Preamble

In 2015, the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry (ACCLPM) commissioned the Christian Research Association (CRA) to carry out a project to examine lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia. The outcome of this initial phase of research was the document authored by Aoife McGrath, Philip Hughes and Stephen Reid, *Exploring Lay Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church*, the final revised version of which appeared in February 2016.

Through exploring, in a second phase of research, the theological understanding of this ministry, ACCLPM's ultimate aim is to draft national guidelines for sustaining and developing lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia.

Central to this theological understanding is the distinction between the common priesthood of the lay faithful, which is founded on the sacrament of baptism, and the unique priesthood of bishops, priests and deacons, which is founded on the sacrament of orders. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expresses it:

> The primary distinction lies between the ministry of the lay faithful and the ministry of the ordained, which is a special apostolic calling. Both are rooted in sacramental initiation, but the pastoral ministry of the ordained is empowered in a unique and essential way by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Through it, the ministry of the apostles is extended. As successors to the apostles, bishops "with priests and deacons as helpers" shepherd their dioceses as "teachers of doctrine, priests for sacred worship and ministers of government." *(Lumen Gentium*, no. 20) … This recognition of the unique role of the ordained is not a distinction based on merit or rank; rather, it is a distinction based on the sacramental character given by the Holy Spirit…. All other ministries function in relation to [the ordained]. (Pp. 21-2.)
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> *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, D.C. 2005), http://www.usccb.org/upload/co-workers-vineyard-lay-ecclesial-ministry-2005.pdf

The ACCLPM's development of guidelines for lay pastoral ministry is undertaken with a clear recognition of this distinction between common and ordained ministry, as well as of their essential relationship to each other.

Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals
25 August 2017

Exploring Lay Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church

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Revised January 2016

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Executive Summary

This is a report of a research project commissioned by the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry (ACCLPM) to examine lay pastoral ministry in Australia and to review the literature in relation to such forms of ministry.

In many Catholic dioceses around Australia, lay pastoral ministers have been appointed. There are several terms used to describe these forms of ministry including 'non-ordained ministry', 'lay ecclesial ministry' and 'lay apostolate'. Different dioceses have developed descriptions of the roles and different structures for their functioning.

The theological basis for such forms of ministry arises from the common discipleship of all those who are baptised into the Church and the responsibility to share in the mission of the Church. Each person is called to make a contribution according to their gifts or charisms, exercising those gifts collaboratively, responsibly, accountably and with high moral standards.

However, a study of lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia in 2000 found that pastoral associates generally worked for more hours than they were paid for and often had no or an inadequate job description. Relationships with the parish priest were not always collaborative and some felt that their work was not understood by parishioners. About half had little or no accreditation for their work, and there was little opportunity to move from a position in one parish to a position in another. Few saw their work as being highly secure.

On the other hand, 71 per cent of Mass attenders felt that lay pastoral associates had enriched parish life. This was confirmed by the research of Dr Trudy Dantis who found that lay pastoral workers contributed significantly to parish vitality. However, recent studies by Dantis and Hughes have emphasised the need for training and mentoring, and the development of clear structures, well-defined roles and clear delegation of authority. Some other denominations in Australia, including the Uniting Church and Anglican Church, have developed clear support structures in which clergy take on roles as 'Resource Ministers' with a focus on resourcing teams or 'Enablers' supporting and training local lay leaders.

This research project took a case study approach in order to explore the great variety of ways and contexts in which lay pastoral ministry is exercised. The research covered those in both unpaid and paid positions. In order to ensure that case studies covered a wide range of situations, they were conducted in five States around Australia, in remote and rural areas, larger cities, and the capital cities, and in high, moderate and low multicultural contexts. They occurred in various canonical settings and involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with lay people in pastoral ministry, parish priests and moderators, a variety of people involved in the administration of parishes, diocesan representatives and other parishioners. In total, 94 people were interviewed.

Most of those in lay pastoral ministry had grown up in the Catholic Church, although some said they had drifted away from the Church at one time or other. Many had taken on lay pastoral ministry because they recognised that there were too few priests to do all that was needed. Others saw it as a responsibility of being a Catholic and they were giving back to the communities which had nurtured them and witnessing to their faith in the community. In some cases, roles had developed over a long period of time, arising from the need for someone to take on a responsibility, or because it was felt there was no one else to do it. Some were paid and others were not, with no common rationale for determining whether remuneration was appropriate. While most found the

roles rewarding, many experienced tensions in the expectations other parishioners and priests had of them and in prioritising their responsibilities for other aspects of family and work life. For many of them, there was an inherent insecurity in the work. A new priest arriving in the parish could mean that their roles would be terminated or significantly changed at short notice. Few felt there was a possibility of moving to similar roles in other parishes. While they could provide some continuity in parish life when priests were moved, there was little attention given to their own security or their succession.

Many of the lay pastoral ministers had begun their work in response to an invitation from a priest to do some occasional unpaid ministry. Their roles had grown from that point. In some cases, there was a process of discernment to establish whether nominees for a particular role were suitable. On the other hand, many paid roles were advertised and applicants had been interviewed. The employer was usually the parish priest and the lay pastoral minister was directly responsible to the parish priest or moderator for their work.

Dioceses had, in some locations, provided some training and/or formation for the roles. In other places, it was assumed that if people had the aptitude they would learn on the job. Some had undertaken theological education.

It was common for many activities that were undertaken in the parish, such as preparation for meetings or taking care of administrative tasks, not to be counted as part of the 'official work'. Many participants who were paid for some work also undertook unpaid work. There were indications that some were facing 'burn out' from overwork and from their attempts to balance their parish work with other aspects of their lives. In places, the physical environment for their work was satisfactory, but in other places it was problematic.

For many, there was no set structure for their daily activities. Many responded in a flexible way to the needs of the particular time and circumstances. Some were involved in long-term planning for their ministry in relation to a leadership team, but in other places such planning did not occur.

Some had been commissioned for their roles. Others had not. It was generally felt that commissioning was important in terms of 'being anointed and sent forth in mission', and in terms of their roles being publicly recognised.

In general, lay pastoral ministers felt that their relationships with parishioners and other people in their communities was positive, partly because they lived similar lives with family, work and other community activities. Certainly, they recognised the need for good communication with other lay, ordained and religious leaders in their communities, and in some case, the levels of collaboration were high. However, in some situations, in instances where priests seemed to feel threatened by the relationships lay leaders had with the parishioners, this added to the tensions in communication. Some lay pastoral leaders recalled circumstances where they felt that certain priests had exceeded their own spheres of responsibility in the ways they interacted with lay pastoral leaders.

Youth workers felt particularly vulnerable, often feeling that other people viewed their leadership as transitory, a preparation for more senior roles. In many circumstances, youth leadership was not well sustained financially by the parishes. People working in parish schools often felt that they became the face of the Church, particularly if there was no local resident priest, and yet were not often recognised for their contribution.

While relationships with dioceses and the national Church were rarely problematic, there was evidence that many lay pastoral ministers were not aware of the support that might be available, and felt isolated in their particular contexts. It was acknowledged that the support of the bishop for lay pastoral ministry was crucial for its effectiveness.

Major challenges arose from the transition of parish clergy, some of whom worked well with lay pastoral ministers while others did not. In other cases, priests could decide on new priorities in ministry which had major impacts on the particular roles that lay pastoral ministers were fulfilling.

Another ongoing challenge was finding parishioners to become involved. In some parishes, there was little sense of shared ownership of the life and mission of the parish.

It is the view of the research team that rigorous processes for the selection, formation, accreditation and authorisation of lay pastoral ministry encourage high quality ministry practice. While the flexible and transitory nature of many lay pastoral ministry roles suits some people, it can also be detrimental to the stability of that form of ministry. It is also important to manage the responsibilities, expectations and working hours to ensure that people do not burn out. Structures of support and supervision are important.

In the light of these observations, and the evident changes in the levels of specialisation and development of 'expert systems' in Australian society, the following recommendations are made:

1. that people be offered remuneration for work done for more than 4 hours a week on a continuing basis;
2. that contracts should cover all employed people, containing detailed role descriptions and realistic assessment of hours of work and should generally specify a length of time for the review of the contract;
3. that dioceses develop procedures and systems for the resolution of grievances and disputes and support networks;
4. that national systems of recognised training and professional development be facilitated with certificates that could be offered through online courses supported by local or online tutoring;
5. that templates for the commissioning of both paid employees and unpaid pastoral workers be developed; and
6. that workplaces should be provided for lay pastoral ministers in line with the instructions for Catholic Church employees in *Good Works*.

Introduction

The Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry (ACCLPM) of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference commissioned the Christian Research Association (CRA) to carry out a research project to examine lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia. The first aim was to find out what lay pastoral ministry looks like in different contexts (e.g. individual parishes, parish clusters, and geographical regions) in order to identify the following:

- how and why lay people become involved in pastoral ministry;
- what kind of tasks and responsibilities they have;
- how their roles are understood and received;
- what structures (if any) of support and supervision surround their involvement;
- how their ministry fits in with the broader mission and ministry in the context;
- what is needed to make this ministry effective and sustainable.

A second aim was to explore the theological understanding of such ministry: to conduct a review of Catholic literature regarding lay pastoral ministry in local, national, and international contexts; and to review relevant literature about similar forms of ministry in other Christian denominations.

The overall purpose of the project is to provide the ACCLPM with information on the current landscape of lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia, based on the experiences of people who participated in the project, and provide an outline of the theological foundations of such ministry. This information will inform the ACCLPM in their drafting of national guidelines for sustaining and developing this ministry.

Background to the Project

The ACCLPM is an advisory body to the Commission for Church Ministry of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Its purpose is to support, promote, and provide education and accreditation for lay people who see pastoral ministry as their vocation.

Acting on its mandate, the ACCLPM conducted a survey among Catholic dioceses in Australia to gather information about the national landscape of lay pastoral ministry. The findings of this survey demonstrated that there was a general recognition of the importance of this form of ministry. However, dioceses expressed the desire for more detailed information on lay pastoral ministry and identified the following needs:

1. Better recognition of and understanding of role(s), authorisation, and commissioning;
2. Solid education and formation for this ministry, leading to accreditation;
3. Support and guidance regarding human resource issues and employment relations;
4. Guidelines and policies on lay pastoral ministry.

In response, the ACCLPM initially asked if the Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference might conduct this research with the assistance of Dr Aoife McGrath who had worked in Ireland as a lay pastoral associate and had completed a master's degree in pastoral ministry. The Pastoral Research Office was unable to continue to employ Dr McGrath for the duration required to complete the research project because of visa restrictions and referred the project to the Christian Research Association (CRA). Hence, the CRA was commissioned to carry out the project, with a view to preparing national guidelines that will address the needs expressed by the Catholic dioceses. Dr McGrath was employed by the CRA as project officer for this research.

The Research Process

The CRA prepared a research proposal for consideration by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) at their November 2014 meeting. The proposal was approved and funding allocated. In December 2014, a Project Management Team was formed to clarify the parameters of the project and to oversee the research. This team comprised representatives of the ACCLPM, the Pastoral Research Office of the ACBC, and the CRA research team. A Reference Group was also formed to provide consultation at various stages of the project.

The Project Management Team created a plan for the research to include a pilot study and seven case studies. These were to be carried out in diverse locations across Australia, to discover what lay pastoral ministry looked like in various contexts. Details of how locations were selected can be found in Chapter 3.

In January 2015, the research team prepared fieldwork documents and an application for ethics approval. These were reviewed and accepted by the Reference Group. The Christian Research Association Ethics Committee approved the project on 9 February 2015.

The pilot and case studies were carried out mostly in February and March 2015. Data was gathered primarily by means of semi-structured interviews with a range of participants in each location. During this time, literature was also gathered for the purpose of the literature review.

In April 2015, the research team analysed the data from the pilot and case studies, and reviewed literature collected. This report was then prepared for submission to the ACCLPM.

The Research Team

The CRA research team for this project comprised Dr Aoife McGrath (Project Officer & Research Assistant of the CRA), Rev Dr Philip Hughes (Senior Research Officer of the CRA), and Stephen Reid (Research Officer, CRA).

The members of the Project Management Team were: Ms Donella Johnston (Project Manager and Support of the ACCLPM), Sr Kari Hatherell osu (Chair of the ACCLPM), Mr Richard McMahon (Deputy Chair of the ACCLPM), Dr Bob Dixon (Director of the Pastoral Research Office of the ACBC), Rev Dr Philip Hughes and Dr Aoife McGrath.

The Project Reference Group was made up of individuals with experience and expertise in relation to lay pastoral ministry. Its members were: Mr Daniel Ang, Ms Alison Burt, Mr Damian Coleridge, the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo, Bishop Andrew Curnow, Dr Trudy Dantis, Fr Martin Dixon, Mr Chris Ehler, Ms Maria George, Mrs Sophy Morley, Ms Teresa Rhynehart, and the members of the Project Management Team as listed above.

The Structure of This Report

The first and second chapter provide an analysis of literature relating to this form of ministry. The third chapter gives an overview of the research method used in this project. Chapters Four through to Seven take a closer look at the themes that emerged from the case studies. Chapter Eight presents some recommendations based on the research findings.

Chapter 1.
Lay Pastoral Ministry in Theological and Church Literature

The body of literature relevant to our present topic is both extensive and varied. For example, in the field of Catholic theology, many documents, articles and books have been published exploring the foundations, practices, and structures of lay pastoral ministry; the identity, spirituality, vocations and charisms of lay people; and the relationship between lay, religious, and ordained ministries in the Church. Similar themes have been addressed about comparable forms of ministry in other Christian denominations. The following review provides a sample of this literature. It illustrates the breadth of issues that have been identified and addressed by authors on this topic, offers some clarification of these issues, and provides an overall context for the current research project. Literature from local, national and international sources has been analysed for the purpose of this review.

Context and Complexities

Lay pastoral ministry and in particular the ministry positions for 'pastoral associates' have been growing in the Catholic Church in Australia from about the 1970s (Dixon, 1991; Dixon and Bond, 2000). While this project has adopted the terminology of 'lay pastoral ministry', such language is not unanimously used or accepted in Catholic literature. 'Lay ministry', 'non-ordained ministry', 'lay ecclesial ministry', and 'lay apostolate' are terms often used to describe this growing reality. To avoid the pitfalls and negative connotations associated with 'lay' and 'non-ordained', some authors have opted for alternative terms such as 'installed ministries' and 'commissioned ministries' (Gaillardetz, 2003). There is still much theological debate around each of these terms, their strengths and weaknesses, and their ability to encapsulate the intrinsic qualities and diversity of the reality being described.

In Australia, several dioceses have compiled policies on lay pastoral ministry roles using various nomenclatures. Certain dioceses provided literature relating to these policies to the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry, which has been made available to the research team for the purposes of this review. For example, in literature provided by the Archdiocese of Adelaide, the term 'lay ecclesial ministry' is used. This term is explained as follows:

> Lay Ecclesial Ministry is a generic description of those who, as well as living out the baptismal call to ministry of all Christians, are authorised by the Diocesan Bishop to assist the local Church in a particular way to fulfil its twofold mission of building up and sustaining Christ's faithful in communion with each other and to bring the message of Christ to the world (Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, 2014, p. 2).

The Archdiocese of Melbourne also uses the term 'lay ecclesial ministry' and has adopted the description provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in its statement *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. This description specifies that lay ecclesial ministry is characterised by:

- Authorisation of the bishop to serve publicly in the local church;
- Leadership in a particular area of ministry;
- Close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests and deacons; and

- Preparation and formation appropriate to the assigned level of responsibilities (Carpenter, 2011, pp. 12–13; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005).

Within the reality of lay pastoral ministry, additional titles are used to describe particular ministry positions or roles: lay leaders, pastoral leaders, pastoral coordinators, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, pastoral assistants, pastoral workers, sacramental coordinators, lay ministers, youth workers and lay chaplains (see Carpenter, 2011, pp.9–11). Such roles enjoy varying degrees of recognition and involve diverse ministry activities. People enter these roles through differing pathways and exercise widely differentiated responsibilities. Some roles have rigorous selection and training processes, and require professional qualifications, previous experience and accreditation, whereas others evolve from 'voluntary' ministry positions, and provide an opportunity for novices to gain experience in ministry working alongside more experienced ministers, with a view to undergoing formation and education for the role. Some roles are paid, or provide compensation and expenses, and others are unpaid.

The members of the faithful to whom the term 'lay pastoral ministry' may apply is further complicated by the tendency to understand the word 'lay' as being synonymous with 'non-ordained'. Thus, religious persons are sometimes included in the term lay pastoral ministry. This inclusion remains the subject of much debate: although both lay and religious states are rooted in the sacrament of Baptism, the distinctive characteristics of religious life – its public perpetual vows, communal life, and congregational charisms and spiritualities – arguably differentiate it from the lay state. The tendency to refer to former religious persons as 'lay' also corroborates this distinction (Dixon and Bond, 2000, p.2). Nevertheless, certain titles (such as 'pastoral associate') are irrefutably applicable to both lay and religious states of life: ministry roles, responsibilities, and activities may be common to both lay and religious pastoral associates, even if their expression is quite distinct based on the unique evolution of their circumstances, spiritualities, and life commitments from the time of their baptisms.

In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, the title 'pastoral associate' or 'pastoral coordinator' is used to describe:

> …an accredited person appointed by the Archbishop on the advice of a parish to work under the leadership of the Parish Priest. The role of a Pastoral Associate or Pastoral Coordinator is to support the mission and pastoral care of the parish community in accordance with the precepts, teachings and practices of the Catholic Church and as such is a formally recognised public ministry. Specific areas of ministry as a Pastoral Associate / Pastoral Coordinator will vary depending on the needs of an individual parish (Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, 2014, p. 3).

According to the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, a 'parish pastoral coordinator' is:

> …a person other than a priest who is entrusted with a share in the pastoral care of a parish community as specified by the diocesan bishop in accordance with Canon 517.2. This person exercises a leadership role of responsibility for the day to day functioning of a parish community in partnership with the parish priest or moderator designated by the bishop. He/she will be responsible for the normal pastoral and administrative duties of the community with the exception of those duties and responsibilities reserved in general for an ordained priest or in particular the parish priest or moderator, as specified by Canon Law and the diocesan bishop. The primary purpose of this role is to support the Parish Priest in his pastoral outreach to the people (Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2013a, p.1).

A further description is given of the role of a 'parish pastoral leader', which corresponds with that of the role of the 'pastoral co-ordinator', except that its primary purpose is to 'lead the parish with the support of the Priest Moderator so that the people…are cared for pastorally, sacramentally and spiritually' (Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2013b, p. 1). In addition, an explanation is given of the 'group of people' known as the 'parish pastoral leadership team'. This description matches that of the parish pastoral leader, except it specifies that the team 'lead the parish with the support of *the Parish Pastoral Co-ordinator* and the Priest Moderator so that the people…are cared for pastorally, sacramentally and spiritually' (Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2013c, p.1. Emphasis added). The diocese also describes the role of a 'pastoral assistant' who 'supports the Parish Pastoral Leader with the pastoral life of the parish' (Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2013d).

