

# Commission on Ministry

**Affirmation and Celebration of Lay Ministry**  
Diocese of Western Michigan

November 8, 2011



## **Affirmation and Celebration of Lay Ministry**

A Guide to the Discernment Process and recognition of Lay Ministry for all Baptized Persons

The way one lives one's life is "Lay Ministry". Jesus invites all of his followers into ministry. The Baptismal Covenant and the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer both clearly articulate ministry expectations for all baptized persons.

Title III Canon 1 "Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons" in the National Episcopal Church Canons states that **"Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including: (a) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's missions at all times and in all places. (b) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation."**

What is a call to Ministry?

Words like "discernment", "call", and "ministry" do not lend themselves to simple definitions because they involve figuring out God's will.

**Call** is a response to God's summons to participate in God's purposes for the world. The response can be specific; such as being called to be a teacher, a salesman, a mother or more general such as how one lives one's life in the world.

**Ministry** is offering oneself for others out of one's love for God. Jesus offered a model of ministry through his work of healing, reconciling, teaching and sustaining.

**Discernment** is the process of discovering what God is calling us to do and exploring what gifts we have to respond to that call.

**For our Diocese to come into full compliance with the Canon, The Commission Ministry Committee members believe that each Parish church needs to explore ways to facilitate the two major areas of :Parish Education and Clergy Support to facilitate lay ministry call and recognition/and response to that call.**

**Equip individuals to hear what God might want them to do.**

There are numerous ways in which the Church can stimulate people to begin thinking about how they might be called to ministry within their own lives.

\* **Establishing Covenant Groups:** Covenant Groups are small groups created for the purpose of developing a deeper intimacy with and understanding of God. These groups which meet regularly are formed for the sole purpose of mutual discernment, accountability and prayerful support for living as a disciple in the world. Each meeting is structured using a discerning Bible study model as a catalyst for group discussion. This is not a traditional Bible study model but rather one that focuses on reading a scriptural passages and allowing people to be open to that passage speaking to them from where they are at that moment in *their lives*. *Through a regular commitment to the group, members become more aware of God's grace in their lives and find new ways to serve God and neighbor.*

*This exercise is intended to help people examine how they go through their lives on a typical day and to reflect on whether this is how they want to live through a day. It addresses how they treat themselves and others and how their daily living can be ministry.*

*It is important to do this meditation slowly with long pauses in between questions to give people time to focus on each part.*

**Presenter:** *Close your eyes. Now, let your mind drift back to a recent ordinary day, perhaps this past Wednesday. Do this now.*

- \* *What did you do when you first awoke? Do you have a spiritual practice to begin your day? Did you spend time in prayer or contemplation to give yourself a solid beginning to your day?*
- \* *If you live with others, how did you greet them in this new day? Did you show pleasure in seeing them (pause) or were you foggy and grumpy? Did you focus on what they were saying to you or were you distracted about what lay ahead for you that day?*
- \* *Did you begin the day with nourishing food?*
- \* *When you left home to begin your activities for that day, how did you travel? If you were driving, were you a courteous and safe driver, or an aggressive and angry one? If you traveled by bus or train or by foot, were you courteous and friendly fellow traveler?*

\*

*Think about the people you saw during the day and how you interacted with them? Who did you talk to? How did you talk to them? Were you brusque and result focused, or did you show consideration to your fellow workers, to your children as you dropped them off at school, to your committee members, to your friends?*

- \* *At the end of the work or activity day, how did you unwind? If you live with*

*others, did you spend time sharing your day and listening to them talk about theirs? Did you listen with interest to what they had on their minds and share what was on their mind? Did you feel re-connected to those people in your life at the end of the day? If you live alone, did you reach out to a friend to see how they were and to share your thoughts?*

- \* In the evening, did you read a good book, take a walk, listen to music, spend time doing something nourishing for your mind, body and soul? Did you take time to pray or contemplate what is important to you in your life? Did you reflect on what had been satisfying about this day - and what you would like to do differently tomorrow?*

