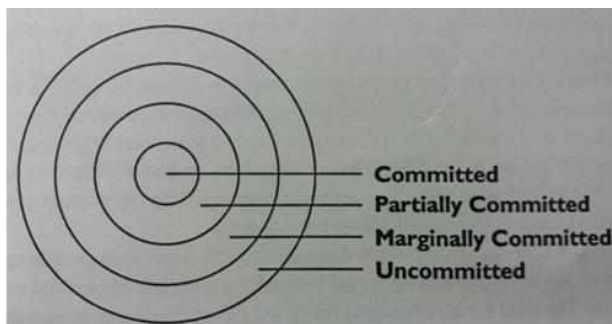
Consider next how the Lay Pastors Ministry fits whole church family. It fits by being elastic enough to stretch around every last one so no one is without personal care and love.

The Lay Pastors Ministry cannot rest until every last member of the church family is loved and pastored by someone who truly cares.

Jesus' parable of the one lost sheep stretches the pastoral boundary to include even the straying one. Just as the shepherd could not rest until every last sheep was enfolded, the Lay Pastors Ministry cannot rest until every last member of the church family is loved and pastored by someone who truly cares.

This means that everybody counts. The love and care boundary is not allowed to gerrymander, including only "the new and the neat" (as one church was accused of doing) while forgetting the drop-outs, the unresponsive and other not-so-neat people.

Imagine your church to be a solar system. These are those at the center, committed. Beyond those are the partially committed. Farther



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out are the marginally committed; most distant from the center are the uncommitted. Whether at the center or most distant away, each one is precious to the Lord and precious to the Lay Pastors Ministry.

Some garments are touted, "One size fits all." That label belongs on this ministry. The reason it fits all is that lay pastors are providing what all people need: love. All need someone who cares enough to hear them and remember them. Every last one, even the wondering ones, need someone to P A C E them (Pray for them, be Available to them, Contact them and be sn Example). One ministry fits all.

LOVE REQUIRES TOUGH PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE TOUGH TO LOVE

The Lay Pastors Ministry requires tough people. It's easy to care for those we like and those who like us, but what about the others? Jesus makes it tough for us. Listen to Him:

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the pagans do that? (Matt. 5: 46, 47)

True love is tough. Have you ever wondered how Jesus must have felt in His humanity? He was misunderstood, sentenced to death by crucifixion in a kangaroo court, spit on, cursed and nailed to the cross while fully alert. And, in spite of the cruelty, He prayed from the cross a prayer of love: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Love is tough! This ministry is carried on by people who have that kind of love. That's why this ministry fits all the people in the church family.

One of our lay pastors was assigned an elderly man who had not been in the church since his wife died. "His wife had the religion." He had joined years before only to please her. Even though he had professed faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord when he joined (it is not possible to join a Presbyterian church without affirming this personal faith), that had obviously never taken root in his heart. He was not very interested in having a lay pastor, especially one who talked about his faith and wanted to pray with him.

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It took a long time, but the lay pastor's love melted his resistance. He finally prayed to receive Christ. His profession and possession were now congruent. It is a point of interest that one of his first acts after this experience was to write a generous check to the church. He was catapulted from the farthest distance in our imaginary solar system to the center. Love is tough. It kept the lay pastor P A C E-ing this man through many difficult and discouraging months. While not much else fit this man, love did. This ministry fits all.

It fits Generation X, thirty something people, baby boomers, people who are slow to accept to Christian morals because they didn't grow up in a Christian environment, the biblically illiterate, those who have divorced, those with AIDS, the handicapped, the unconventional, people of all races, the confined, the senile and all others who have become a part of your church family. This ministry fits all because it takes that all of Galatians 3:26-28 seriously:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (italics mine).

THE LARGE PICTURE

Another crucial consideration is how the ministry fits into the large picture—the whole purpose of the church, the witness of its people between Sundays, and the church's participation in the kingdom of God.

Because the Lay Pastors Ministry is the organized and visible caring initiative within the church, it raises the caring quotient of the whole congregation. When a church of 500 members, for example, has 20 to 40 people who intentionally love and care for others, the spirit of the whole churchbin enriched.

Love and care spreads like the yeast a woman mixed into the flour until "it worked all through the dough (Luke 13:21). This ministry mixes love and care into the lives of people until it work through all the church.

The Church, being a model of the kingdom of God, is to be attractive

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to people not yet in the Kingdom. Jesus said, "By this all men [and women] will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). And we sing, "They will know we are Christians by our love " By seeing that God's people have genuine and enduring love, people will be drawn to His kingdom.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." *Let laypeople do it!*

Notes:

1. Matthew 16:18. My belief is that the Lord is using the Lay Pastors Ministry as one way of building His Church.
2. See chapter 1 for the Cannon Falls, Minnesota, church and chapter 12 for the Phoenix, Arizona, church
3. Stephen Ministries, 8016 Dale, St. Louis MO.
4. *Net Results*. "Building A 'High Touch' Church."

-The End