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, a 'pastoral worker' is described as someone 'appointed by the Parish Priest to assist him in leading the mission and pastoral care of the parish community in accordance with the precepts, teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. Every Pastoral Worker position will have roles and responsibilities unique to that position as determined by the employing Parish Priest' (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, p.6). This role is differentiated from the role of pastoral associate, since the pastoral worker 'undertakes some aspects of the role of a Pastoral Associate but is not accredited as a Pastoral Associate; or…undertakes a narrower range of pastoral duties than would otherwise be expected of a Pastoral Associate, such as liturgy and/or music coordination, catechist coordination or sacristan duties' (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, p.6).

While the 'pastoral associate' in the Archdiocese of Melbourne is also initially characterised as someone who is 'appointed by the Parish Priest to assist him in leading the mission and pastoral care of the parish community in accordance with the precepts, teachings and practices of the Catholic Church,' there is a proviso that the pastoral associate's appointment 'reflects engagement in specific areas of Pastoral Associate ministry which will vary depending on the needs of an individual parish, and on the particular qualifications of the Pastoral Associate' (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, p.8). As the employer, the parish priest plays an integral role in determining the roles and responsibilities of both the pastoral worker and associate employed to work in the particular parish.

The Archdiocese of Melbourne further delineates the 'Senior Pastoral Associate' as a person holding a position of 'formal public, responsible leadership in a parish,' who 'assists the Parish Priest in leading the mission and pastoral care of the parish community in accordance with the precepts, teachings and practices of the Catholic Church' (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, p.11). Among the various roles outlined for the pastoral associate and senior pastoral associate, the primary distinguishing feature is that the latter has a responsibility 'as approved by the Parish Priest, and excluding those matters which are the exclusive domain of priests, [for] acting on behalf of the Parish Priest when he is not present' (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, p.11).

These definitions indicate the varying manifestations of lay pastoral ministry roles in Australia: in the Archdiocese of Adelaide a pastoral associate/coordinator supports the mission and pastoral care of the parish community *under the leadership of* the parish priest; in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, while the pastoral coordinator exercises a leadership role of responsibility *in partnership with* the priest, the primary purpose of the role is *to support* the parish priest; by contrast, the pastoral leader or pastoral leadership team *leads the parish with the support of* the priest moderator;

and the pastoral assistant *supports the* [lay] *pastoral leader*(s). In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the pastoral worker, associate, and senior pastoral associate all *assist* the parish priest in leading the mission and pastoral care of the parish, with the senior pastoral associate being able to *act on behalf of* the parish priest in his absence and with his approval. Several distinctions are evident in these descriptions: for example, the degree of responsibility the lay people have, according to their prescribed role, for the pastoral care of the community and their working relationship with other ministers exercising leadership.

Moreover, the pastoral associate/coordinator in Adelaide, the pastoral assistant in Maitland-Newcastle, and the pastoral worker, associate, and senior pastoral associate in Melbourne possess a different canonical status to the pastoral coordinator and pastoral leader(s) of Maitland-Newcastle, the latter being entrusted with a share in the pastoral care of the parish community in accordance with canon 517.2, which specifies:

> If, because of a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has decided that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest, or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care (*Code of Canon Law*).

Thus, lay pastoral ministry designations have different meanings in different contexts. In some instances, a pastoral coordinator or associate (senior or otherwise) may be working under the leadership of a resident parish priest. On other occasions, a pastoral coordinator may be entrusted with a leadership role to work in partnership with a parish priest or moderator who is not in residence in the parish because of the shortage of priests, or a senior pastoral associate may act on behalf of an absent parish priest. A pastoral coordinator may also have a supportive function for a parish leadership team, although they have the same canonical status. This supportive function may be necessary if a fledgling pastoral leadership team needs mentoring from a more experienced practitioner, or if they need someone with whom they could consult on particular issues of pastoral care.

It is noteworthy that the Archdioceses of Adelaide and Melbourne both specify the need for accreditation, which implies a certain level of qualification and ministry experience necessary for the respective roles outlined. However, it is arguable that the positions described by the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (except for the pastoral assistant) delineate roles that have greater degrees of leadership responsibility, due to their canonical status, than those in either archdiocese; from this one could infer a greater need for accreditation. It is significant that the levels of education, experience, and the need for accreditation are not consistent between comparable lay pastoral ministry positions in Australia. In other words, in contrast to other caring professions, role designations in this context do not represent standard, recognisable positions. Consequently, people moving between parish communities will have differing understandings and expectations of specific lay pastoral ministry roles; it is potentially more difficult for lay people exercising such roles to transition between roles and contexts; and, the readiness of individuals for positions of responsibility, and the quality of their resulting ministry, is not assured according to agreed standards.

Most recently, the Secretariat for Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the Archdiocese of Melbourne updated their accreditation standards for lay ecclesial ministers, including lay pastoral associates, lay chaplains and others, who work within the archdiocese. In the following excerpt the Secretariat outlines its rationale for providing accreditation standards:

Lay Ecclesial Ministers, just like the ordained, *need and deserve formation of high standards* that will provide them with the necessary skills and resources to *adequately* minister to the community in which they serve.

In the professions which require accreditation, for instance psychology, social work, and teaching, there are always two areas under which criteria are established: academic training and experience in the field. *So to accredit a person as Lay Ecclesial Minister is to officially recognise the person as having achieved certain minimum standards in theoretical knowledge and practical experience which fit them for their role in ministry.* It is both a recognition and an affirmation of the professionalism that is required by ministers in contemporary ministry.

Lay Ecclesial Ministers have a privileged position of dealing with the joys and fragilities of people within the ministry community. *There is a duty of care to ensure that Lay Ecclesial Ministers are equipped to pastorally support those within the ministry community.* Accreditation as a Lay Ecclesial Minister *provides an assurance to the ministry community, the employer and the Archdiocese of Melbourne that the accredited minister has achieved a standard of capabilities that are recognised as being important and required in order to have the capacity to adequately minister.*

Finally, accreditation helps to *create a common shared language* to develop a mission of Church, a community of practice working with likeminded people, and to help ministers see themselves as part of a larger 'team' of pastoral practitioners. Accreditation assists in the formation and ongoing growth of ministers and development of common guidelines to improve ministerial practice (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2015, pp. 3–4. Emphasis added).

There are several critical principles in this passage concerning accreditation standards: for example, that they will provide assurance to the community, the employer, and the diocese; create a common shared language; contribute to the growth of ministers; and, assist in the development of common guidelines to improve ministerial practice. The greater the degree of responsibility in particular ministry positions, the more integral these principles become to sustaining the quality of ministerial practice.

Identity, Responsibility and Ministry

Identity

The primary identity of people in lay pastoral ministry is what they have in common with all the baptised: their identity as Christian disciples. This is what Kenan Osborne terms the 'common matrix of all Christians', and it is a concept that proved influential at the Second Vatican Council during the preparation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*). Osborne explains that the Council Fathers, deliberately placing the chapter 'On the People of God' before those on the hierarchy, laity, and vowed religious, used three specific terms to articulate this common matrix: the people of God, *christifideles*, and the priesthood of all believers. Although these terms are meant to convey the common discipleship of all the baptised, they are still sometimes used to designate lay people (Osborne, 2003, pp. 530–540). Rightly understood, however, they express the reality that 'before there are ordained and nonordained, clergy and lay, all church members are the Christian faithful, the baptized, called to common discipleship in Christ' (Gaillardetz, 2003, p. 27).

The term 'disciple', meaning 'follower' or 'learner', was used to identify followers of Jesus in the New Testament: 'the disciples are those who freely choose to follow the Lord, to be with him, and to accept a mission' (O'Grady, 1991, p. 67). Through his teachings, Christ revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to his disciples, drew them into intimate relationship with him, and gave them

a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 787). The call from Jesus to 'follow me' (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17) is both a call to personal relationship with Jesus and a call to communal relationship with those who accompany or follow Jesus. It is a call to grow in understanding of Jesus' teaching, to live by his commandments, to follow his example, to bear witness to his message, and to overcome the struggles, tensions, and adversity encountered on the way.

Christ instituted baptism as the gateway to this way of life that is Christian discipleship: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you' (Mt 28: 19-20; Attridge, 2006). Thus, Christians are called by God to embrace a new way of life through the sacrament of Baptism:

> Baptism initiates us into the way of discipleship, a journey that demands the whole self for one's whole life. Our fundamental call is to be a disciple by living the way of discipleship. …Through the waters of baptism, Christians together heed God's call and promise to embrace a common way of life – a life of discipleship in communion for mission. This is the most basic, elemental, and foundational reality, identity, and promise of the Christian. It is what constitutes a people, a holy people, the people of God (Cahalan, 2010, p.27).

This fundamental call from God, shared by all the baptised, was affirmed in conciliar teaching: the Council Fathers acknowledged that all the faithful, who are by baptism 'constituted among the People of God', share in the same 'Christian vocation', which is the mission of the whole Christian people – to spread the Kingdom of God throughout the earth (*AA*, §2, *LG*, §31). The faithful are further called, through their communal relationship with each other, to be 'the initial budding forth of that kingdom' (*LG*, §5), to serve 'as a leaven' in the world, transforming it into God's family (*AA*, §40). This mission is an obligation (or responsibility) for 'every disciple of Christ,' each according to their own state (*LG*, §17).

This sense in conciliar teaching of the responsibility of all Christian disciples has found a more succinct expression in the post-conciliar notion of 'co-responsibility'. Pope John Paul II appealed for the lay faithful to be 'active and coresponsible' in the mission of the Church (*CL*, §21). Pope Benedict XVI also reflected on the co-responsibility of the laity. He affirmed 'a renewed awareness of our being Church and of the pastoral co-responsibility which, in Christ's name, we are all called to exercise' (*Opening Address of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the theme: 'Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility'*). In addition, he stated:

> Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated.

Although Pope Francis does not use the term 'co-responsibility' in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he too is aware of the identity and mission of the lay faithful in the Church:

> There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an

excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making (*EG*, §102).

It is noteworthy that Francis views formation and an attitude of openness and acceptance as integral for the flourishing of lay responsibilities in the Church.

The conciliar view that each Christian lives the common vocation of discipleship (their co-responsibility) *in his or her own way, or according to his or her state of life,* indicates that Christians have both a shared vocation (i.e. discipleship) and a specific vocation. Kathleen Cahalan suggests '*our baptismal identity and call to be a Christian disciple is lived out in and through the particular callings that constitute our vocation*' (Cahalan, 2010, p. 28. Emphasis in original). John Paul II affirmed the particular or unique vocations of each disciple in *Christifideles Laici*:

> Being 'members' of the Church takes nothing away from the fact that each Christian as an individual is 'unique and irrepeatable'. On the contrary, this belonging guarantees and fosters the profound sense of that uniqueness and irrepeatability, in so far as these very qualities are the source of variety and richness for the whole Church. Therefore, *God calls the individual in Jesus Christ, each one personally by name*. In this sense, *the Lord's words "You go into my vineyard too", directed to the Church as a whole, come specially addressed to each member individually* (*CL*, §28. Emphasis added).

Thus, God calls each individual personally 'to work for the coming of his Kingdom in history', and this 'personal vocation and mission defines the dignity and the responsibility of each member of the lay faithful' (*CL*, §58). Moreover, although all vocations serve the one mission and are directed to the good of the Church as a whole, each one 'offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body,' or the 'organic communion' of the Church, which is characterised by 'a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities' (*CL*, §20).

For the realisation and exercise of these unique and diverse – but complementary – vocations, the Holy Spirit 'gives the faithful special gifts… (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), "allotting them to everyone according as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11)', making them 'fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church' (*AA*, p. 3, *LG*, p.12). For Cahalan, these gifts or 'charisms' are given to all Christians to help them discern their individual vocations as disciples. These charisms are the way God calls, through the promptings of the Spirit; if they are discerned, they enable the Christian to discover his or her call from God; if they are embraced or responded to, they will enable the whole community to flourish in its mission (Cahalan, 2010, pp. 30–37).

According to conciliar and post-conciliar teaching, the particular vocations of the lay faithful are to 'carry out for their own part' the Christian mission in the Church and in the world (*LG*, §31), sharing in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet, and King, by the spiritual sacrifices of their daily lives, by proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and spreading that Kingdom in history (*CL*, §14), reaching out to all wherever they may be encountered (*GS*, §9).

This was the vision around which lay pastoral ministry roles developed: alongside the laity's responsibility to spread the Kingdom of God *in the world*, lay people responded to their calling from Christ to participate in the task of building up the communion of the People of God *in the Church*, by exercising their share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly ministries. Elaborating on this activity, the Council's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* stated:

> Their activity is so necessary *within the Church communities* that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. In the manner of the men and women who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3) the laity with the right apostolic attitude supply what is lacking to their brethren and refresh the spirit of pastors and of the rest of the faithful (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17-18). Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager *to do their share of the apostolic works of that community*. They bring to the Church people who perhaps are far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and *offer their special skills* to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient and effective (*AA*, §10. Emphasis added).

Thus, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council provided a strong basis for the development of lay pastoral ministry roles, wherein lay people are called and gifted by God to participate in their own way in evangelisation, catechesis, pastoral care and administration within their church communities. Lay people are entrusted, recognised, and mandated by the hierarchy to exercise these roles 'in union with their priests' (*AA*, §§24, 10). This unity is at the core of co-responsibility.

Yet scholars recognise that lay pastoral ministry is a reality that 'runs ahead of theological reflection' (S. Wood, 2003, p.ix). They acknowledge that the conciliar teaching did not enunciate an unequivocal understanding of lay pastoral ministry: at times it seems to emphasise the secular nature of the lay vocation, stressing the laity's call from God to 'work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven' (*LG*, §31), and arguably this can be seen to contradict the lay call to activity 'in the Church' or intra-ecclesial activity. If one interprets the transformation of the world as a 'purely lay' activity (*Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest* (1997)), the implication is that ministry in the Church is a purely clerical activity. This viewpoint suggests 'an implicit acceptance of a clearly defined distinction between the sacred and the temporal', and between clergy and laity (Gaillardetz, 2014, p. 2).

However, as has been previously referred to, *Gaudium et Spes* specifies that it is the mission of the whole Church to serve 'as a leaven' in the world, transforming it into God's family; and, secular duties and activities do not belong exclusively to lay people (*AA*, §§40, 43). Moreover, in at least two passages, *Lumen Genium* refers specifically to the intra-ecclesial activity of lay people: 'some of them have to fulfil their religious duties on their own, when there are no sacred ministers or in times of persecution; and [...] many of them devote all their energies to apostolic work' (*LG*, §35); and 'there are also laymen, chosen of God and called by the bishop...[who] spend themselves completely in apostolic labours, working the Lord's field with much success' (*LG*, §41).

In accordance with this understanding, the US Bishops make an important affirmation concerning both the secular vocation of the laity and the intra-ecclesial activity of certain lay people:

> All of the baptized are called to work toward the transformation of the world. Most do this by working in the secular realm; some do this by working in the Church and focusing on the building of ecclesial communion, which has among its purposes the transformation of the world. Working in the Church is a path of Christian discipleship to be encouraged by the hierarchy (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 8).

Here the US Bishops have articulated that the secular vocation of lay people working in the church is not abandoned, but rather fulfilled, when they engage in the intra-ecclesial activity (or ministry) of building up the People of God.

In this context, it is noteworthy that Cahalan views 'ministry' as a distinct vocation among the many vocations that exist within the Christian community. She asserts that, for those active in ministry, this vocation can be a further realisation of their call to discipleship: 'the self-identity of the minister is rooted in discipleship and the further deepening of that identity takes place by living the demands of discipleship in and through the vocation to ministry' (Cahalan, 2010, p. 49). Thus, in respect to lay pastoral ministry, it can be said that the identity of lay pastoral ministers as disciples is deepened in and through their particular vocation to lay pastoral ministry.

Aurelie Hagstrom corroborates this understanding by arguing that the lay people working in the Church bring the secular aspect of their identity to bear on their intra-ecclesial work. It is this characteristic that makes their share in the Church's mission distinctive:

> The secular character of the laity influences and colors the laity's activities not only in the world, but also in the Church. The activities of the laity in intra-ecclesial affairs, such as ecclesial lay ministry, flow from the secular character which they laity bring to these services and ministries. The identity or being of the laity, which includes the secular dimension, influences and determines even the intra-ecclesial functions or activities carried out by the laity. Their secular character actually enhances and enriches ecclesial lay ministry, making it distinctive in the life of the Church. It is a gift, not a hindrance, to full participation in the life of the Church *ad intra* (Hagstrom, 2003, p. 159).

Thus, not only is the identity of the lay pastoral minister as a disciple deepened by their ministerial work building ecclesial communion, but this activity is enriched by their unique secular character.

Ministry

Cahalan offers two definitions of ministry, which are of relevance in understanding lay pastoral ministry. The first, stated briefly, is that '*ministry is the vocation of leading disciples in the life of discipleship for the sake of God's mission in the world*' (Cahalan, 2010, p.50. Emphasis in original). This means that what distinguishes ministry from discipleship is that ministers have a vocation to lead other Christians in their lives of discipleship. As a consequence, all ministers are disciples, but not all disciples are called to be ministers. Cahalan argues that there are charisms given to some individuals within the community by the Holy Spirit which pertain to community leadership (1 Cor 12:7-11; Cahalan, 2010, p.33). These charisms make them fit for the vocation to ministry.

There is some confusion and debate in Catholic literature around this point: the relationship between discipleship and ministry. For example, on the one hand, in a way similar to Cahalan, Thomas O'Meara acknowledges that 'the Christian life is not the same as ministry,' that it 'is wider than church ministry,' and 'ministry brings something more specific: namely, public voice and action directly for the kingdom' (O'Meara, 1999, p.145). On the other hand, he states that 'every Christian has a vocation to ministry, to serving the kingdom of God,' (thus equating mission and ministry) even while he admits of the diversity within ministry where 'some are called to give more and more of their time and energies to spreading the kingdom' (O'Meara, 1999, p.210). Despite these contradictory statements, Richard Gaillardetz and John N Collins certainly associate O'Meara with the latter position – that all Christian activity is ministry (Collins, 2006, p.12; Gaillardetz, 2003, p.36). Paul Bernier similarly asserts 'our theology tells us that baptism should lead all Christians to some ministerial activity' (Bernier, 2014, p. 251).

The concept that all Christians are called to ministry has caused conflict in the life of the Church, and has led some of the faithful, scholars and church leaders to be concerned for the distinctiveness of ordained ministry:

[It]…has left many priests and potential priests questioning their identity in the Church. Some lay ministers resent what they see as prerogatives and privileges accorded to the ordained. While some members of the Church are attempting to reclaim an identity for the ordained based on hierarchical and juridical powers, others are rejecting the very notion of the distinctive ministry of the ordained (S. Wood, 2003, p.ix).