*(Long Pause) As you are ready, begin to come back to this room and this moment. Let your mind and body slowly return. When you are ready, open your eyes.*

*Questions for discussion might include:*

- \* What struck you as important as you went through this process?*
- \* Did anything surprise you?*
- \* What are your thoughts about your everyday interactions as ministry?*

*Additional open- ended questions may lead to more discussion.*

**\* Establish a “Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community” Group:**

Listening Hearts provides a useful basis for hearing the voice of God in one’s life through community. It supports the development of ministry in congregational contexts through group discussion. The discussion approach to using *Listening Hearts* in a congregational context through group discussion can have the following purposes. (from the Manual for Discussion Leaders)

- \* To help participants clarify and expand their understanding of call, ministry, discernment, and community as they relate to one another.*
  - \* To provide participants an opportunity to grow in their relationship to God.*
  - \* To increase a sense of listening to God in themselves, through others, and in everyday occurrences.*
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- \* To enable participants to become more aware of the value of the support of a faith community.*

While some have used *Listening Hearts* in a very specific way to discern a call (such as a change in careers, change in a relationships,, or considering ordination) it is generally useful in the congregational context to build the ministry of the baptized community.

**Dynamics of Covenant Groups** - Each member of a covenant group agrees to be present to other members of the group in a mutual journey of discernment. As such, the group forms norms or agreement for members. Eight covenants are identified as follows:

- \* **Covenant of Affirmation** - There is nothing you have done or do that will make me stop caring for you. I may not agree with your actions, but I will care for you as a person, and do all I can to hold you up in God's affirming love.
- \* **Covenant of Availability** - My time and resources are at your disposal if you need them, to the limit of my abilities. As part of this availability, I pledge my time on a regular basis, whether in prayer or in an agreed upon meeting time.
- \* **Covenant of Prayer** - Covenant to pray for you regularly.
- \* **Covenant of Openness** - I promise to strive to become a more open person, disclosing my feelings, my struggles, my joys, and my hurts to you as well as I am able. This is to establish trust, acknowledge need to affirm your worth to me as a person.
- \* **Covenant of Honesty** - I will try to mirror back to you what I am hearing you say and feel. If this means risking pain for either of us. I will trust our relationship enough to take that risk. I will try to express this with honesty and sensitivity and awareness of the appropriate circumstance.
- \* **Covenant of Sensitivity** - I will strive not to let my needs overshadow my sensitivity to your needs. I will try to hear you, see you, and feel where you are.
- \* **Covenant of Confidentiality** - I will promise to keep confidential whatever is shared with the confines of this group.
  
- \* **Covenant of Accountability** - I consider that the gifts God has given me for the common good should be liberated for your benefit. I am accountable to you to become what God has designed me to be. If I should discover areas of my life under bondage for whatever reason, I will seek Christ's liberating power through his Holy Spirit and through my covenant partners so that I might live into the work God has given me to do.

## **Or use the “Torah” from “Disciples of Christ in Community: Small Groups**

- 1.** Avoid speaking in generalities or about theory. Make I statements. For example, discuss how the topic makes you feel and how you do or do not live it out.
- 2.** Be responsible for yourself in the group.
- 3.** Be a active listener. Do not try to convince. Do not give advice. Do not judge. Try to hear the feeling behind the words.
- 4.** Claim your share of “air time”.
- 5.** Do not dominate. Everyone should have a chance to contribute.
- 6.** Attend every week/ or meeting with very few absences. This is your Commitment. Continuity is very important for the life of the group.
- 7.** Maintain the confidentiality of the group. You may discuss with outsiders only what you said in the group, and only if doing so does not reveal what anyone else said.
- 8.** Remind other group members of the Torah when they are not observing be kind, but speak the truth.
- 9.** Seek and serve Christ in each person in the group, especially those different from you.

*The “Disciples of Christ in Community” is a program developed by the School of Theology at Sewanee, Tennessee. This is a comprehensive program that allows participants in a small group to reflect and experience God’s direction and call through Scripture and discussion in their lives in the past and looking to the future.*

\* **Gifts Discernment:** God gives everyone gifts that can be used in ministry. The use of these gifts enables us to participate in the reconciliation of God and the world, to fulfill God’s purpose in the world.