It is arguable that certain scholars endorse the conviction that all Christians are called to ministry in order to reaffirm conciliar teaching about the dignity and activity of the lay faithful in the Church, but this can be done to the detriment of ordained ministry:

> The rise of the laity seems to go hand in hand with the diminishment or marginalizing of the ordained. It doesn't have to be the case, but generally the cry of John the Baptist in relation to ministry and the laity is true: the laity must increase and the ordained must decrease. This development can be observed in the anxiety about the role and identity of the ordained. It is also expressed in the frustrations of the laity when they are held back, silenced or ignored (Pickard, 2006, p.84).

The tendency to diminish ordained ministry led in 1997 to the publication of an *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest*, by eight dicasteries of the Roman Curia. This *Instruction* was primarily concerned with highlighting the essential difference between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained. The *Instruction* emphasised this difference based on the conciliar teaching that these 'differ from one another in essence and not only in degree' (*LG*, §10). It was also reliant on the teaching of John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici*, which noted the 'too-indiscriminate use of the word "ministry", [and] the confusion and the equating of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood' (*CL*, §23).

In his comments addressing the confusion between discipleship (or common priesthood) and ministry, John Paul II stated, on the one hand, that 'a person is not a minister simply in performing a task, but through sacramental ordination', while on the other he emphasised the 'necessity' of expressing:

> …with greater clarity, and with a more precise terminology, both *the unity of the Church's mission* in which all the baptized participate, and the substantial *diversity of the ministry* of Pastors which is rooted in the Sacrament of Orders, all the while respecting the other ministries, offices and roles in the Church, which are rooted in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (*CL*, §23. Emphasis in original).

Furthermore, he states that 'Pastors…ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their *foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation,* indeed, for a good many of them, *in the Sacrament of Matrimony*' (*CL*, §23. Emphasis in original). Subsequently, Benedict XVI emphasised that it is 'important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops' (*Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action*).

Thus, post-conciliar teaching is incongruous: a person can only become a 'minister' through ordination, yet 'ministries' rooted in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and matrimony, which make their own specific contribution to the mission of the Church, are acknowledged. In an effort to find a solution to this incongruity some scholars claim:

> The layman has an indispensable positive role in the Church. But the layman is *never* a minister. To be a lay minister would be an oxymoron. One becomes a minister only through the sacrament of Orders (LG 10), whose "vector" points towards the service of the laity, just as the "I" (Logos) of Christ points as gift to death for the Bride (Church). *If* the layman *exercises* ministry, it is *always* by deputation, for a period of time and never in an activity that demands the unique empowerment of Orders (Connor, 2002, p.274. Emphasis added).

This reasoning creates a distinction between the practice of ministry and the identity of the minister, based on the understanding that one does not become a minister by performing certain functions or engaging in certain activities. It assumes one cannot have a specific vocation to ministries, offices, and roles that have their foundation in any sacrament other than Holy Orders. Consequently, it reduces all lay intra-ecclesial activity to those tasks, offices, and roles entrusted to the laity in cases of supply for lack of priests 'when necessity and expediency in the Church require it': 'namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of the law' (*CL*, §23).

This rejection of the identity of the 'lay minister' is an oversimplification of the theological tensions regarding ministry in the church; and the limiting of ministry roles that can be exercised by the laity is not faithful to the nuances of John Paul II's teaching. On the one hand, *Christifideles Laici* did affirm that the 'task exercised in virtue of supply takes its legitimacy formally and immediately from the official deputation given by the Pastors, as well as from its concrete exercise under the guidance of ecclesiastical authority' but, on the other hand, it also confirmed the ministries of the lay faithful arising from the sacraments of initiation and marriage, as shown above (*CL*, §23). This teaching corresponded with the conciliar vision of *Lumen Gentium*, which outlined legitimate forms of intra-ecclesial activity based on the 'lay apsotolate', in addition to the 'more direct form[s] of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy', to which it states lay people 'can also be called' (*LG*, §33).

At the root of this tension in Catholic literature, as has been mentioned, is the contentious viewpoint that all Christians are called to ministry. Scholars turn to biblical sources – and, in particular, to the early Christian communities of the New Testament – to consider the validity of such understandings of ministry (Cooke, 1976; Gooder, 2006). For some, an interpretation of key texts leads them to postulate 'a corporate *ministry* of the church', that is, a 'commission that pertains to all baptized Christians including those designated for specialized ministries' (Cooke, 1976, p. 203. Emphasis added). Collins is especially critical of this stance based on his indepth analysis of the writings of Paul, and Paul's use of '*diakon-* words' (i.e. words derived from the cognate Greek term *diakonia*, commonly translated into English as 'service' or 'ministry'). For example, Collins suggests that if the terms 'gifts', 'services', and 'activities' in 1 Cor 12:4-6 were interpreted as being interchangeable, then 'the whole church performs *diakoniai* or ministries' (Collins, 2006, p. 28). However, from his analysis of early Christian writings and ancient non-Christian sources, he surmises that the terms are not in fact interchangeable.

Rather, *diakonia* or 'ministry' in 1 Cor 12:5 was understood by early Christian communities as being distinct from the word 'gifts' used in 1Cor 12:4: the term used in 1 Cor 12:5 meant the ministry of 'privilege, responsibility and burden of those few chosen to deliver the Word in the name of God, Christ and Spirit'. In other words, after the generic 'gifts' (in 1 Cor 12:4), two species of gifts are recognised: services or 'ministries,' 'comprising ministerial functions of a divine quality pertaining to those who had come among them delivering the Word of God'; and, activities or 'workings,' 'which are distributed churchwide'. Thus, Collins maintains that a more accurate interpretation of the term *diakonia* refers to a particular ministry of designated leaders, and not to the activities of all disciples (Collins, 2006, pp. 27–29). The term ministry thereby applies to certain

disciples who have been gifted with charisms for fulfilling a specific mission or mandate from God (Collins, 2012, p.29, 2005, p.166).

Acknowledging that the vocation to ministry is not synonymous with the call of discipleship does not exclude the possibility of a vocation to lay pastoral ministry. Nor does it preclude an understanding of ministry in the Church as rooted in the sacrament of Baptism. In other words, endorsing an understanding of ministry based on the sacrament of baptism is not the same as suggesting 'every Christian is baptised into ministry.' In fact, the Collegeville Ministry Seminar, which was set up to explore a contemporary theology of ministry in 2001, argues as follows:

> Baptism initiates a person as member of the community, and ministry arises from the community. …Baptism is the primary sacrament of ministry. Ordained ministry does not have a different source, but finds its source in baptism, as does lay ministry. All ordained ministry, as all discipleship, proceeds from baptism, as does lay ministry.
>
> Baptism configures us to Christ, incorporates us into Body of Christ, and initiates us into ecclesial relations. …This means that the most fundamental ordering of the Church occurs in baptism. We assume our place in the order of the Church according to our state in life and the charism we bring for the upbuilding of the community and Christian discipleship (S. K. Wood, 2003, p.257).

This understanding is based on the teaching of Vatican II in *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, which states that 'priests are brothers among brothers with all those who have been reborn at the baptismal font. They are all members of one and the same Body of Christ, the building up of which is required of everyone' (*PO*, §9). Thus, the sacrament of baptism is the root of both discipleship and all forms of ministry, whether ordained, religious, or lay. It constitutes the fundamental ordering of the church: 'Baptism does not just make one a different kind of individual; it draws the person into a profound ecclesial relationship within the life of the Church as a follower or disciple of Jesus sent in mission to the world. …To be initiated into the Church is to take one's place, one's "*ordo*," within the community, the place of the baptized' (Gaillardetz, 2003, p. 35).

Consequently, the call to undertake a ministry within the church involves an 'ecclesial re-positioning' (though one's primary identity as Christian disciple can never be abandoned): 'ministry is something to which I am formally called by the community over and beyond my baptismal call' (Gaillardetz, 2010, p. 23). Ministers enter into a 'distinctive public relationship within the community' (Gaillardetz, 2003, pp. 36–37); because of this public character, the minister's discipleship is more visible and at times transparent; it becomes a public sign and witness by virtue of their leadership role (Cahalan, 2010, p. 50).

Richard Gula refers to this public witness as 'symbolic representation of the holy'. He suggests that ministers represent for other disciples the Church, the Catholic tradition, the Christian way of life, and even the love of God: 'the church, in effect, is expressing its vision, values, and beliefs through us [its ministers]' (Gula, 2010, pp. 30, 35–36). John Patton also mentions the representation offered by ministers:

> God is 're-presented' in a pastoral relationship when the carer is aware that he represents more than himself and more than his particular community of faith. The presence he offers is more than his presence. He is a reminder and re-presenter of God, faith, the church, and all that religion may represent to the person cared for (Patton, 2005, p. 25).

Such representation is congruent with Collin's 'reinterpretation' of *diakonia* in New Testament sources (Collins, 1990). Emila A. Wcela remarks that 'there are…three basic elements in the notion of ministry as expressed by diakonia':

1. It is an action done in the name of another. One acts as the representative or emissary of another, whether divine or human, master or friend.
2. The action performed is given as a command or mandate by the one represented.
3. The actions performed become a personal obligation for the minister or *diakonos* (Wcela, 2010, p. 37).

The minister is thus called and mandated by God, through Christ, to carry out a divine purpose of leading others in the life of discipleship for the sake of the divine mission in the world; and, ministry is the duty performed by the minister to represent God, the one who called, and act in God's name. Patton offers an important proviso in this context. He is mindful that the minister 'is not the one who "brings God" into the room of the person cared for'; rather, the faith which the minister represents 'affirms that God has been there and is there now. The carer is a part of bringing that presence into some kind of awareness in the person cared for and in himself' (Patton, 2005, p. 25).

Cahalan offers a second, and more detailed, definition of ministry which is useful in this context: it captures the diversity that exists within the vocation to ministry and is thus applicable to all forms of ministry, whether ordained, religious, or lay; it allows for the legitimate vocation of certain disciples, who have been gifted with charisms for fulfilling a specific mission from God; and, it emphasises the representation offered by ministers for the growth of discipleship in the community.

> Ministry is leading disciples through the practice of teaching, preaching, worship, pastoral care, social ministry, and administration; for the sake of discipleship lived in relationship to God's mission; as a public act discernible in word, deed, and symbol; on behalf of a Christian community; as a gift received through faith and baptism, charism, and vocation that is acknowledged by the community in rituals of commissioning, installation, and ordination; and as a practice that exists within a diverse array of ecclesial contexts, roles, and relationships (Cahalan, 2010, p. 55).

In offering this definition, Cahalan attempts to describe and identify the primary characteristics of the complex reality of ministry. For the sake of brevity, the following examines only three of these characteristics: leadership, ministry practices, and ministry diversity.

Leadership

The first characteristic is leadership: this is a position of responsibility in the community for providing guidance to serve the life of discipleship, which is a participation in God's mission. Ministers 'oversee' the community so that its gifts and resources are used for the fulfilment of this mission; and ministers help disciples to see a vision for the Christian life, which they interpret through Scriptures and Tradition, so that they can offer 'compelling and meaningful ways to understand and live the faith in context' (Cahalan, 2010, p. 57). According to Richard Gula:

> No one else in church or society is trained in matters pertaining to the Christian tradition so as to provide theological reflection on human experience. This means we [ministers] ought to be able to draw on the stories, symbols, rituals, and traditions of the Christian faith in order to help believers understand and respond to what is happening in their lives from the perspective of faith and so reclaim, preserve, and strengthen their identity in Christ (Gula, 2010, p.32).

For this reason, Gula refers to ministers as 'professionals': they are 'experts who have mastered, over an extended period of formal education, a specialized area of knowledge and skills', so that they can 'be a theological resource for the people', 'bringing a theological understanding to human

experience,' in order to help disciples 'see the sacred dimensions of everyday life' and 'bring the Word of God to bear on concrete situations'(Gula, 2010, pp. 30–32). Gaillardetz and Gula agree that people expect more from ministers as their public representatives: they are held 'to a higher moral standard' (Gaillardetz, 2003, p. 37; Gula, 2010, pp. 35–37).

The US Bishops recognised this leadership aspect of lay pastoral ministry when, in *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, they described it as 'leadership in a particular area of ministry' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p.10). H. Richard McCord suggests that the 'criterion of leadership was especially important to the bishops as they developed *Co-Workers*', and that 'in a very real sense it could be considered the primary characteristic of lay ecclesial ministry' (McCord, 2012, p.5). In understanding this concept of leadership, arguably the most revealing statement in *Co-Workers* is the following: 'Lay ecclesial ministers should cultivate leadership qualities modeled on the example of Jesus so that they can inspire and enable others to fulfill their baptismal calling.' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 49). A number of observations can be made following this statement:

1. It establishes Jesus as the proper model for the leadership of lay pastoral ministry, such that it is only authentic in so far as it follows Christ's example.
2. It implies lay people in lay pastoral ministry positions have inherent leadership qualities, which they are called to 'cultivate' or develop by initial and ongoing formation and education, and practice.
3. It confirms that leadership in this context is concerned with inspiring and enabling others.
4. It is mindful that the goal of this leadership is to facilitate the fulfilment of the baptismal call of others.

Evidence of the leadership modelled by Jesus can be seen in both his teachings and the way he practised his ministry. For instance, Donal Dorr observes that Jesus invites his followers who exercise leadership not to 'lord it over their people' but to 'be a servant of the others' (Mt 20:25-27). Dorr concludes that Christ is advocating a leadership that is taken on 'not for personal power or honour, but purely as an act of service' (Dorr, 2006, p. 17). In Jesus' post-resurrection encounter with Peter (Jn 21:15-19), where Christ asks Peter three times if he loves him, Dorr surmises that 'love is the primary quality which Jesus looks for in a leader'. Thus, leadership should only be entrusted to a person who loves to a high degree, and this love is first of all a love for Jesus, which is then put into practice by a committed love for the community (Dorr, 2006, pp. 18–19).

Loughlan Sofield and Donald H. Kuhn also reflect on the model of leadership that can be drawn from Jesus' life and teachings. The characteristics and behaviours they find most striking are that Jesus was a listener (Lk 10: 38-42); responded lovingly (Mk 5:21-43); was a creator of vision (Mt 5: 1-12); was authentic, admitted his vulnerability (Mk 14:34); was compassionate (Mt 9:36); was forgiving (Jn 8:1-11); was straightforward (Mk 2:23-28); was generative, continually focussed on others (Jn 2:1-11); was inclusive (Mt 28: 19); was empowering (Jn 15:15-16); and was a person of integrity, committed to doing what he believed was right (Jn 19:11) (Sofield and Kuhn, 1995, pp. 34–36). These were qualities Sofield and Kuhn believed should be emulated by all Church leaders who, because of their position in the Church, 'effect the development of members of the Christian community'. They acknowledge that lay leaders are included in this definition because they hold positions that can have a 'profound impact on people both within and outside the church' (Sofield and Kuhn, 1995, p. 12).

Ministry Practices

The diversity of practices exercised by ministers constitutes the second characteristic of ministry: teaching the path of discipleship; presiding over the community's prayer and worship; witnessing to the Word of God through preaching; accompanying disciples by offering spiritual guidance and pastoral care; encouraging social ministry and outreach by helping community to discern, organise, and call forth prophetic responses to the cries of the poor; and, by administering and governing the community's resources in accordance with the demands of stewardship (Cahalan, 2010, p. 58). For Cahalan, the Holy Spirit grants gifts for each particular ministerial practice: 'when these gifts are discerned and formed through education and practice, a disciple has become a minister and assumes the role, title, or office appropriate to their gifts for service' (Cahalan, 2010, p. 59).

The task of providing accompaniment to disciples in pastoral care is a central theme for Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he describes it as the representation of Christ:

> …ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Ex* 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life (*EG*, §169).

Thus, ministers who are experienced in 'the art of accompaniment' make present Christ's love and compassion for other disciples in the community. They become the catalyst for discipleship when they initiate everyone into this art of accompaniment. The purpose of such pastoral care is thus to inspire and enable others to represent Christ for each other.

Ministry Diversity

Finally, ministry is exercised in 'diverse places, through different roles or offices, and with varying levels of education, responsibility, and ecclesial recognition' (Cahalan, 2010, p.64). This diversity reflects the varied vocations and charisms of those disciples who undertake formal ministries and are drawn into public relationships within the community. Gaillardetz argues that this ecclesial re-positioning is influenced by all of the following factors:

1. a personal call
2. ecclesial discernment and recognition of a genuine charism
3. formation appropriate to the demands of ministry
4. some authorisation by community leadership
5. some ritualisation as a prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit and a sending forth on behalf of the community (Gaillardetz, 2003, p. 36).

Thus, ministry begins with the recognition by the individual and/or the community of a pre-existing charism that suggests the person's suitability for entering into a new, public, ecclesial relationship with the church (Gaillardetz, 2010, pp. 23–24). Edward Hahnenberg contends that 'the vocation…depends on a call that is both experienced by the *minister* and extended by the *community*' (Hahnenberg, 2012, p. 48, 2003, pp. 128–150).

It can be argued that this concept of ministry diversity is captured in *Co-Workers*: it explicitly acknowledges the vocations of lay people who experience a call from God to lay pastoral ministry, which motivates them to be active and shapes their 'major life choice and commitment to Church ministry' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 12), but it does this without

diminishing the role of ordained ministry. In fact, it highlights the important role of the diocesan bishop (or his delegate, the pastor of a parish) in authenticating and authorising lay ecclesial ministry roles, because this role serves the unity of mission within the community, and respects the 'ordo' of ecclesial relationships. This right order is safeguarded by the ministry of episcopal oversight and pastoral care of the bishop (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p. 23).

Similarly, in *The Sign We Give*, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales suggest that a 'renewed understanding' of hierarchy would see it as 'a structure for ordering and unifying relationships and gifts, a service to community'. 'Hierarchy is what holds communion together, rather like the membranes in a leaf. It is part of what the spirit gives to enable the Church to be maintained in truth and unity' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, pp. 16–17). Thus, *The Sign We Give* corresponds with *Co-Workers* in its presentation of 'the ministry of the ordained, particularly that of the bishop and priest-pastor, as that of discerning, ordering, and empowering the charisms of the baptized,' and in its acknowledgement that lay pastoral ministry 'has its own ministerial integrity as something more than an auxiliary to the ordained' ministry (Gaillardetz, 2010, p.26).

Principles of Ministry

In addition to the characteristics of ministry outlined by Cahalan, two principles are prominent in the Catholic literature on ministry: the need for mutual collaboration, and the professionalisation of ministry.

Mutual Collaboration

The characteristic of lay pastoral ministry as leadership is inextricably linked to the understanding, as outlined in *Co-Workers*, that it is exercised in '*close mutual collaboration* with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p.10. Emphasis in original). This idea of mutual collaboration is synonymous with the notion of co-responsibility referred to earlier: it does not denote that lay ministers are 'collaborators of' ordained ministers; rather, it connotes *the mutual collaboration* of all ministers based on their common identity of discipleship and their complementary shares in the leadership ministry of the Church.

This mutually collaborative ministry is at the service of disciples within the community, inspiring and enabling their co-responsibility in discipleship. One of the descriptions of collaborative ministry given in *The Sign We Give*, is quite helpful in this context:

> Collaborative ministry is an ecclesial activity; it brings together into partnership people who, through baptism and confirmation, as well as ordination and marriage, have different vocations, gifts and offices within the Church. It does not blur the distinctiveness of each vocation or gift. Rather it enables the identity of each to be seen and expressed more fully (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p. 12).

The unique contributions of each disciple and minister are thereby respected and nurtured in the collaborative way of exercising ministry. It is exercised in partnership because it recognises that all the baptised are called by God to further Christ's mission in history, as a community of disciples, not isolated individuals (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p.12). It is in relationships, in our communion with each other, rather than in isolation from others that we will find fulfilment. We will reflect God's life if we live in this spirit of communion and collaboration

and if our relationships are characterised by equality, mutuality and reciprocity. The vocation of the Church is to be a communion, a living source of Trinitarian relationships (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p.15).

Ministry leaders have an increased responsibility to work in mutual collaboration because 'they are a sign and symbol of the unity of the body' (Cahalan, 2010, p.62). According to the US Bishops, 'the Church's pastoral ministry can be more effective if we become true collaborators.' They thus encourage 'both lay and ordained ministers to learn the skills of collaboration, to value the benefits it brings to Church life and ministry, and to commit themselves to practice it in their places of ministry' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, p.48).

Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano have identified four levels in the evolution of a community towards truly effective mutual collaboration: the first is co-existence, whereby individuals or groups identify with one another in a general way, but they exist independently of each other and their relationships exact no mutual expectations or accountability. The second is communication, where there is an explicit effort to enter into some mutual interaction or dialogue, which leads to the understanding that, while each person or group is distinct, each has the same purpose or mission. The third is cooperation, whereby parties have a growing awareness that they do not exist in isolation, and there is a dynamic movement towards interdependence. The final level is true collaboration, which is characterised by the shared ownership of a common mission, competition is replaced by mutuality and partnership, the decision is made to identify, value, and unite the various gifts each possesses, and these are freely joined together in ministry for the common purpose of furthering Christ's mission (Sofield and Juliano, 2000, pp. 18–19).

According to *The Sign We Give*, involvement in collaborative ministry demands 'conscious commitment to certain values and convictions,' including the following: 'a recognition that Christian initiation gives us a shared but differentiated responsibility for the life and mission of the Church'; an acceptance that all baptised people are called 'to work together on equal terms'; a conviction that 'different vocations and gifts are complementary and mutually enriching'; and 'an agreement that we are accountable to each other for how we work and what we do' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p. 12). Thus, co-responsibility or mutual collaboration involves an equal share in the mission of the Church and mutual accountability.

However, *The Sign We Give* recognises that this equality and mutual accountability are difficult to achieve in practice:

> Working together on equal terms is difficult when one partner has more training, resources and recognition than others. It becomes more viable as laypeople build up experience and formation, although new difficulties can emerge when priests work with competent, qualified laypeople. Priests may feel threatened or inadequate alongside skilled or expert laypeople, and there may be tensions as both together learn how to make use of different skills and knowledge with mutual respect. Tensions can also arise from different financial situations; when one is fulltime and professionally paid, another is full-time but has living costs supplied and a very small salary, and others are voluntary, it can be hard to feel that there is equal valuing (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p.21).

In order to overcome these difficulties, the bishops of England and Wales advocate the necessity of 'mutual trust and recognition' of all persons involved (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p.25). Significantly, they repeatedly assert that collaborative ministry 'will not work if those involved do not really want to do it, or feel it has been imposed'; 'if people do not desire to collaborate, or do not find that desire in those with whom they must work, directives or

policy alone will not be sufficient for collaboration to work' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, pp. 24, 10). Therefore, collaborative ministry is only possible through 'a gradual and mutual evolution of new patterns, new attitudes and new self-understanding'; 'it must be chosen and consciously pursued from conviction' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p. 24). 'Mutual recognition is seeing others - whether bishops, laypeople or priests - as persons genuinely working to be faithful to the Gospel in their own vocation'. Mutual trust means 'appreciating that each [person] has the good of the Church and the Kingdom in mind, not the protection or pursuit of personal interests' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, p. 26).

The Sign We Give cites two further requisites for overcoming obstacles to collaborative ministry: formation and personal development.

> Collaborative teams in particular need formation planned to meet their particular requirements as a team and not just a collection of staff. In addition, individuals should be encouraged to pursue their own personal and professional development, insofar as it is practical to do so (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1995, pp. 26–27).

Professionalisation of Ministry

The literature provides evidence of the professionalisation process by which ministry is being transformed into – or is, perhaps, being newly recognised as – a vocation that should be exercised competently and with integrity. As previously mentioned, Gula contends that ministers, whether ordained or lay, are professionals who are trained experts in the Christian faith and tradition, and so are public representatives of the Church, tradition, way of life, and the love of God. Therefore, he concludes that ministers are held to a higher moral standard, and are expected to practise their ministry with integrity. He offers extensive reflections on the professional ethics of pastoral ministry as a resource for ministers and those involved in ministry training programs (Gula, 1995, 2010).

Elsewhere, Gula maintains, that the primary purpose of a professional code of ethics – in the Church context – is to 'foster authentic ministry' and engender trust, by making explicit the commonly shared criteria or standards concerning the values of the ministry profession and its basic moral obligations as a professional role (Gula, 2006, pp. 149–150).

Francis J. Butler explicates some of these values and obligations that are fundamental to professional leadership in the Church:
1. Nurturing a deep relationship with Jesus Christ and an understanding of the Church as a community;
2. Being an authentic witness not just by preaching the Catholic teachings, principles, and values, but by practising what is preached;
3. Being open and transparent in the exercise of ministry;
4. Recognising that authority in leadership is about the empowerment of others;
5. Observing high standards in ministry practice, and being accountable for this practice;
6. Exercising direct pastoral care for the vulnerable, especially the poor, to attain a deeper appreciation of the sufferings of others;
7. Developing communication and listening skills, remaining open to learning, and having the courage to speak boldly;
8. Respecting diversity of gifts and perspectives, and fostering broad participation in Church life;

9. Recognising the equality of discipleship through baptism and opposing all forms of clericalism;
10. Being responsible and accountable in the stewardship of the Church's property, facilities, and financial affairs (Butler, 2006, pp. 140–144).

Gula suggests that without codes of ethics 'a vocational calling too easily becomes the excuse for avoiding professional duties and accountability, and it can breed a sense of isolation, superiority, and, even worse, entitlement' (Gula, 2006, p.149).

The literature of Church leadership also reflects this interest in fostering the highest standards in pastoral ministry. For example, in December 1996, the National Committee for Professional Standards in Australia published a document *Towards Healing*, which set out the principles and procedures to be followed in the Church's response to complaints of abuse. This document has been revised a number of times and the latest edition is from January 2010 (National Committee for Professional Standards, 2010). Also in 1996, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops issued *Responsibility in Ministry: A Statement of Commitment*, which was based on extensive consultation with clergy, religious, and laity (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996).

In May 2000, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference issued *Integrity in Ministry* that provided official guidelines on professional standards for ordained and religious pastoral ministers (New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2000). Similarly, in 2001, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference released *Integrity in Ministry*, which offered a set of standards to enable Church personnel to exercise their pastoral ministry in a safe environment that is conducive to growth (Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2001). Also in 2001, the Congregation of Religious in Ireland produced *Ministry with Integrity: A Consultative Document about Standards in Pastoral Ministry* (Congregation of Religious in Ireland, 2001). This document was intended to offer general principles and policies for the employment of religious in pastoral ministry but in practice it was also used for lay pastoral ministry positions.

In 2004, the National Committee for Professional Standards issued its own *Integrity in Ministry* document, which was primarily directed towards clergy and religious engaged in Church ministry in Australia, but specified that its values 'apply also to lay people who have been engaged to carry out formal ministries in the Catholic Church' (National Committee for Professional Standards, 2004, p. v). In September 2011, it produced an analogous document *Integrity in the Service of the Church* for 'any lay person who performs paid or unpaid work in the service of the Church (Church Worker)' (National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, p. 4).

The literature makes clear, however, that the question of promoting an ethical culture of leadership within the Church is not solely realised through codes of ethics for professional ministers: the institution or organisational structure of the Church also perpetuates attitudes and practices regarding ministerial practice; thus, the institution itself needs to embody ethical principles and values. Consequently, what some scholars call 'structural church reform' is also necessary to foster authentic ministry (Gaillardetz, 2006, p.58). One resource the Church has for guiding this reform is its body of doctrines known collectively as Catholic Social Teaching. This teaching addresses issues of social justice and was developed to 'influence society and societal structures…by means of the responsibility and tasks to which it gives rise' (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005, p.69). When the Church does not practise what it preaches in this regard 'the Church's sacramentality is thereby compromised, and its mission undermined' (Gaillardetz, 2006, p. 62). Accordingly, the admission by the world Synod of Bishops in 1971 is significant:

While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church herself.

Within the Church rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of his ordinary rights because he is associated with the Church in one way or another. Those who serve the Church by their labor, including priests and religious, should receive a sufficient livelihood and enjoy that social security which is customary in their region. Lay people should be given fair wages and a system for promotion. We reiterate the recommendations that lay people should exercise more important functions with regard to Church property and should share in its administration (Synod of Bishops, 1971, §§40–41).

Hence the principles of Catholic social teaching can be applied to the Church's own organisational structure. For this reason, the Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations produced a document *The Catholic Church as an Employer in Australia*, which sought to provide guidance about the conduct of employment relations within Church organisations adhering to Catholic social teaching (Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations, 2002). More recently, it issued *Good Works: The Catholic Church as an Employer in Australia*, which was a revision of the earlier document (Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations, 2015).

Chapter 2.
Lay Pastoral Ministry in Sociological Literature

Survey of Lay Pastoral Ministry

Sociological literature on Catholic lay pastoral ministry in Australia is limited (see Dixon, 1991). As previously mentioned, a report was released on July 2000, based on the Catholic Church Life Survey of parish pastoral associates and pastoral workers conducted in November 1996 (Dixon and Bond, 2000). The questionnaire provided to pastoral associates and workers as part of that survey was 'designed to gather data that would contribute to a greater understanding of the backgrounds and attitudes of pastoral associates, their role in the parish community, the details of their appointments and working conditions and the pressures on them in a rapidly changing society and Church' (Dixon and Bond, 2000, p.2). The findings of the survey were considered representative of pastoral associates in general throughout Australia because of the statistically representative sample of parishes that was chosen. However, there were only thirty-seven *lay* pastoral associates in the sample, so the authors of the report advised readers to take care in interpreting the results with respect to lay pastoral associates, suggesting that the pattern of responses that emerged from a question (or number of questions related to a single theme) was most significant (Dixon and Bond, 2000, p.4).

The following observations made by the authors are interesting to note:
1. Pastoral associates (religious and lay) allocated most of their ministry time to people who were active in the parish, with forty-three per cent devoting 60 per cent or more of their time to this group, while about 12 to 14 per cent devoted a similarly large proportion of their time to fringe attenders, the wider Church, or the wider society.
2. In general, pastoral associates worked more hours than they were paid for – sometimes a great deal more. Two-fifths of them, including some who said they had a part-time appointment, worked more than 40 hours per week.
3. Two-fifths of pastoral associates had no job description at all. Of those that had a job-description, one-fifth said it was a close match with their actual responsibilities, another two-fifths said it closely matched the overall direction of their work but not the details, and another third reported reasonable correspondence between the job description and their actual work.
4. Just under 30 per cent of pastoral associates characterised their relationship with the parish priest as one of being a fellow team member. Just under a quarter saw him as a colleague and the same proportion saw themselves as his helper.
5. Almost 90 per cent of pastoral associates agreed that parishioners were satisfied with their work. Seventy-five per cent felt that parishioners understood their role as pastoral associate. But lay pastoral associates were more likely than religious pastoral associates to believe that parishioners did not understand their role (31 per cent compared to 12 per cent for religious).
6. About half of the pastoral associates had diocesan accreditation, but about a quarter said their diocese had no accreditation scheme for pastoral associates. A further 17 per cent were ineligible for accreditation.
7. Pastoral associates were asked whether they agreed with the statement that they 'felt secure in their position': 68 per cent of lay pastoral associates, and 83 per cent of religious pastoral associates, expressed agreement with the statement, but only 29 per cent of lay pastoral associates strongly agreed.
8. Nineteen per cent of lay pastoral associates had held a role previously in another parish,

suggesting that when lay pastoral associates left their position, relatively few were able to take up a position in a new parish.

9. Nearly three-fifth of pastoral associates agreed that it is difficult to find a suitable position in another parish.

10. Lay pastoral associates who had held a previous position and then moved suggested that the most likely causes were that the position was discontinued, because the parish priest moved, or because of conflict.

11. Eighty per cent of lay pastoral associates stated that they had obtained their present position when their voluntary, part-time position had developed into a formal appointment, they had seen an advertisement in the parish, or the parish priest approached them and asked them to apply.

12. Two-fifths of lay pastoral associates agreed that there may come a time when they could no longer afford to work for the Church, but 54 per cent disagreed that such a time would come.

13. Nearly three-quarters of pastoral associates intended to work for the Church for the foreseeable future, and only two per cent indicated that they thought their work for the Church would end in the short term.

14. Of 1800 Mass attenders who were asked whether pastoral associates had enriched parish life, 83 per cent agreed that religious pastoral associates had done so, and 71 per cent agreed that lay pastoral associates had done so (Dixon and Bond, 2000, pp.5–8).

No further surveys were conducted among pastoral associates nationally, so additional research is needed to determine to what degree these findings of the 1996 survey would be replicated today. It is noteworthy, however, that the above observations find resonance in the experiences of participants in this research project.

The Significance of Lay Pastoral Ministry for Parish Vitality

The recent qualitative study of Dr Trudy Dantis on parish vitality included an examination of lay leadership. Her discussion of leadership began by noting the ways that people talk about it: the importance of empowering and encouraging people, accepting people as they are and allowing people to be part of processes (Dantis 2014, p.260). Priests saw that it was necessary to be collaborative in leadership and developing a sense of being a team. This was at the heart of developing a shared vision and commitment to that vision. Lay leaders needed to feel that they had a place in relation to the vision and could contribute to it (Dantis 2014, p.266).

Dantis noted that in both large and small parishes, the development of a network of lay leadership encouraged greater participation in parish life and greater opportunities for people to be involved. Part of the process of encouragement involved respecting the decisions lay leaders made, and helping them to develop parish structures so that initiatives and activities did not lose momentum (Dantis 2014, p.268). In these ways, lay people were encouraged to become 'co-responsible' for the parish (Dantis 2014, p.269).

Dantis noted the importance of support structures which she says are 'crucial to avoiding the pitfalls of confusion, pressure and burnout' (Dantis 2014, p.272). Lay leaders often reported that they received support from family members, the parish teams, and the parishioners who appreciated their contributions to the life of the parish. Most lay leaders found their work greatly rewarding and enriching, but also challenging. She reported that a number of lay leaders indicated that what they most appreciated about their work was being able to grow in faith through their work and come close to God as they built relationships with people in the parish (Dantis 2014, p.277).

However, Dantis said lay leaders faced several challenges. One was time constraints and the challenges in balancing their parish work with other work and with their family lives. There was a tendency for the roles to become increasingly demanding and complex (Dantis 2014, p.278).

Another challenge was finding more leaders. Many found it hard to find people who would share the workload. Dantis notes that there were instances of older people forced to remain in their roles when they would have liked others to take over. Indeed, getting people involved, particularly those who were not regular in their attendance at Mass, was often very hard work (Dantis 2014, p.279). Another challenge that she noted briefly was that of setting up programs and activities and then finding the funds and resources to maintain them.

Dantis argued that, in all the cases she examined, lay leadership was important for the vitality of parish life. However, the development of lay leadership depended on the extent of the empowering nature of parish leaders and encouragement of lay people to share their gifts and skills. She maintained that lay leadership did not undermine the role and work of other parish leaders such as priests and religious. Rather, with mutual trust, respect and support, collaboration between the lay and ordained leaders proved very effective for overall growth and development of the parish (Dantis 2014, p.283).

Factors in the Effectiveness of Lay Pastoral Ministry

A qualitative study of lay leadership in two rural Catholic parishes in Australia by Philip Hughes came to similar conclusions. In one case, a lay team was running a parish with the assistance of a visiting priest. In the other, one priest served a large rural area of four parishes and was developing lay leadership to assist in administration, pastoral care and in the conduct of worship. The study noted that those who had become involved in leadership were experiencing personal growth through their involvement. They had not only grown in their understanding of the liturgy and the Scriptures, but had grown in confidence and in their skills in leadership (Hughes 2013, p.10).

The study found that it was important where lay people were leading that they were allowed to contribute at a level that worked for them. Hughes suggests 'lay leaders should not be expected to emulate what a priest would, but to find patterns of operating that are appropriate for the time, energy and capacities that they have to offer' (Hughes 2013, p.11). The adoption of lay leadership is not always successful as it can mean laying heavy burdens on people who have other responsibilities in life, particularly when the leadership role does not involve paid employment.

One of the important factors in success was that lay people were mentored into their roles. In one of the studies, a Good Samaritan sister who had had responsibility for the parish had accomplished this well through training and encouragement, and through involving lay people directly in her pastoral and liturgical work. What was also important was that she believed in the capacity of the lay people and helped them to believe in themselves (Hughes 2013, p.11). Clear structures, well-defined roles and clear delegation of authority is also important for the success of lay ministry (Hughes 2013, p.12).

Lay Pastoral Ministry in Other Denominations in Australia

Many other denominations have made extensive use of lay leadership. Indeed, for some, such as the Churches of Christ and the Brethren and other denominations that developed as part of the movement of Restorationism in the 19th century, the importance given to lay leadership has been

part of the denominational protest against clericalism. However, other churches in Australia which have traditionally relied on trained and stipended full-time ministers have found it necessary to develop lay leadership, particularly in sparsely populated rural areas where it was not possible to fund a full-time ordained minister.

A study of models of leadership in the Uniting Church in South Australia was conducted by the Christian Research Association and published in 2008 in a research paper 'Rural Churches in the Uniting Church in South Australia: Models for Ministry' (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008). Effectively it was a study of lay ministry as few rural churches in South Australia are served by their own ordained minister. In some cases, lay leaders work without support from an ordained minister at all. In other cases, lay leaders or teams are supported by a lay minister who has responsibility for a group of churches.

Analysis of church survey data indicated that there was little difference between the vitality of churches led by lay leaders and those led by ordained leaders. There was a slightly greater tendency for people in churches led by lay leaders to feel a strong and growing sense of belonging and to feel that the exercise of their gifts was strongly encouraged than for people in parishes led by priests.

What was more important than whether the church was led by lay people or ordained was whether there was a single leader for a church. It was noted that single lay leaders were developing a vision and encouraging their churches to try new things more than many ordained leaders and that they were relating more positively to their churches than most ordained leaders (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008, p.7). The sense of responsibility for the life of a church is weakest when one congregation is run by another larger church, as in the case of 'satellite' models. In this case, the both the major church and smaller church are 'pulled down' in their vitality (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008, p.7).