People are often confused about their gifts. They may not be used to thinking of themselves as having gifts. They may not have any idea how they can use their gifts to be useful for God’s purposes. We are familiar with those people who think their gifts are not special enough for God’s work. Or, sometimes the gifts they most obviously have are well-worn, and the owner wants to do something new.

Parish congregations or small groups of people are invited to participate in a Gifts Discernment Assessment. This will enable you to name your gifts, identify opportunities to use them inside and outside your church community, and receive support for your special ministry.

The resources described are intended to help people explore their gifts and their call to use their gifts for God's Glory and for service and mission.

**Finding your Spiritual Gifts for ministry** (taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. See attachment "Spiritual Gifts Assessment Form")

**Knowing Your Personality Style - DISC**

Robert A. Rohm Ph.D., Personality Insights, Personality Insights. Com.

While on the journey of discerning your ministry call, knowing what motivates and inspires you will be a great help. Understanding what motivates and inspires people that you share ministry work with will help create smooth working relationships. Knowing what your personality style is and celebrating the gifts that are associated with your particular style are vital components in realizing your ministry call.

You determine your personality style by answering the following questions:

1. Are you more outgoing or more reserved?
2. Are you more task-oriented or people-oriented?

The answers to those two simple questions will give you the basis for determining your personality style.

**D Dominant Type** - An outgoing, task-oriented person who is inspired by getting things done and making things happen. These People are motivated by respect and getting results.

**I Inspiring Type** - An outgoing, people-oriented person who is inspired by socializing, having fun, and interacting with others. These people are motivated by admiration and recognition.

**S Supportive Type** - A reserved people-oriented person who is inspired by helping and supporting other people and building the team. These people are motivated by friendliness and sincere appreciation.

**C Cautious Type** - A reserved, task-oriented person who is inspired by consistency, quality, information, and accuracy. These people are motivated by trust and integrity.

DISC is not meant to measure our values or create labels that define us. It is a tool that will help us understand behavior patterns in ourselves and the people in our environments. Each personality type offers gifts that contribute to different ministries. The key is to understand what personality types are compatible with particular ministries as well as knowing what gifts and talents that others bring to the work that can supplement the gifts and talents that you have identified.

Everyone has traits in each of the DISC categories. Knowing what category motivates and inspires you can give you courage and strength as you continue the discernment of your ministry call.

### **Ministry Opportunities Are Everywhere**

\* **Ministry of Relationships:** *Ministry is found in relationships - our everyday relationships offer opportunities to live our faith in meaningful ways, to participate in the reconciliation of the world to God's kingdom of justice and love.*

*Relationships are a crucial part of our human experience. Research confirms that relationships are good for us, for our physical, mental and spiritual health. We all need each other and each other's care.*

*So what does this all mean for us as Christians? Our baptismal covenant, what we promise when we are baptized - or what is promised for us if we are infants - is that we follow Christ and live by his words. The Book of John quotes Christ as saying, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you," and "This I command you, to love one another." Loving, caring for one another is at the heart of our faith, of what Christ calls us to.*

*The foundation for our faith is about our relationship to God and to each other. The Ten Commandments are about loving and honoring God and about how we treat one another. Then in the New Testament, Jesus calls us to love God and to love each other. We celebrate our lives as Christians in community, together. We get together to baptize new babies, celebrate love in our marriage ceremony, affirm growth and new responsibilities in the confirmation service, grieve loved ones through ceremony and ritual. Our lives as Christians affirm community and relationships over and over.*

*Every day, when we encounter other people, whether loved ones, not so loved ones, people who do work for us, people for whom we work, ALL people, we as Christians, are given the opportunity to be ministers of God's love in the world and to honor Jesus call to us to love one another.*

\* **Ministries in the Workplace:** Christians in the workplace offer witness to their faith each time they make a choice and by the ways they treat others. Any given day on the job, a believer can make a decision that will influence the lives of many other people. So how does it mean to follow Jesus in a secular job? How

does what you hear on Sunday influence what you do on Tuesday?