There were, however, a range of challenges faced by these lay led churches. While the typical rural congregation was led by four lay leaders with the assistance of their spouses, most of the leaders were in their 60s and 70s. There was some anxiety about who would take on leadership in the future. A few of the lay people had completed some formal theological and/or pastoral training. For most, however, the costs in both time, energy and money of travelling to a large city for such study was too great. However, the denomination had organised some seminars and networks in rural areas which were much appreciated.

Another challenge was that there were times when people spoke of the need for input from 'outside' the locality and from local leaders. There were issues of counselling, for example, where it was helpful to have someone who was not entwined with local kinship and social relationships. There were times when people wanted the extra depth of insight into faith that an ordained 'outsider' could bring. Few local lay leaders were innovative in their leadership. While they were able to keep the churches alive, they were not generally able to develop highly innovative patterns of church life that might take the churches into a different future (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008, p.21).

Some of the churches in which worship and pastoral work were conducted by unpaid lay workers had employed a part-time administrator. These administrators ensured that everything in the church ran smoothly. While they did not conduct services themselves or do the pastoral visiting, they performed very valuable roles as contact and anchor people, even if paid for just a few hours a week (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008, p.20).

A recommendation of the report was the development of Resource Ministers who could effectively provide oversight to lay leaders in clusters of up to 15 churches. The Resource Ministers would

focus on working with the lay teams, lay pastors and lay preachers across the churches. They would ensure that training, organisational advice and programs for the spiritual formation of lay team members was provided. They would also provide some back-up for counselling and other assistance in times of crises (Hughes and Kunciunas 2008, p.23).

A similar study was conducted in five rural Anglican churches across Australia, looking at different models of leadership and organisation. Among the patterns of ministry examined was the 'Enabler Supported Ministry' in which an ordained clergy person acted as an 'Enabler' for lay teams appointed in a number of churches. The 'Enabler model' was similar to the 'Resource Minister' model in the Uniting Church. The task of the Enabler was to encourage, train, mentor and evaluate the mission and ministry of the lay teams. In some cases, some members of the lay team became 'Ordained Local Ministers'. That is, they were given the authority to serve and act as a priest within a particular local context and for a limited period of time. Most of these people worked part-time in this role and many had other occupations. Some were stipended but most were not. They generally had limited training.

This model was found to have a number of advantages. The Ordained Local Ministers and other lay leaders generally related well to the local churches because of their deep roots in their own communities. They personally reported that they had experienced significant growth in faith because of their involvement and they were able to engage the skills of the people in their churches more effectively. However, there were challenges in finding suitable people who had the time and focus to give to the task. They lacked training and the wider experience of other ordained clergy. There were also some issues in relation to the acceptance of their authority (Hughes and Kunciunas 2009, pp.10-11).

In another model lay people and ordained clergy worked together as a team covering a large area of churches. Again, some of the lay people were ordained as local ministers so that they could preside at the Eucharist. The difference in this model was that there was no one 'Enabler' working with local leaders, but rather a team sharing the responsibility of ministry.

The team approach certainly made available a wider range of skills and experience to the churches served. It was also possible for people to cover for each other. Thus, if one person was sick or on holiday, another person could step in for funerals or other special events. This team approach meant that there could be centralisation of some non-pastoral functions such as financial arrangements. It also provided a strong support structure for its members.

However, it meant that members of the team had to get to know a great number of people in a variety of churches. Team members often felt like visitors in a particular situation. At the same time, the model discouraged self-reliance and ownership of the future of their own ministry within individual churches (Hughes and Kunciunas 2009, p.11-12).

Both the Enabler model and the model of the mixed team of lay and ordained ministers involved lay leaders, some of whom were ordained for the purpose of local ministry. Both models showed how effective lay leadership could be, particularly when it was well supported by ordained clergy. There was considerable discussion in the various dioceses as to what training should be required of these people. While lay people varied greatly in the skills and experience they brought to their positions, what was probably more important was on-going mentoring and support in their roles. There were also theological discussions about what level of recognition should be given to lay people in their ministry (Hughes and Kunciunas 2009, p.13).

Lay Pastoral Ministry in the Church of England

The Ordained Local Minister model of lay ministry has been adopted in many places in the Church of England in the United Kingdom. Some studies of it have been conducted. The way 'Local Ministry' has developed in England is primarily team-based. People are ordained for a particular location and do not have the right to exercise ministry in other locations. They are also ordained to serve for a particular period of time: the ministry may be 'taken up and laid down' in ways which other forms of ordained ministry cannot (Bowden et al. 2011, p.15). While most clergy are ordained for life and remain priests when they retired, and thus could continue to preside at the Eucharist, those ordained to local ministry were only given authority to preside at the Eucharist for a limited period of time.

The debate about the nature of ministry referred to in Chapter 1 also arises in this context. Some people have argued that the theological base of lay ministry lies in the appreciation that ministry and mission are responsibilities of the whole church and not just activities for paid clergy. All members of the church have a responsibility to share in God's mission, to share in the work of pastoral care, and have involvement in worship. Simon, in Bowden et al. (2011) notes that in 1963, the World Conference on Faith and Order affirmed 'All baptized Christians are called to respond to and participate in the ministry of Christ directed towards the world' (Bowden et al. 2011, p.9). Within this context, however, people have different skills and gifts and play different roles. Nevertheless, in practice, lay ministry has often been driven by the lack of availability of ordained clergy and the funds to pay them, particularly in small rural churches.

Leslie Francis, one of the editors of the book *Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England* (Bowden et al. 2011)*,* conducted an empirical evaluation of ministry comparing the 20 dioceses in Britain where Ordained Local Ministry has been adopted and the 23 dioceses where it is not practised. He began by noting that the spread of the two groups of dioceses were similar. There were no significant differences in the size of the dioceses or the population density of the dioceses which had adopted Ordained Local Ministry and those that had not. Nor were there any major differences in the numbers of clergy in the two groups of dioceses (Bowden et al., 2011, p.84). In other words, Ordained Local Ministry had not been adopted simply because there were insufficient clergy available.

Francis considered whether there were differences in these two groups of dioceses in their progress and performance between 1991 and 2003. He looked at a range of statistics which are gathered by the dioceses, including Sunday attendances, Easter and Christmas attendances, and the numbers of infant baptisms and confirmations. Francis found that there had been declines in all these measures, but the rate of decline was no different in those dioceses that had adopted Ordained Local Ministry and those dioceses that had not. He also found that there was no significant relationship between these statistics and the numbers of people in Ordained Local Ministry. Thus, using these rather crude measures, it would seem that Ordained Local Ministry had made little difference to the performance of churches and the levels of involvement of people in the churches of these dioceses: that it had not been detrimental, but neither had it had highly positive impacts (Bowden et al., 2011, pp.87-88).

What Francis did find was that in the dioceses with Ordained Local Ministry, there had been a decline in the number of licensed Readers. In other words, the statistics suggested that, in some places, Ordained Local Ministry had become an alternative way of exercising ministry to that of the Reader, volunteers who have been selected, trained and licensed by a bishop to preach, teach and lead worship (Bowden et al., 2011, p.89).

For many people, the journey to such ordination was the consequence of a sense of call. Often there was an inner experience of a call, but also an affirmation from other members of a local church or from church leaders. These people reported that the training was often challenging and had stretched them in their thinking. However, they had experienced it as personal growth (see, for example, Bowden et al., 2011, p.121).

Most Ordained Local Ministers worked with teams of lay people and found affirmation in the teams. On the other hand, some reported that clergy and other church leaders were not affirming of their ministry. For example, one wrote 'Ordained Local Ministry is not widely understood, even by our diocesan bishop or the new archdeacons' (p.122). Indeed, there has been some hostility from people who have seen such ministry as a threat to the ordination and sometimes to the vocation of those in full-time ministry. It was reported that, in some places, a significant theological difference had emerged between Ordained Local Ministers and full-time clergy in their conception of ministry. Ordained Local Ministers saw their mission to change ecclesiological culture so that the 'priesthood of all believers' became a practical reality in parishes. Full-time ordained clergy stressed the variety of 'spiritual gifting' and the uniqueness of their own ministry (Bowden et al., 2011, p.139).

There is continuing discussion of the costs and benefits, the theological justifications and the advantages and challenges for ministry in local churches of having Ordained Local Ministry. There remains significant resistance to such ministry in many places. On the other hand, the debate and the experience of Ordained Local Ministry have led to a stronger expectation that the call to ministry will have its roots in the encouragement of a local congregation and that ministry is stronger when clergy work collaboratively with lay people (Bowden et al., 2011, p.144).

Summary

Lay pastoral ministry is taking place in many denominations. One of the drivers has been the lack of availability of priests or full-time, fully trained ministers of religion. However, lay ministry has developed along with recognition that the ministry of the Church is a task for all members, using their various gifts and time. It has also been recognised that, in many places, the involvement of lay people in ministry and in leadership has contributed to the vitality of the local church and to the effectiveness of its ministry.

There are, however, a variety of common challenges. One has been identifying the distinctiveness of the ministry of lay people and clergy, an issue which has sometimes made both clergy and some parishioners reluctant to accept the ministry of lay people. It has also made the collaboration between clergy and laity which is necessary for successful ministry difficult to achieve.

Another major challenge has been the development of suitable structures for selecting, training, accrediting and commissioning lay people into pastoral ministry and the fact that expectations of lay pastoral workers are often inappropriate for people with family and other responsibilities. Simply attempting to apply a 'weak' version of the structures used for clergy often does not work well.

The focus of this research is to review how lay pastoral ministry is operating in Catholic parishes in Australia and to make recommendations that would assist the development of guidelines for lay pastoral ministry. The next chapter describes the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3.
The Research Method

The major aim of this research is to provide insight into the current diversity of patterns of lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia. While the primary means of doing this was through interviews with people connected with lay pastoral ministry, a secondary part of the research was examining materials about such ministry and its theological foundations, as has been done in the preceding chapters. These aims confirm the overall objective: to come to a deeper understanding of the reality of lay pastoral ministry. The type of information through the case studies being sought is in-depth knowledge of how this form of ministry is experienced, what peoples' perceptions and beliefs are about it, how it is practised, what structures are in place around it, and what relationship it has with other forms of ministry.

Case Studies

Since the research sought to describe and understand the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of lay pastoral ministry, it was appropriate to use a qualitative research approach. Such an approach allowed the researchers to listen to the individual stories of participants, gain insight into their experiences in particular contexts, and understand what structures and practices existed in different settings. It was also recognised that lay pastoral ministry exists in many forms, some formal and some informal. To cater for that diversity, a case-study methodology was seen as best for identifying and examining the many forms of lay pastoral ministry.

The qualitative approach deemed suitable for this project was multiple case studies. A case study gives the researcher the opportunity to look in-depth at particular locations or settings. Multiple case studies allowed the comparison of contexts and appreciation of the similarities and differences between them.

The research was not designed to examine the extent of lay pastoral ministry, but to look at the range of its forms and contexts. Hence, the research plan was to conduct a series of seven case studies into the experience of lay pastoral ministry in a wide variety of pastoral contexts. The research team believed this method of data collection would offer a sense of the range of lay pastoral ministry, how it is understood, experienced, practised, and supported.

Selection of Locations

In order to choose suitable locations to conduct the case studies, the research team sought the recommendations of all Catholic dioceses, the Project Management Team, and the Project Reference Group. On the basis of these recommendations, case studies were undertaken at six locations, apart from the pilot study which made a seventh case study. These locations were chosen to ensure the research examined lay pastoral ministry in a variety of types of locations, in different dioceses, and in differing canonical settings that were geographically diverse.

As can be seen from Table 1, case studies were conducted in five states: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. One of the case studies occurred in a remote rural location and several others in less remote rural towns of various sizes. Two of the case studies occurred in large urban parishes.

Table 1: Overview of Case Studies

Study	State	Demographic Classification	Interviews
Pilot	Victoria	Small rural towns	8
Case Study 1	Victoria	Remote rural location	17
Case Study 2	Queensland	Major city	11
Case Study 3	South Australia	Capital city	16
Case Study 4	New South Wales	Large rural town	9
Case Study 5	Queensland	Large rural town	17
Case Study 6	Western Australia	Medium-sized rural town	7
Total Number of Interviews			**85**

The Project Management Group was also aware that another factor that could be significant in the expression of lay pastoral ministry was the level of multiculturalism in the location and the proportions of parishioners born overseas. Hence, it was important that the case studies included places with different levels of multiculturalism. In two of the case studies, there was a high level of multiculturalism. There was a moderate level of multiculturalism is two other case studies, and the three other case studies were largely among people of Anglo-Irish background.

Three different types of canonical settings were identifiable in the pilot and case studies: single parishes with multiple Mass centres; twinned parishes (i.e. 2 parishes); and, clustered parishes (i.e. 3 or more parishes). As Table 2 illustrates, the most common setting in this project was the single parish with multiple Mass centres. In these settings, though counted as single parishes, there are several church buildings where liturgy is celebrated. In some instances these centres were formerly separate parishes that had been merged. It was noted that a number of participants recounted that the process of merging such parishes was at times difficult. It often becomes a significant pastoral challenge to build a sense of common identity and community between such former parishes, now Mass centres of a single parish. Many retain their own distinctive character even after the merger, maintaining the diversity within the unity of the larger community. In twinned and clustered parishes, each parish retains its separate identity, while working more closely together, sharing personnel and resources.

Table 2: Canonical Settings of Study Locations

Canonical Setting	Number of Studies to which this applies
Single parishes, with multiple Mass centres	4
Cluster of parishes (i.e. 3 or more parishes)	2
Twinned parishes (i.e. 2 parishes)	1

In these settings, five parish priests and four moderators were active in ministry. Of these, three parish priests and three moderators were interviewed as part of the project.

The research team presupposed that choosing diverse canonical settings for the studies would increase the likelihood of obtaining a wide variety of lay pastoral ministry roles for the project. It was assumed that the respective canonical settings shape the structures of lay involvement in ministry. This was indeed the case. The most obvious examples are those instances when parishes are altered to deal with the declining numbers of clergy. Lay ministry and ordained ministry were both influenced by such changes.

For example, in those locations where a priest was entrusted with the pastoral care of a number of parishes, as either parish priest or moderator, it increased the need for lay people, paid or unpaid, to become involved in pastoral leadership roles within these parishes. It also accentuated the pastoral care exercised by lay people in unpaid, occasional ministerial roles. For this reason, the research team sought to interview lay people exercising various roles, even if these were not formerly recognised as pastoral ministry roles. Therefore, the research team sought to include not only people who were recognised as exercising lay pastoral ministry – such as lay ecclesial ministers, pastoral associates, pastoral workers, youth ministry workers, lay chaplains or campus ministers, or sacramental coordinators – but also liturgical ministers, parish pastoral council members, parish administrative staff, and school staff. This was partly to discover to what extent these latter lay people exercised pastoral care, even if they did not self-identify as lay pastoral ministers.

For each of these studies to proceed, the approval from both the bishop and the parish priest/moderator of the locations was obtained (see *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 515 §1, 517 §1).

Selection of Participants

The research team sought to interview not only lay people exercising recognised pastoral ministry roles, but also lay people who carried out roles which may have pastoral features. We also sought to interview lay, religious, and ordained individuals who interacted daily with lay people in pastoral ministry. We planned on asking religious participants to what extent the term 'lay pastoral ministry' was a meaningful way of describing their own ministerial identity.

To aid with the selection of participants, the parish priest/moderator (or their chosen representatives) nominated individuals within the respective locations whom they deemed as being suitable participants for the research.

The suitability of participants depended on the types of lay pastoral ministry and ordained ministry being exercised in the particular context. The research team suggested participants could include:
- Parish priests/moderators
- Key lay people in pastoral ministry
- Religious sisters and brothers who are active in pastoral ministry
- Representatives of parish pastoral councils
- Representatives of finance councils (where applicable)
- Parish secretaries/managers
- Local diocesan representatives
- Assistant priests, retired priests, or deacons
- Any additional people as appropriate.

The research team identified particular days in which it was possible to visit the various locations. Based on the willingness and availability of nominated individuals on these specified days, interviews were arranged and carried out. It should be noted that, given the time needed to obtain approval for the case studies to proceed, some locations had a relatively short period of time in which to organise willing and available participants for the project.

A total of 85 interviews were conducted. Four of those interviews had two or more participants in each so that the total number of people interviewed was 96. Table 3 describes the work settings where participants exercise their pastoral ministry, measured according to the criteria of remuneration, type of work, and context of work.

Table 3: Participants' Work Settings

Role Type	Males	Females
Unpaid, part-time parish workers	19	27
Paid, part-time parish workers	0	16
Paid, full-time parish workers	2	7
Paid school workers	3	3
Paid diocesan workers	0	5
Ordained parish workers (priests and deacons)	14	0
Total interviewees	**38**	**58**

It should be noted that, for the purposes of Table 3, the different categories of 'parish workers' include lay and religious participants, while 'ordained parish workers' were given a separate category. An argument could be made for including 'school workers' within the 'paid parish workers' categories. However, given that the place or relationship of the school community with the wider parish community is one of the issues to emerge from the project, together with the question of recognising school staff as exercising pastoral ministry, the research team deemed it appropriate to regard 'school workers' as a separate category at this stage of the analysis.

In any case, grouping participants using these categories has inherent limitations: they disguise the diversity that exists among the participants in each of the given settings, in terms of education or formation, role designation, level of responsibility, amount of remuneration, and other characteristics of their work and background. For example, the category of 'unpaid, part-time parish workers' included participants who were involved in occasional parish ministries, such as lay people in liturgical ministries, sacramental preparation, teaching religious education in state schools, members of finance councils, members and chairpersons of parish pastoral councils, and members of lay leadership teams who participated in the pastoral care of the parish with a moderator priest (canon 517 §2). All of these participants were unpaid, had roles which were meant to be part-time, and worked primarily in the parish context. Although they had these characteristics in common, their roles and responsibilities were quite distinct.

In particular, participants who were involved in lay leadership had a greater degree of responsibility than other unpaid part-time parish workers for pastoral care in their communities. They had a responsibility to engage in their own formation and development, so that they were able to provide formation, support, and resources to the lay people in occasional ministries like those mentioned above. In a real way, the roles of those in lay leadership had more in common with participants in the other settings of 'paid, part-time parish work' and 'paid, full-time parish work.'

Yet, even within these examples of paid part-time and full-time work there was considerable diversity. For some, the extent of their remuneration was a stipend, compensation for expenses, and/or agreed living arrangements, while others received salaries. Role designations within these settings were also quite varied, from 'co-ordinators' of specialised ministry areas to 'pastoral workers', or 'pastoral associates'. Some parish secretaries, managers, and catechists also fell within these categories because they were paid and worked on either a part-time or full-time basis in the parish context. The experiences of religious participants were distinct from their married and single lay counterparts in terms of their formation, training, and previous experience.