In recent years, a number of initiatives have begun helping people make the link between their lives of faith and their workplaces...helping them see the ministry opportunities in their places of employment. Interested persons are strongly encouraged to use their favorite internet search engine to search for resources related to “faith at work”, “workplace ministry”, and “spirituality at work”.\_

\* **Children as Ministers:** Unlike the rest of this publication, the target reader for this section is not the person ministering in the context described. Rather, it identifies ways that we adults can be attentive to the spiritual gifts represented by children, gifts that make them ministers in the world.

Human beings are by nature attracted to God, or to something beyond ourselves. This characteristic shows itself easily in children for they are aware of God at an early age, although they have yet to develop language to express it. Other characteristics of children - especially very young ones - make them exemplars of spirituality, if we but take the time to notice.

First, children love to love, and respond readily to expressions of love from others. Second is that they are quick to forgive. If we learn nothing more from children than those two qualities, we will have benefited from their ministry. But they offer more!

Children think about existential issues; life, death, meaning. In seeking answers for themselves, they make ample use of the imagination. They find it easy to be in relationship with God, most likely because their mind is not constantly causing them to doubt. Consequently, they are sincere in their prayer, never “faking it.”

Children are not interested in status. This is one of the characteristics Jesus was pointing to when he proposed a child as a model for the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 18:3) They are unimpressed by bishops, CEOs of multinational corporations, or presidents of countries. They deal with people as people. What matters most to children is serious attention to their being, which should prevail in adult relationships, but rarely does. A corollary is that children are more interested in process than product. This means that the experience itself is more meaningful than any concrete object derived from it.

Children are creative with the simplest of objects. If children have access to basic materials, they will devise all manner of interesting objects, all the while enjoying their fabrication more than the objects themselves. Whether children continue to serve us as ministers as they grow up is to a large extent governed by the type of guidance they get from us adults. We have all seen children - both younger and older ones - behave in selfish ways, or respond dramatically to external stimuli. How adults respond to those situations is crucial to the way children process the elements of their environment. If throughout their growth we nurture them in their

faith development, they continue to be hopeful and trusting. They become strong in the confidence that enables them to confront difficulty. They develop awareness of reciprocity among individuals, and are able to articulate increasingly complex observation about their relationships and about the world. In adolescence, they continue to ponder existential questions, talking about them in language derived from whatever environment has sustained them.

Finally, one of the most valuable qualities children and young people share with adults is their idealism, their absence of cynicism. On some level, life's central challenge is to grow old without becoming a cynic, and children help us in this endeavor. Our response to their qualities and to their being will determine the kind of minister they and we become.

*Affirm the ministry of all God's people*

### **Ways to Celebrate and affirm Ministry in the world**

#### **"All Are Called" Sundays**

The objective of "All are Called" Sundays is to recognize, encourage and bless the primary ministries of the Baptized in the context of the worshipping community. These small additions to the regular Sunday liturgy can be inserted after the Sermon and Creed, prior to the Prayers of the People, as one would do for the Commissioning of Lay Ministers.

We are all called to be ministers in the world, to follow Jesus, and to work towards the reconciliation of the world to God. This is not something that happens in isolation, but in all that we do. We recognize the diverse ways and settings in which this reconciliation occurs -- at home, in our workplaces, in our relationships and in our avocations. We invite all who are called to various ministries to come before the assembly to be recognized in their principal ministries and to receive the blessing of the people of God.

*Included in the "All are Called Sundays" can be the ministries of :*

- \* The Arts*
- \* Business, Finance, and the Law*
- \* Care, Nurture, and Formation of Children and Youth*
- \* Education*
- \* Health Care and Healing*
- \*Public Service*
- \*Relationship*

*Note: the prayer over the ministers, after the bidding, prior to the concluding Trinitarian blessing, may be prayed in unison by the whole assembly. The basic format for “All are Called” Sundays and sample collects can be found in the Worship Resources.*

### **Prayers of the People**

**Intercessions:** The Book of Common Prayer offers six forms of the Prayers of the People, which are used as standard. However they can be used as models. Other forms or adaptations are legitimate as long as we are mindful of including the particular topics that express the breadth of our concerns and celebrations as a community. One of those topics is to pray for our Universal church, its members and its mission (BCP, p. 359). On any given Sunday, this is realized when we pray for one member of our Anglican Communion, one particular church in our diocese and of course the ordained leadership. However if we take seriously our understanding of praying for our members, would this not include all of our baptized ministers?