Despite these limitations, Table 3 illustrates the extent to which the case studies conducted included a range of male and female participants and a range of paid and unpaid roles. Table 4 provides an overview of the range of the roles exercised by interviewees in the case studies. Of necessity, the designations used to describe these roles are indicative of the types of roles, rather than using the accepted terminology from the particular locations. This measure has been taken to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Table 4: Participants' Roles

Ordained	Religious	Lay
Parish Priest	Pastoral Co-ordinator	Parish Secretary
Moderator	Pastoral Associate	Parish Manager
Assistant Priest	Pastoral Presence	Eucharistic Minister
Associate Pastor	Pastoral Assistant	Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson
Visiting Priest		Parish Pastoral Council Member
Pastor Emeritus		Finance Council Member
Deacon		Lay Leadership Team Member
		Pastoral Associate
		Youth Ministry Coordinator
		Catechist
		Coordinator of a Specialised Ministry – liturgy, sacraments, visitation, funeral, adult faith formation, etc.
		Parish Coordinator
		Catholic School Campus Minister
		Religious Educator [State Schools]
		Religious Educator Coordinator [State Schools]
		Catholic School Principal
		Catholic School Assistant Principal
		Diocesan Pastoral Planner

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection in the case studies was semi-structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. However, in certain circumstances, there were exceptions: on a few occasions it was necessary to interview two or more people together or conduct phone interviews.

Two researchers were involved in visiting parishes. For each study, one member of the research team visited the location for a two or three day period. In that time, the researcher interviewed participants and was present for liturgical worship gatherings, where possible. These methods provided the team with in-depth information into individual participants' stories, experiences, and understandings; the relationships between individuals, and structures in place within the setting; and the process of entering, practising, and supporting lay pastoral ministry within each context.

The information gathered in these case studies revealed the complexity of the reality of lay pastoral ministry. Although the experiences of participants cannot be considered representative of all lay people involved in pastoral ministry in Australia, conducting these case studies has provided an opportunity to see a range of lay pastoral ministry as practised in various contexts.

Interview Schedules

The interviews were guided by a set of questions that had been prepared by the research team. These questions explored a range of topics, while allowing a focus on the particular experience of the participants. The topics included:

- the background of the person being interviewed and how they became involved in ministry;
- the organisational practices of their parish;
- the person's understanding of ministry;
- their day-to-day ministry experiences;
- their growth in ministry; and,
- other important insights.

Nine different interview schedules were prepared for the following groups of people:

1. lay people in pastoral ministry
2. vowed religious
3. representatives of parish pastoral councils
4. representatives of finance councils
5. parish secretaries / volunteer administrators
6. school principals
7. parish priests or moderators
8. assistant priests, deacons or visiting priests
9. diocesan representatives.

The duration of the interviews varied depending on the role of the participants, and ranged between 30 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes in length. With the permission of the participants all interviews were recorded, so that the research team could check details subsequent to the interviews.

Data Analysis

The interview process initiates the analysis of the data, which continues throughout the research process. This analysis during the interview is crucial for articulating appropriate responses to spontaneous conversation, and in formulating follow-up questions so as to yield further information of relevance to the project. Analysis continues through the immersion of the researcher in the interview recordings and notes taken during and after interviews. Common patterns or themes contained in these interviews were identified.

Ethical Issues

In any project involving human participants several ethical issues emerge, such as informed consent, respecting autonomy, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, appropriate dissemination of findings, and security of data. As part of the planning process, an application was made to the Christian Research Association Ethics Committee addressing such issues and approval was granted on 9 February 2015.

The research was conducted on a voluntary basis only. Individuals were nominated by the parish priest or moderator (or their representatives), were invited to participate, and were advised that they could choose to withdraw their participation from the project at any time.

To enable individuals to make an informed decision about taking part in this project, a General Project Information Flier and Participants' Information Sheet were provided to each person. Consent Forms were signed, and interviews conducted, only after individuals had sufficient opportunity to peruse this information and ask questions.

Confidentiality was one of the conditions under which ethics approval for the project was received. Thus only non-identifiable data has been reported from the research findings so that neither the locations of the case studies, nor the participants in each of the locations, can be identified.

Chapter 4.
Identity, Responsibility and Principles of Ministry

This chapter explores the participants' insights into why lay people become involved in lay pastoral ministry, how they understand their roles within the Church, and what principles of ministerial practice are evident in the canonical settings of the study locations.

Faith, Family and Occupational Background

For most, when asked the question about their faith background, family history was the first and basic point of reference. Some participants had grown up in a household where both parents were Catholic; others had one parent Catholic and the other parent a member of a different Christian denomination. A number of participants recalled that one of their parents had converted to the Catholic faith for the sake of their spouse and family. Most participants recollected that they were brought to Mass every Sunday by their Catholic parent(s). Some explained that their parents had been 'quite traditional' or had a 'very strong faith'. For some, it was 'quite normal' to have priests and nuns visit their family homes.

The majority believed their family of origin, whether remembered positively or negatively, had a formative influence on their own faith and ministry lives. Many of the participants recalled periods when they had 'drifted away from Church' for one reason or another.

For some it was the kindness of one person in a community – not infrequently the priest in their local parish – that instigated their return to faith and liturgical practice. For others, when they began their own families, or when their children started being educated in Catholic schools, they began to reintegrate into Church community life and regular liturgical practice.

Some participants recalled how their faith and interest in the life of the Church had deepened through their experiences of various Church-related programs, such as Marriage Encounter and Ignatian Spiritual Exercises; through their personal involvement in Church ministries, such as liturgical and sacramental preparation ministries, youth and family ministries, men's ministries, bereavement ministries, and visitation of the sick; and, through their training and formation for those ministries. A few participants also became Catholic as adults, after having experienced Christian faith in other denominations.

A distinctive aspect of most of the participants' background stories was the influence of migration throughout their lives. Some were the descendants of immigrant families that moved to Australia from other parts of the world. Many participants themselves had travelled around Australia seeking work. These participants thus had various experiences of Church leadership, liturgical practice, and community spirit in the different parishes in which they had lived. The parish was often the first point of contact when they moved to a new place, and their participation in parish activities was the primary means of making friendships.

The current family status of participants varied: ordained and religious participants had experience of living in community and on their own; some participants were single lay people living alone; others were married, separated, and widowed; many were parents, and some were grandparents and great-grandparents. Some of the participants' children were also engaged in the ministry life of the Church.

Most married participants conveyed the encouragement and the strong emotional, financial, and in-kind support they received from their spouses that enabled them to carry out their ministry more effectively. However, this was not the case for all married participants. A few had spouses who did not share their Catholic faith or level of commitment to ministry, and occasionally this was problematic for their ministry.

For the participants who spoke about their occupational background, the field of education was the most common. This holds some significance given the debate on the relationship between school and parish life. A number had backgrounds in various types of business, administration, and health fields. For each participant who came to ministry from another occupational background, the skills, insights, and ideas they brought to ministry as a result of these backgrounds were quite evident.

Identity, Mission and Ministry

One of the significant factors that influenced participants' understanding of lay pastoral ministry was their perception of their place or identity within the Church. All participants recognised the importance of lay ministry in the Church, but there was a certain ambiguity around the reason for lay involvement.

The priests are just so overwhelmed. The task is now just so big. There is so much to around governance and legislation, administratively, and there are so many needs pastorally and sacramentally, and they just can't do it all. [Lay Participant]

On the one hand, many participants implied that lay people were involved in Church ministries because of the shortage of priests: they recognised that there were simply too few priests left to do all that needed to be done to sustain the life of the Church and to build community. Therefore, lay people were needed 'to help Father.' This rationale has two implications: first, the tasks and responsibilities for the mission of the Church were seen as belonging to the priest, and lay people act as (temporary) substitutes out of necessity; and second, if there were a surplus of priests in the future, lay people would no longer be needed to fulfil these roles. For some participants, therefore, despite in-depth formation of laity (both ministers and communities) regarding discipleship, stewardship, and ministry, current lay roles are still understood as a 'filling the gap' measure until such time as a priest can return: recognition of the call of baptism and the authenticity of lay leadership is gradual (at best), because of the deep-seated sense of the ordained as leaders within parish communities.

This outlook was consistent with some participants' feelings of being unworthy for ministry within the Church, or at least for the particular role which they found themselves in. Some were surprised that the person who invited or nominated them for ministry saw something in them that they could not see themselves. Some believed they were insufficiently prepared or trained, or did not feel confident with certain public aspects of their roles, or felt there were gaps in their roles that they were struggling to meet. Some participants

I saw it here [when I first arrived] *and I still see it: unless the priest is doing it, it isn't 'the church'. Sometimes that means you need to stand back as the priest, and make sure that you don't dive in and need to do whatever it is. Here that's easy because there are plenty of other things to do anyway, but that's not a healthy model, that Father does everything and everyone else is just a helper, or poor substitute, because we don't have enough of him. Rather than saying 'No, that's not why, that's not the motivation for this at all'. And I think often that's been the misunderstanding and for many people that's how ministry has been presented - as a second best - rather than understanding that it is part of the nature of baptism. It's who and what we are.* [Ordained Participant]

who had been involved in Church ministries for a significant period of time, as well as those who were new to their roles, shared these feelings.

> *We have to be involved, otherwise we wouldn't have a church. We are church.* [Lay Participant]

However, on the other hand, when participants were explicitly asked whether they believed lay people should be involved in Church ministries, even if there were a surplus of priests in the future, they replied positively: without doubt, they believed that lay people, because of their baptism, are part of the Church, and that they have a part in the Church's mission. Thus, a number of participants understood lay ministry as a 'responsibility' of Catholic baptism, and as an activity that Catholics should be actively engaged in because of a 'baptismal call' to love one another. For example, one female participant felt a responsibility to become involved in unpaid pastoral ministry in her parish as a way to give back to the parish, as other parishioners had pastorally cared for her over the years since her husband had passed away. For her, pastoral ministry was caring for others, and was not just an ordained minister's responsibility.

'Helping Father' still played a part in this latter understanding, yet with an entirely different connotation. From this second viewpoint 'helping Father' meant lay people taking responsibility for their own roles within the Church and, in so doing, creating the environment within which the priest could have the freedom to exercise his own ministry.

> *We wouldn't be a church without the lay people's involvement. We are all making it happen together.* [Lay Participant]

When participants were asked to clarify what roles they saw as being 'proper' to the priest's role in this instance, celebrating the sacraments, visiting the vulnerable in their homes and care facilities, being a pastoral presence for people, and preaching were the most common answers. There was a sense in which lay people in pastoral leadership participated in the pastoral care of the parish, and thus shared responsibility for this with their respective parish priest or moderator.

Supporting this second rationale for lay involvement in mission and ministry were the participants' responses to what motivated and sustained them in their ministry roles. For some it was a matter of giving back what they had received and of witnessing their faith to others within the community. However, some interviewees made no mention of motivation or sustenance in ministry; just that there was no one else willing or able to undertake their role.

> *Everything that I have learned in life in some ways has all come to this ... I have these moments when I think 'I really love this', and I get energised from it. I find that these are moments of grace, and I think this is good, I'm on the right track ... I often think, how did I get into this position? And I think the Spirit has to be moving, and I am responding and doing the best that I can.* [Lay Participant]

The majority spoke of being 'called' to be active in the Church: some related stories of being drawn to a particular ministry despite their protestations against it; and, some shared their feeling of enjoyment or sense of peace around their ministry role – knowing they are 'meant to be' where they are, or meant to be doing what they are doing.

The 'discernment' of lay people's call (or 'vocation', a term that some were not comfortable using) to ministry is different in each setting. For some it was the invitation from a priest or pastoral associate to become involved in some form of ministry, such as hospitality ministry or liturgical ministry. For others it was a process of being nominated within a community discernment initiative. Most of those in paid pastoral leadership roles went through an interview selection process, which of necessity involved some form of discernment; while others evolved into paid leadership roles, through discussion with the parish priest, from unpaid, occasional ministry activities.

However, for others, ongoing discernment was integral to their roles. For instance, some participants who had been involved for a number of years in a particular role spoke of continually discerning their effectiveness within the role, the development of their relationships with co-workers and the people they served, and, the viability and sustainability of the role. Those exercising different types of roles, for a specified term, necessarily underwent a discernment process near the end of each term, which would culminate in making a renewed commitment to their current role, or a new commitment to another ministry activity.

Yet, for many, there was no such discernment, just a willingness to stay in their roles because no one else was there to take over. Many in unpaid lay ministry just kept doing what they were doing, and in the way it had always been done, unless there was a specific direction for it to change.

Issues of Terminology

The question of identity is closely related to language, since we need to use language to express how we view our identity and our place within the Church. The issue of the adequacy, or rather the inadequacy, of language was evident throughout the research.

From the outset, the research team realised that the term 'lay pastoral ministry' was occasionally problematic. Some participants, such as pastoral associates, pastoral workers, or pastoral assistants, had little difficulty with the term because the language was already inherent in their role designations. We anticipated some difficulty, however, with participants in other roles, such as parish secretaries and managers, school staff, and possibly parish pastoral council members. We were uncertain to what degree these participants would self-identify as 'lay pastoral ministers' or even 'lay people in pastoral ministry'.

Despite the lack of familiarity that some participants had with the language itself, most could relate to what the term signified: they recognised that they were 'lay people' working out of a baptismal call. The majority acknowledged that there were at least some 'pastoral care' aspects to their role; and no one expressed any difficulty with the term 'ministry'.

Nevertheless, there were a few issues with the terminology of lay pastoral ministry. Some participants suggested that the language was only meaningful in the Church context, and that it did not translate to the Australian tax sphere. Others wondered whether liturgical ministries, sacramental preparation and other such ministries could be considered pastoral. Some were concerned that the language was too often reserved for lay people with particular sets of qualifications and religious sisters, even though others performed the same lay pastoral ministry functions. Some were worried that only applying the term to particular lay roles would mean that the pastoral aspects of other roles would be ignored or in some way removed.

Difficulties also emerged with respect to religious participants' acceptance of the term 'lay pastoral ministry'. On the one hand, all the religious participants identified positively with the term. Their primary justification for this was that they were 'non-ordained'; their vocation to ministry arose out of their baptism, which meant that religious persons have more in common with 'lay' people than the 'ordained'. On the other hand, religious participants also used the terms 'lay' and 'religious' as if they were distinct groupings in the Church. In addition, some lay participants seemed to view religious persons as having more in common with ordained ministers. Their experiences of community life, their religious vows, and their extensive formation and ministry experience seemed to set them apart from their lay counterparts. Indeed religious participants also recognised that these differences, which arose from the nature of religious life, shaped their roles as pastoral ministers.

Therefore, the language of 'lay pastoral ministry' is somewhat ambiguous and not universally accepted.

This does not mean that the language cannot be used, however. Rather, it means that it needs to be clarified as it is used. There is a need to build some clarity around who is covered by the term 'lay' and what sorts of ministry are properly referred to as 'pastoral'. The ambiguity is a reminder that while there are people who are designated 'lay pastoral ministers', there are many other lay people who work in the Catholic Church for whom 'pastoral ministry' is a dimension of their ministry.

Principles of Lay Pastoral Ministry

One of the divisions between groups of people involved in lay pastoral ministry is between those who are paid and those who are not. However, categories of remuneration do not necessarily represent different roles. In some of the settings, the paid pastoral ministers were distinguished from the unpaid because of the formers' co-ordinating or leadership roles, through which they offer support, training, and resources to unpaid ministers. Some reasons given by participants for their payment were:

1. such lay leaders had higher levels of responsibility,
2. they could be required to have professional qualifications;
3. they could be held accountable for the work they did; and,
4. the parish could afford it.

However, the research found lay people in pastoral ministry in other settings with similar levels of responsibility, and performing analogous leadership functions, in some instances with equivalent levels of qualification, and exercising this ministry with similar devotion and care. This reality demonstrates that there is no common rationale for determining when remuneration is necessary and what level of remuneration is appropriate. In many cases, remuneration was decided on an individual and circumstantial basis. For some participants, the variation in remuneration was a justice issue.

Leaving aside this issue of remuneration, for the moment, this section looks at the other characteristics of lay pastoral ministry found in the various settings. For participants, lay pastoral ministry was predominantly seen as pastoral, leading, collaborative, professional, transitory, persistent and successive.

Pastoral

From the experiences of participants in the project, it can be surmised that, at a basic level, all ministry roles within the Church, in one way or another, have a pastoral character. In terms of lay roles, whether the lay person works as a parish secretary, parish manager, liturgical minister, catechist, school staff member, or in sacramental preparation, bereavement support or hospitality, they are sometimes involved in offering emotional and spiritual support, and sometimes physical and material care to the people they encounter in their work. Some lay participants did not identify this dimension of their activities, although their accounts of their daily tasks made it evident this pastoral work was occurring. In a real way, lay participants, both paid and unpaid, were often a

> *In terms of lay pastoral ministry I include our admin people. I know some people don't, but I do. I see* [the parish secretary] *in our office, in terms of pastoral contact - that first encounter on the phone or at the door or wherever. She is incredibly pastoral. It's an incredibly pastoral role.* [Ordained Participant]

pastoral presence for those they encountered.

However, given the feeling of 'unworthiness' that was evident among participants, many were not comfortable acknowledging this aspect of their role. Although it was evident that pastoral care was a natural characteristic, a talent or gift, for many of the lay participants, some felt underprepared or underqualified if such pastoral care were to become an expected or prescribed aspect of their role.

Leading

One characteristic evident in the roles of many interviewees was that of leadership. Pastoral care was an explicit aspect of these roles. In some cases, participants were leaders within specific specialised ministry areas: these leaders offered pastoral care to the people within their sphere of responsibility. The names used to designate such leadership roles were significant to indicate the leadership quality of the roles, and so to distinguish them from other forms of lay involvement in the ministry life of the Church.

The importance of having a pastoral associate named as a 'pastoral associate' ... is because people see them in a relationship of leadership, with the priest, and that's different to the history of lay people who have been workers 'helping Father', but not necessarily being leaders. And even if they had been leaders, there hadn't been recognition around that, and there was never a sense of them being co-workers with the priest. Thus, in terms of the naming, especially in formal documentation, we need something: and 'pastoral associates' is important, or 'pastoral co-ordinators'. [Lay Participant]

From the perspectives of participants who exercised leadership within their communities, it was evident that leadership in the Church was not about doing all tasks, or taking on all the responsibility. Rather, the role of the leader was to awaken the gifts and talents of others and enable them to play their own part in the ministry life of the Church. For many lay participants this meant co-ordinating ministers, providing training, resources, and support for them so that others could minister more effectively. It also meant modelling this style of involvement for others: not taking on every task that is sent in one's direction, and taking time to get a group of people together to complete a task, even when it would be quicker to do it oneself. Laying the groundwork through processes of listening and discernment with occasional ministers was considered very valuable in terms of the effectiveness of longer term pastoral planning. Ministry leaders who engaged in these types of processes found them valuable for encouraging the growth of lay activity, and for enabling others to embrace their baptismal call to discipleship or stewardship.

Because now we are going to see priests coming and going, and we can't just wait for the next one to take us on a new direction, because we're going to get lost. [Lay Participant]

Given the scarcity of priests in some areas, participants viewed lay leadership as very important. With the movement of priests, ongoing responsibilities for retired priests, leadership of non-resident priests, and the different leadership styles, visionary outlooks, ministry gifts, and apostolic zeal of those priests, participants suggested that parishioners could feel pulled in various directions with regard to leadership. They believed that one of the strengths of lay leadership was that these leaders could ensure a level of consistency in terms of the mission and vision of the parish. This was based on the understanding that, for the most part, such lay leaders would reside within the community, remaining in situ while priests moved in and out.