***Congregational-Based and Worldly Ministries:*** Many congregations expand prayers to give thanks for the work of the many ministries that have their center within the parish. Affirming alter guild members, Lay Readers/Chalice Bearers Christian Formation educators, Acolytes, Choir members, Parishioner Care Team Members, Vestry Members, in Prayers can recognize their contribution and significance of the work done consistently throughout the year. These are ways in which laity “take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church”. However, ministry also includes representing and bearing witness to Christ and according to the gifts given us, to carry out Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world “wherever we may be” (BCP, 855) Therefore, weekly liturgies can also include prayers that affirm the ministries of members as caregivers, healers, advocates, friends, parents, and children. They can be simple even when using a standard prayer form. For example: “We give thanks for the ministry of all the baptized and especially all those who are called to a healing ministry, doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, chaplains and all others whose labor in the world reflects the healing love of God.”

Praying for our ministry in the world or within our congregation need not be mutually exclusive...

“For parents, teachers and youth workers, that they may live with the gospel each day, sharing their love with all.” or “We give thanks for the ministry of parents, and teachers as they guide and nurture our children. In our own parish we give thanks for all those on the Youth and Family Ministry Team.”

For all members of our community, that we may recognize the gifts we have received from the Spirit and use them freely for the good of all. (We pray for all those who exercise a ministry of discernment to friends, family, or coworkers. In our parish we pray for all those on our Discernment Ministry Team.)

We hear in all these prayers, a reminder that Christ's work is in the world and all of Christ's work is important and a reflection of the gifts we each bring to our daily lives.

It is hoped that what has been presented here as a resource will assist in....

- \*Affirming the ministry of all God's people, especially non-ordained persons
- \*Expand our understanding of ministry possibilities in every day life
- \*Equip individuals to hear what God might want them to do
- \*Equip congregations to affirm ministries beyond the institutional church
- \*Equip congregations to become discerning communities.

*The Subcommittee on Lay Ministry of the Commission on Ministry for the Diocese of Western Michigan wishes to thank The Episcopal Diocese of Newark for allowing us to use their "Celebrating Life as Ministry" Resourced Manual in the preparation of this information. We are hopeful that this resource will contribute to equipping congregations in affirming lay ministry within each of our parishes.*

### **Resources:**

*The Spiritual Lives of Children* by Robert Coles 1990

*The Spirit of the Child* by David Hay 2006

*The Ten Principles of Spiritual Parenting* by Mimi Doe 1998

Very good resource, about children seeing and feeling God. Includes

Comments from children. Suggestions given for young and older children.

*The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Vol. 1*

Disciples of Christ in Community "DOCC" from University of the South Sewanee Tennessee. For more information Google University of the South Sewanee Tennessee. Choose School of Theology. Request "Disciples of Christ in Community". You will receive good information about this adult program which provides an experiential in building community while encouraging individual spiritual growth.

*Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* by Suzanne Farnham

Listening Hearts Manual for Discussion Leaders

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America *God's Work. Our hands*  
***Spiritual Gifts Assessment Form***

Positive Personality Profiles by Robert A. Rohm PH.D. Personality Insights.com

A Guide to Living the Baptismal Covenant by Linda Grenz 1996

Supporting Christians at Work by Mark Greene 2001 A good resource for clergy to encourage and equip their congregations to view ministry in the workplace.

Appendix I Spiritual Gifts Assessment Form  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Appendix II Licensed Ministries In The Diocese of Western Michigan  
From the Office of the Bishop, Commission on Worship,  
Commission on Ministry Within the Church