Some participants were less than optimistic about the influence a newly appointed parish priest, who did not share a similar understanding or vision of lay pastoral ministry, could have on a parish. Similarly, a change of bishop within the diocese could mean a change of direction – positively or negatively – for lay involvement.

On the other hand, a very different model of lay leadership in one of the locations saw a paid full-time person who was not a priest having administrative oversight for the whole parish, including giving support to a number of assistant priests. This leader had responsibility, not because of a scarcity of priests, but because it was the best model of leadership for the particular parish. While this person's role had a pastoral element to it, it was primarily an administrative leadership role for the parish as a whole, allowing priests to focus on their particular pastoral responsibilities.

Some participants expressed the view that leadership in the Church was simply about 'maintenance': that is, about keeping every group, or ministry, or activity running smoothly, without making any significant changes. Other participants viewed leaders as enabling growth within the community, building involvement, fostering new gifts, and encouraging new members and the development of leadership.

Thus, a deeper and more widespread engagement with the vision of leadership within the Church at national, diocesan and local levels seems necessary; to come to a shared understanding of what leadership in ministry entails, and what formation is necessary to propagate that shared understanding.

Collaborative

One of the unequivocal findings of the research was the centrality of teamwork or collaboration for the effectiveness of ministry, and in particular ministry leadership, in the contemporary Church. Whether participants were ordained, lay or religious, there was general agreement that no one person is capable of doing, or can be expected to do, all that needs to be done to build community. This is especially the case given the scarcity of priests in some areas, the resultant changing canonical settings, and the ever growing needs of people within the Church communities. Among participants there was a clear acknowledgement of the gifts and talents enjoyed by all the baptised, and that these are essential for contributing to the overall growth and vibrancy of their local communities. Consequently, participants argued that teamwork or collaboration between those in ministry was essential.

Co-working is not all into a central focus. There is some network. I think that is sometimes where the great work happens. I might sometimes be incidental to that, and that's good. In other words, I don't have to be a conduit for everything. [Ordained Participant]

The language used by the US Bishops in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* has had an influence in some locations: the idea that ordained, religious, and lay people are co-workers in the service of the mission of the Church was evidently beginning to permeate parish life in several of the case studies. For participants in these locations, being co-workers means being in a network of working relationships: not just with the priest (whether parish priest or moderator), but also with all the members of the ministry leadership team, with people in ministry groups, and with parishioners.

This co-worker relationship was being balanced in several instances by the employer-employee relationship. Some participants tried to explain this dynamic which they saw as demonstrated by a mutual accountability. Employees were accountable to their employers for the responsibilities they were employed to undertake. For employers, it meant ensuring employees had clear role descriptions, the boundaries of which were respected, and appropriate working environments, remuneration, and support structures. However, in some situations, employees often found it difficult to balance the responsibilities and demands of ministry as an employee and life outside of that role. This was a tension for at least a few participants who struggled with the demanding

expectations of others in what was often a part-time role within a parish.

Participants readily acknowledged that working together in teams was both challenging and rewarding. Working with others to achieve a common goal could be difficult when personalities, cultural backgrounds, family status, age group, and visionary outlooks of team members were quite different. These factors could make a real difference to the effectiveness of team ministry. For participants, all team members ultimately needed to be committed to collaboration as a way of doing ministry: if they were not, not only could the team dynamic break down, but also the interaction between ministers could become destructive. Participants affirmed that, where team members were committed, teamwork or collaboration could create a supportive and caring environment within which all ministers were enabled to better fulfil their ministerial duties.

> *When you are working in a team, especially in a Christian and Catholic environment, it gets a bit more intense and a bit deeper. There are difficult moments, because there are the personalities, perspectives, or moments when you feel a bit pressured, or when we test each other's patience ... So it's important to spend time with [team members] and help each other as much as possible, because that is so important. Everyone gives each other a bit of encouragement. No one is there to take anyone else's position. Everyone is there to share what they know. I may need to learn something, but others need to learn something too. There has to be trust that what we do for and with each other is for our mutual benefit. And everyone has to be as up-front and open as they can.* [Lay Participant]

Participants described several structures that could be put in place to enable ministers to work as a team. These included:

- regular contact or communication;
- team meetings for planning, review, and debriefing;
- a working environment which provided team members with individual and shared spaces;
- mutual and shared formation and spiritual retreat opportunities;
- equivalent/comparative selection, remuneration, and work agreements across team members;
- balanced distribution of responsibilities;
- adequate means of addressing conflict, grievance issues, and cessation of employment.

These structures, however, could be undermined if team members did not function as a team. Induction, shared formation, peer relationships and even facilitation were methods suggested by participants for better enabling a collaborative spirit. This was especially the case when new ministers were joining an existing team.

Professional

The majority of participants viewed the 'professionalisation' of ministry as a positive development. For most participants, professionalism in ministry included:

- improving the standards of ministry practice by requiring ministers to undergo initial and ongoing formation and training, especially with respect to best practice in safeguarding vulnerable members of the communities;
- employing qualified, experienced lay people to specialised ministry roles, so that such ministers can be entrusted with pastoral leadership in communities;

- engaging in planning and reflection regarding the pastoral needs of communities, so that ministers would be working out of and towards a common, shared vision;
- establishing effective communication between ministers and parishioners, between parish and diocese, and between parish and the wider community, so that everyone would be better informed and experience a sense of inclusion in the task of growing and developing the community.

I fear that we could be creating another form of clericalism by having professional [lay] pastoral ministry. That's why we use the term 'coordinator' because theirs is a role of coordinating, resourcing and supporting the ministry of parishioners. [Ordained Participant]

Some lay participants recalled that they had encountered clergy who disapproved of speaking about ministry in 'professional' terms. In a concurring manner, some ordained participants admitted having an anxiety about the term because they feared it would lead to the 'clericalisation' of the laity. Other participants suggested that some lay people would find the term alienating, especially if they had not received any academic training: they would feel unworthy of such a title, as if they did not have the skills to perform a professional role in a ministry context.

Transitory

While participants did not use the specific term 'transitory', the research team believes this term expressed the reality of some lay pastoral ministry roles. Indeed, the feature of being transitory was an inherent part of many of the models for ministry exercised in the various settings. It was particularly evident in the unpaid models of ministry, whether leadership roles or otherwise: ministers were invited to commit to a particular role for a specified period of time. In some cases they were required to relinquish the role after a set period of time, allowing another person to take up the position. In other settings, people took on a particular role with no fixed term.

There were many reasons behind this transitory character. First, short-term roles were often developed with the intention that they would be more attractive to individuals given that they would be exercising these roles, for the most part, in addition to their existing occupational or family commitments. Secondly, it meant that ministers could not become so attached to the role, and perhaps to the 'power' that it occasioned, that they would begin to feel like it belonged to them. Thirdly, it meant that someone new coming into the role periodically would ensure that the ministry remained fresh, new, energised and effective.

The researchers asked participants whether they believed a similar transitory nature should be applied to paid lay pastoral ministry roles. Most of the responses to this question were less certain. Given the understanding that paid positions were more frequently related to leadership positions, and most participants viewed these positions as opportunities for communities to have some stability and continuity regarding ministry, the extent to which these ministry positions should be transitory was questionable. In addition, in those instances where professional requirements were placed on lay people who enter these roles – in terms of academic achievement and pastoral experience – it would be more challenging to attract lay people to these roles if there were no reasonable degree of stability or sustainability.

Noting that clergy were moved between parishes, it was acknowledged that such movement could be helpful for some lay ministry roles. However, it was argued that structures needed to be established to enable lay pastoral ministers to move from one parish to another.

While the transitory character of ministry was presented as having some positive consequences, in

many of the interviews there was an underlying frustration with the excessively transient nature of ministry life in the contemporary Church. This was sometimes the case with reference to alterations in canonical settings, with the movement of ordained leaders, or with changing pastoral plans, formation programs, or models of ministry, while not allowing sufficient time for implementation or development of the previous measures. Although participants admitted that some of these changes were inevitable and necessary, there was a sense that constancy and true growth was being forfeited as a consequence.

Persistence and Succession

These characteristics are the obverse of the transitory quality of ministry. To combat excessive transience, participants argued for commitment to visions, plans, programs, and models. In such contexts, remaining in the role would allow them to fulfil their potential and achieve these visions. They contended that ministry roles, which were based on perceived needs within the community, should be successive as long as these needs were still evident. Moreover ministers who reached the end of their specified terms should be enabled to succeed to other equivalent positions, if they so desired and if their gifts corresponded with the needs of the prospective community. This was not seen as an equivalent of 'career advancement', but was rather understood as a source of stability for lay ministers and for preserving the gifts of the minister for the good of the Church.

Given that ministry roles were often established in response to particular perceived needs within a community, participants implied that, despite the transitory quality of ministry, ministers should be enabled to meet those needs for as long as those needs remain. In other words, if certain members of the community were reliant on the provision of a particular ministry, the needs of these members should not be disregarded. Sometimes an unintended consequence of ending an employment agreement, or reducing ministers' hours, or moving a minister out of a location without the appointment of a successor, was that needs of the community were not met.

On the other hand, the research team was aware that it is not always possible for ministries to continue simply because the need for such ministries is there. In most settings there are limited finances and limited possibilities in finding people with the skills, time and energy to devote to the ministry. Ministry can never meet all the needs that are identified and some processes of prioritising what is most important is inevitable. There are times when particular needs must be placed before the parish community and invitations given to people to help them raise the financial and people resources to meet those needs.

At the same time, for the sake of both those involved in pastoral ministry and for the sake of the ministry of the Church as a whole, there needs to be arrangements whereby lay pastoral ministry positions can be maintained through different appointments of priests within a location and where there are some opportunities for lay pastoral leaders to transfer their gifts and skills from one position to another. Effective lay pastoral ministry requires structures which incorporates both persistence and succession.

Chapter 5.
Entry Pathways and Preparation for Ministry

This chapter briefly summarises the participants' insights into how lay people become involved in lay pastoral ministry and what preparation is needed for entry into and growth in this form of ministry.

Entry Pathways

In each interview participants were asked what ministry involvement they had previously and how they became involved in the ministry roles they were currently exercising. The most common path for lay participants' first entry into ministry was through invitation-response. Someone, usually the parish priest, asked them to do some occasional unpaid ministry (e.g. ministry of the Word, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, or sacramental preparation), and they agreed. For most, the invitation came as a surprise: they found themselves doing something they would never have dreamed of volunteering for.

The majority of the participants had this invitation-response experience in a different location from their current setting. Most had exercised more than one occasional ministry, and nearly all still exercised some occasional ministries. This was the case even for those currently exercising paid and unpaid lay leadership roles: they were still involved in occasional ministries in addition to their other responsibilities.

In some settings, participants commented that the entry pathway into occasional ministry roles had now changed. Some parishes had processes of nomination, whereby members of the community were asked to nominate people they saw as suitable for particular roles, and the nominated individuals could accept or decline.

In some cases, there was a process of discernment to establish whether the nominees were suitable people for the particular role and, if there was more than one nominee for a single position, to ascertain which nominee would be most suitable for the role. Such processes are understood as discernment of the movements of the Spirit. They were used for both occasional and unpaid leadership roles.

However, in one small rural setting, lay ministry was simply 'getting in and doing what needed to be done in the parish'. In this context the practicalities of ministries and the viability of the parish was more important than processes and formal structures. There was a need for tasks to be done, so people offered to help.

In one particular setting, the process of discernment had undergone a further modification. Every two years parishioners were asked to identify their own gifts or talents and pinpoint which occasional, unpaid ministries within the community they believed best corresponded to their gifts. They were then invited to enter into an honest and frank conversation with someone they trusted about whether the person agreed with their own discernment of their gifts and apposite ministries. Once they had come to an agreement on their chosen ministries, parishioners were asked to complete a form to sign on for this ministry.

For some parishioners it was a matter of indicating they would like to enter into a new ministry.

Others indicated that they would like to continue in the ministries they had exercised before. These parishioners were then commissioned for their ministries for a two-year period, until the cycle began again.

In one setting, an annual 'Ministry Fair' had been undertaken as a way of highlighting the diverse ministries within the parish, and as a way of building parish community. The fair also allowed parishioners to discover more about a particular ministry before committing themselves to it.

Entry pathways into positions were somewhat different for paid and unpaid positions. For many participants, entry into paid ministry roles was a relatively easy transition from exercising unpaid occasional ministries. In most cases, it was still a matter of referral: somebody bringing an advertised position to their attention because they believed the participant had some qualities that would make them suitable for the role, or an invitation from the relevant priest to apply for the position. Most participants who held a paid position had undergone an interview process, after which they were selected and appointed to the role. However, there were some who, after a number of years of working in an occasional ministry in an unpaid capacity, were approached by their priest and asked if they would like to formalise their role somewhat, and receive payment in return for working a specified number of hours. These types of roles usually began as part-time and flexible, but they often developed into more full-time positions.

For most participants working with the parish context, the employer was the parish priest: he was the one that authorised the lay pastoral minister, and was the one to whom the minister was directly accountable. In some settings, the local bishop either gave his approval of the candidate, before the appointment could be made, or made the appointment directly, or commissioned the ministers prior to the commencement of their roles.

Preparation for Ministry

Participants recalled that in the past there was little or no formation for unpaid, occasional ministries. In at least one location this was still the case: most of the participants in this setting said that there was no real training in the roles they volunteered for. They suggested there was only what one female lay participant described as 'a hope that you can do the best you can'. This same individual noted that 'there was no training, little support in most things', and that 'everything was a battle'. Other participants suggested that in the more remote parishes there needed to be local training and formation opportunities. When dioceses provided training opportunities in their central offices, or at other regional places, this could still mean a few hours' drive for some people. The idea of pastoral supervision for lay people as a way of preparing people for ministry was met favourably by some participants.

In other settings, with the growing number of religious and lay pastoral assistants, associates and co-ordinators, more opportunities for formation and preparation were being provided to parishioners exercising occasional ministries. In some instances, this formation was offered directly by the lay or religious pastoral leader; in other cases, the pastoral leader engaged an outside facilitator from the diocesan offices or elsewhere to present the formation program. In some cases people went to diocesan offices or other places for some training.

In terms of lay leadership roles, no two methods of preparation were the same in the study settings. Some positions required previous experience, training, and education, while others functioned on a 'potential and aptitude' basis, requiring no initial training or experience. Some were offered a certain amount of formation and induction, or encouraged the minister to pursue theological

education as soon as possible. In some contexts, this education was to take place in the ministers' own time and at their own expense. In other settings it was financially provided by the parish and took place during the ministers' working hours.

Most people felt that the individual's potential and aptitude were initially more important than academic training for pastoral positions. Some suggested that academic qualifications were not a satisfactory indicator of the pastoral sensitivity or ministerial competence of the candidate applying for the position. The gift for pastoral ministry and discernment of this gift were therefore paramount. Furthermore, some participants suggested that encouraging theological education in advance of appointment to a ministry role contributes to the unjust situation of having an abundance of highly trained and accredited individuals, without having sufficient employment opportunities.

Nevertheless, for many participants, the need for theological education was implicit, whereas for others it was quite explicit, especially for those engaged in ministry leadership positions, whether paid or unpaid. It was seen as giving ministers a deeper understanding of the roots of the Christian faith and the history and teachings of the Church. It also contributed to greater competency in their fields of specialisation, such as ministry in music, among youth, in sacramental preparation or in liturgies.

Most lay participants who had not yet undertaken formal, theological education saw value in doing so. They were also aware that their employers had a preference that they would engage in such studies sooner rather than later. However, it remained a source of concern for them. Given the transitory nature of lay pastoral ministry, participants speculated about the prudence of investing in formal education for a position they might not be able to retain. Participants who were presently engaged in theological study, or had attained theological qualifications in the past, acknowledged that it was quite a commitment, especially in terms of time and finance. This was true, in different ways, for both married and single participants.

> *There is a part of me that would love to [do theological studies] ... but I need to see the longevity of this position as well. I've got another twenty or twenty-five years of working life left, and I can't go down a track that would end up in a dead end. When it comes to the wages, as a single person, that is what I struggle with ... If they could see that this would lead to somewhere, that it was sustainable ... I've got to live. I've got bills to pay and I'm one person, I'm not a couple or anything. My position has been put in place by [the current parish priest] and if he retires, there is all these 'ifs and buts'. I'm the type of person that doesn't like to do the wrong thing by anyone, but at the same time there has to be some negotiation.* [Lay Participant]

There was a consensus among participants that on-going formation and education were also important. Some roles had structures built into position descriptions or agreements to provide for this ongoing development. One ordained participant commented that such formation not only kept the minister informed of the latest theological discussion, but also provided a structure and motivation for continuing personal and professional development. He suggested that there were times when ministers did not prioritise theological reading and reflection because they were busy 'doing ministry'. On the other hand, ongoing education could create the space and opportunity for ministers to dedicate some time to such reflection, which might be beneficial for their role. One lay participant, who had engaged in extensive educational formation over her years of ministry, remarked that she had reached a point on entering her current role where she vowed she would not engage in any more formal education. For her, it was time to apply what she had learned. Yet she remained an advocate of ongoing formation in general, although not necessarily of an academic nature.

Chapter 6.
Local Ministry Environment, Structures and Relationships

This chapter provides an overview of the working environment, structures and relationships that were evident in the pilot and case studies.

Work Conditions

It is difficult to determine what qualifies as 'work' in lay pastoral ministry (Dixon, 1991). Depending on the specific roles, tasks can be varied and disparate. Tasks can include coordinating pastoral or formation programs, attending meetings or events, preparing liturgies, offering support to ministers, preparing resources, scheduling ministry rosters, offering spiritual direction, and being present for others. In addition, 'working time' is an elusive concept. For the most part, participants would agree that working time was limited, that is, when it was compared to the scale of ministerial responsibilities, and the high quality lay pastoral ministers were expected to achieve by themselves and others in their ministerial practice. Thus many activities were not counted in ministers' official recording of working time, and some might not have considered these tasks work. Effectively all lay participants were working more hours than they were initially asked to work, or for which they were receiving payment.

This is especially the case for part-time ministers, whose working time was further restricted to a specific number of hours per week, such as eight hours per week, or two days per week. Some tasks are very time-consuming, but are still necessary, since without them the work of pastoral care could not take place, or would be ineffective. Yet, to count them in official work time would leave little time for anything else. For example, time spent preparing resources and setting up meeting or event spaces; taking care of administrative tasks, such as data entry, arranging appointments, responding to correspondence, advertising events and initiatives, and contributing to pastoral bulletins; travelling to different locations in parishes or dioceses; unforeseen encounters with people on the street or in the supermarket; and time spent in formation, education, prayer, or reflection.

Many of the participants were involved in multiple ministries in an unpaid capacity, and some found that while the roles could be life-changing, the demands could also be quite draining. This was particularly the issue for one female participant in a large rural parish, who became emotional when asked about her various roles: *"I am in a dry spot at the moment. This is the year of trying to get out of everything, because I'm drained. But it's a spiritual thing. It needs to be spiritually nurtured. So where do lay people go for retreats?"* At another small and quite remote parish, a number of participants involved in unpaid occasional lay ministries noted the need to not overwork the paid Pastoral Associate, especially given the considerable amount of time spent driving between Mass centres and for pastoral visitation.

Participants who worked in leadership roles, whether paid or unpaid, had difficulties when quantifying 'working time'. This was evident when, in addition to working in their commissioned or appointed ministry roles, they were still involved in occasional ministries. Arguably, ministers who had role descriptions had more obvious boundaries about what constituted work. Yet often these role descriptions were generic and all encompassing, stressing the need for flexibility should further unforeseen pastoral needs arise. Thus lay pastoral ministers were left to determine their own

boundaries regarding what constituted work, which required discipline and a degree of experience in helping to prioritise tasks. Sometimes this was done in consultation with the parish priest or moderator, and/or the employer, and, if applicable, in cooperation with the ministry team.

I have a problem with role descriptions and ministry. My role description says that I coordinate the music of the parish, but my ministry is to play at Mass on Sunday or any liturgical celebration. That's what I do because I have the gifts and talents to do it. So when I grumble and complain about a busy weekend, that I'll need a day off on Monday, playing at Mass really isn't work, it's ministry. I do baptism prep but my role description says I coordinate the baptism preparation program. But when I prepare a parent that's not really my role, is it? That's ministry. So there is a fine line between what I am employed to do and what is ministry. ...I don't include that baptism preparation in my time worked, because I do enough to fill my hours. [Lay Participant]

It is interesting to note the tension for some lay participants between the ministry tasks for which they were commissioned or appointed as lay pastoral ministers and the other ministry activities they engaged in. These other activities were usually exercised in the same area of ministry as their leadership positions. They were practised in response to the same gifts and the same vocation. Yet lay participants did not see their movement into leadership positions as necessarily a progression, which would imply the movement from one to the other. Rather, they believed they now had additional tasks, more responsibilities, and increased accountability, but they still remained simultaneously involved in occasional ministries and their leadership ministries. Thus, there was a tension between working with the people in these occasional ministries, and co-ordinating or supporting these people. To the observer, there were two apparent shortcomings in this scenario: first, some leaders could be seen to be doing everything; and, second, these tensions were contributing to increased stress and overwork.

One further area of consideration regarding working conditions was the physical working environment of the lay pastoral ministers. In all of the settings, this environment was given some consideration and was addressed in some way. In most instances lay pastoral ministers were provided with individual spaces in 'fit for purpose' parish buildings, which provided parishioners with a point of contact. These individual spaces gave lay pastoral ministers locations in which to do preparatory work, store resources, and hold confidential appointments. Where possible, shared or communal spaces were also important, to facilitate team meetings, ministry meetings, and ministry formation. In some instances an existing parish building was adapted for these purposes, in other situations offices were purpose built. However, in one setting, the parish office was still under the same roof as the priests' residence. Participants in this location acknowledged that this was problematic for a number of reasons, not least of which it seemed to encourage the notion that the 'lay pastoral ministers were tucked in under the priest's wing'. In this setting plans were in place to move the parish offices to a separate building to help clarify boundaries around work and living environments.

Structures

Regarding the structure of ministry practice, lay participants had varying experiences. Some suggested that there was no set structure. Daily activities were organised according to the liturgical year, the agreed actions of the leadership team, and the needs of the community. They described themselves engaging in everything from administrative tasks to ministry co-ordination, training and support of other ministers, direct involvement in ministries such as music ministry, funeral ministry, sacramental preparation, lay liturgical leadership and other liturgical ministries, and being a pastoral presence for individuals in the community. Others had a clear understanding of the limits of their

own gifts and experience, and of the boundaries that were necessary for effective ministry practice. All participants expressed something of the flexible nature of ministry. This seemed to be both an advantage and disadvantage to lay participants. On the one hand, it allowed those who were parents to carry out particular family duties while honouring their ministry commitments. On the other hand, it meant lay ministers were often apportioned an unrealistic number of tasks, in many cases beyond their remit, which typically required them to work beyond their allocated hours.

Having no set structure to ministerial practice meant that much was left up to individual ministers to discern what their role entailed on a daily basis. Participants explained how certain times of the year were especially busy, such as Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter, but that it could quieten down outside of those periods. Sometimes, they suggested, it was a matter of doing what needed to be done for a particular event or initiative, and taking time off at another stage. For a number of participants, the long term plan was worked out in consultation with the leadership team, or their co-workers, or those in senior leadership positions to whom they were accountable. A few participants who had joined a pre-existing team experienced some difficulties when they resolved to organise their ministry practice in a different way from their predecessor, or determined not to do certain tasks. Maintaining a work-life balance was difficult in light of the variable nature of ministry. The degree to which lay ministers achieved such a balance depended on their own endurance threshold, support structures and personal wellbeing.

In several instances, the need for some mentoring structures was apparent due to the inexperience and/or minimal training of lay people at the time of their appointment or commissioning to their given leadership role. In two instances, religious ministers (one of whom was paid, the other receiving in-kind compensation) mentored unpaid lay leadership teams for a planned period of time, until the lay leaders had received some training and experience in their areas of responsibility. In another instance, a more experienced part-time, unpaid lay parishioner mentored a newly appointed part-time paid lay co-ordinator. This arrangement was to continue for an unspecified period, depending on the willingness and availability of the mentor and the growth of the lay co-ordinator in his or her leadership role.

Structures or models of pastoral ministry in the case study settings were primarily shaped by the local context. In particular settings, the diocesan plan or framework was also instrumental. Some participants suggested that a certain amount of experimentation had been necessary to work out effective models of lay pastoral ministry in parish contexts. Each place had its own history, each community its own needs, and the resources, gifts, and personnel that were available in each community were unique. In some places, there were many parishioners willing and with time, energy, and skills to get involved in lay leadership. Other places struggled to find individuals who were willing to take on such commitments.

The model or structure of engaging lay leaders, therefore, depended on the context. For instance, it could involve employing/appointing a part-time or full-time pastoral assistant to support the priest(s), or a pastoral associate working in partnership with priest(s), or employing a pastoral coordinator (under canon 517 §2) to work with the support of a priest moderator. Each of these options depended on the financial ability of the community to sustain such a role. It could involve commissioning an unpaid, part-time lay leadership team to work with the support of a priest moderator, a retired or a visiting priest. If the setting covered a wide geographical area or a large population, it could involve employing a number of lay people, part-time and/or full-time, in administrative and pastoral roles to work in mutual collaboration with a number of priests and deacons in a leadership team.

Participants agreed that one of the crucial factors in determining the tasks of leadership in a community was the need to provide for the sacramental care of the people. This care was provided in a variety of ways depending on the availability of priests and the geographical complexities of the particular context. Some communities had active or retired priests in residence. Others had visiting and moderator priests who occasionally celebrated the sacraments. Others had a single parish priest whom they shared with other parish communities. The role of lay leaders in each case was to care for the sacramental and liturgical life of the community when the priest was not available. They did this by providing opportunities for community prayer, such as liturgies of the Word with Communion, in anticipation of the celebration of the Eucharist. Sometimes it would mean organising the visit of an ordained minister when a special need arose for the celebration of the sacraments and funeral Masses.

Participants recognised the danger of priests becoming 'sacramental machines', and emphasised the importance of getting a balance, so that the pastoral presence of the priest would not be reduced to his sacramental presence. For most participants, the structures that made close collaboration between lay, religious, and ordained ministers possible enabled ordained ministers to exercise their pastoral presence more effectively. It created opportunities for lay people to undertake tasks and responsibilities, which freed up some of the priests' time, so that they could concentrate on providing pastoral care appropriate to their ordination, their gifts and the needs of the community.

For participants, another significant aspect of the effectiveness of a given leadership structure was the adequate recognition of lay roles by Church authorities and the parish communities. This recognition could take the form of an official appointment and/or a ritual commissioning of lay leaders when they entered their roles. Again, there were varying structures depending on the context. Some were appointed by the bishop on the advice of the parish. Others were appointed by parish priests. Some were commissioned by the bishop, as opposed to being appointed, in a liturgical celebration. From one perspective, the difference between official appointment and commissioning can be viewed as corresponding to the difference respectively between paid, academically trained, professional roles and unpaid, non-academically trained roles. However, most lay participants who had been appointed, but not commissioned, to their roles expressed regret about this fact. For them commissioning was about being anointed and sent forth in mission, and it involved the entire community in a celebration. While they were involved in organising commissioning ceremonies for occasional ministry roles – for instance, for ministers of the Word, or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist – they felt a disappointment at not having been commissioned themselves. Moreover, there was a sense that commissioning was not something one could ask for, but would be offered and given by someone more senior in leadership. Thus, a lay leader appointed to a ministry position by a bishop, or his delegate, felt they could not ask to be commissioned, if such was not offered.

Relationships with People

In the main, lay participants described their relationships with the people in their respective communities as positive, and ordained ministers viewed lay roles as well received. Lay participants recounted several ways they had used to communicate with people, to find out their needs, and to assess how these needs could be met and/or if these needs were being adequately met by existing pastoral initiatives in the communities. They also indicated that they exercised discernment in deciding if the emerging needs were within their sphere of responsibility or whether another minister or ministers within the community, ordained, lay or religious, could better serve them. Methods of communication included one-on-one encounters, listening processes, community gatherings and thanksgiving (fundraising) campaigns. While they acknowledged that it was

impossible to keep everyone happy, they stressed the importance of not letting anyone fall through the cracks because everyone is important.

Lay participants agreed that being a lay person had distinct advantages in their relationships with the people in the communities they served. Those who were married, with children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, suggested that this made them 'one of the people'. For female participants especially, who were often initially mistaken for religious sisters, their witness with their spouses and families, living 'normal' lives, engendered a sense of wonder in individuals and groups. Their witness as lay pastoral ministers actively involved in ministry awakened people to the possibilities of their own lay involvement in the Church.

> *I think what it does is it creates an understanding that I'm real. I'm not saying priests and nuns are not real, but for me, it has made me realise that I've lived the lives that other people are living in the main. Most people live a family life, and I have lived that, and can relate to whatever happens within a family context. So my life makes sense to me. And to other people with whom I'm ministering to and with, it makes sense. They can talk to me about issues because of my background* [education, work and family]. *... Having a supportive husband gives a good witness. People observe that: they know that he is supportive of me. It is witnessing.* [Lay Participant]

In addition, lay participants suggested that the skillset they were able to bring to their ministry, as a result of their lay identity, educational background, and previous employment experience, distinguished them from their ordained and religious counterparts, and enabled them to contribute something valuable in their ministry contexts. Such skills helped them in such areas as strategic planning, teamwork and collaboration, problem solving and conflict resolution.

When asked whether they saw lay pastoral ministry roles as creating another class of lay people within the Church, in other words, leading to a clericalisation of the laity, lay participants said no. They suggested that because of their witness as lay people, they were able to create relationships of trust between them and the people, such that they were seen as being one of them. One married participant explained that people did not see her as exercising a differential of power; she claimed that, because they could relate to her, they trusted her, and knew she was not trying 'to rule it over them'. For some participants, however, it depended how lay people exercised their responsibilities, and 'wore their titles'. If lay people had airs and graces because of the position to which they had been appointed, or hid behind the title they had been given, clericalism of the laity could occur.

Relationships with Co-Workers

Participants spoke often about the need for good communication between lay, ordained and religious ministers in leadership within their communities. The mode of this communication varied according to the models or structures of ministry. From the perspective of lay pastoral associates, for example, this meant meeting regularly with the parish priest, not only to keep him informed about the pastoral initiatives being undertaken or co-ordinated by the lay minister, but to seek guidance and refer pastoral needs of particular members of the community. This was especially the case if the parish priest employed the lay leader to assist him in pastoral care, making him or her directly accountable to him. In such instances, participants viewed the parish priest as ultimately responsible for ensuring pastoral care was exercised appropriately, making their regular contact with him essential.

In other instances, where ordained, religious and lay ministers worked in collaborative teams, team meetings were equally important. Team members were generally mutually supportive and accountable to each other for the ministry they practised in their individual spheres of

responsibility. Similarly, in those contexts where lay leadership teams were supported by moderator priests, visiting priests, and religious pastoral co-ordinators, participants described their regular meetings with team members, and open lines of communication and periodic meetings with their ordained and religious co-workers as crucial.

Some participants recalled times when relationships between co-workers were strained. For example, lay participants in leadership positions remembered particular instances when their ordained counterparts openly or indirectly challenged them. One some occasions, lay pastoral ministers suggested that the source of tension was their own relationship, as lay ministers, with people in the pastoral community. Other lay participants believed that as pastoral leaders they were a constant in the life of the people, who thereby came to trust and approach them regarding their pastoral needs. Some suggested that priests were threatened by these relationships, supposing it was having a negative impact on their own relationships with the people. This dynamic created tension and competition between the lay pastoral leaders and the priests in question, which in the view of participants was unfortunate and unnecessary. Lay participants claimed that, for lay pastoral ministers, exercising the responsibility of being an effective pastoral presence was critical. When appropriate, they referred individuals or situations to the priest, stressing the importance of communication between co-workers or team members.

The canonical stipulation of having a priest in charge of every parish, whether as parish priest or moderator, was not a source of difficulty for lay participants *per se*. They accepted that it was just the reality of working in the Church. However, they believed that, in order for it to work effectively in practice, there needed to be mutual recognition and understanding of each other's roles, with full sharing of information and clarity around position descriptions, and definite boundaries in responsibilities. In addition, there needed to be mutual trust that each would exercise their responsibilities to the best of their ability. Difficulties arose when, for example, either party exceeded her own sphere of responsibility. Some problems occurred when someone new adopted a pre-existing role or joined a pre-existing team without engagement in a review or induction process.

In several locations, integration processes were seen as particularly important with reference to the incardination of overseas priests. Cultural differences, the status of the ordained, and interaction with women were cited as the main issues requiring attention, because these were a potential source of tension in the relationships between co-workers.

Being young ... was a struggle with older generations ... especially when it took [the priest] *a while to get to know me and to convince him that I knew what I was doing, and that I was okay to, like, trust ... It was very much a calling for me ... I knew it was where I was called to be ... But I definitely thought I was a professional worker. I took it that this is my career, so this is my job, so I am attempting to be a professional. As a youth minister I would attend and represent the parish in different things ... I had a lot of standards I had to meet. It wasn't all 'fun and games', running retreats. You have to be professional about things. You know it wasn't all youth issues I had to deal with. I was a parish employee, and parishioners knew who I was. So if I was at Mass and someone wanted to talk about something I was told or asked about. And I would have to follow up, maybe with an email to the right person ... Sometimes a young person is an easier person to approach.* [Lay Participant]

Two areas which require special emphasis in terms of the relationships with co-workers are youth ministry and Catholic schools. Regarding the former, on the one hand, youth ministry co-ordinators intimated that some members of the community and ministers in leadership viewed young people, and thus young ministers, as 'the future of the Church', rather than the Church's present. In that sense, young ministers were not treated as co-responsible, or as co-workers, in the

service of the mission of the Church at the present time. They were more likely to be viewed as ancillaries who had energy, enthusiasm, and connections with young people within the community, in long term preparation, perhaps, for future ministry leadership. Their age made it more difficult for some other ministers to trust that they were competent and responsible in ministry. Yet, on the other hand, some parishioners viewed youth ministers as parish representatives, in a similar way to pastoral associates or other lay ministry co-ordinators. In addition, they were expected to meet the same professional standards as other ministers.

Some youth ministry participants spoke of good working relationships with other ministers in their respective parishes, especially the mentoring they received from lay pastoral associates, and support from ordained ministers. This support helped them to meet the challenges and demands of being professional ministers.

[After difficult experiences] *I had to do a different discernment. First, like, do I want to still be in youth ministry, and do I want to be in a school or parish context? It was sort of a realisation for me that I want to be in this parish-Church context. You know there is pretty much nowhere in Australia, like barely anywhere, there would be very few places that have a full-time youth minister in a parish. And so for me, I knew what I wanted to do, because I had the taste, and I was able for a couple of years to work in a parish. I know what that was like. For me, it was a much more effective way to minister to young people, teenagers, in a parish and getting them into the Church, than it was to be in a school and trying to get them into the Church.* [Lay Participant]

It is noteworthy that few parish-based youth ministry positions had been created and sustained in the case studies. Funding was a primary reason given for this. Some positions had been created using money that was bequeathed to a community. But this was usually a limited source of revenue. At other times, positions were created in conjunction with another institution or body, but this split the time, responsibilities and accountability of the minister and inevitably created a higher workload which, in some circumstances, was difficult to sustain. Most youth ministry positions were paid part-time, although there was often sufficient work to keep the minister active on a full-time basis. In one location, even though such a position did exist, it remained vacant.

The second area that held significance for some lay participants was the relationship between staff in Catholics schools and ministers in parishes. An emerging question is to what extent school staff could be seen as, or could function as, co-workers in the service of the mission of the Church? Interview participants who were working within a school context agreed that Catholic schools had a responsibility to be 'the face of the Church', 'to represent the Church' due to the scarcity of priests, families' limited connection to the 'traditional Church', their infrequent attendance at parish-based liturgical worship, and difficulties arising from the sexual abuse crisis. Being the face of the Church, in this context, was not simply saying that schools have 'a Catholic identity'. It was about relationships and witnessing to the Christian way of treating people, as people were loved, and as care was offered to the underprivileged and the poor.

As a teacher it is how you teach religion as a subject, but also how you present yourself and the way you act. I think that is heightened even more so as a principal, because you are not teaching necessarily. But I like to think that every interaction I have with people is 'the face of the Church'. How I respond to people if they are having a problem or if they come with a concern, and how I respond in a pastoral sense, in a Christian sense, and in a Catholic sense, how I feel that we should respond and react. So in some ways I temper my response because of that, because of the faith aspect. And I try and encourage my staff as well ... And I've got some staff that aren't Catholic. But generally they are happy to work within the system, happy to teach religious education. And they've been in the system for a long time, so they have experienced the Catholic grounding. I've never had someone that is against it. [Lay Participant]

Interviewees who worked in school contexts also indicated that Catholic schools share in the responsibility of building community and fostering relationships, and this was particularly important where there were no priests residing in the community. Given this emphasis on building relationships and community, some participants refer to their schools as Catholic communities. Principals spoke about being spiritual leaders and having a pastoral role in the school, not just in relation to students, but to staff and families as well. Regarding spiritual leadership, they spoke of the witness of their lives: the impact of what they said and did as signs of, but also as sharing, the Catholic faith and the Catholic way of life. In relation to pastoral care, they described themselves as offering a pastoral presence for those within the school community. The importance of having counselling skills and knowing when it was appropriate to refer individuals to certified professionals was noted.

> *Parents are still talking about being Catholic. They are still getting their children baptised, and they still have a reason to be involved. They pray at home. Are we making them knowledgeable, comfortable to turn back to the Church when the time comes? Half of what the school has to do is to keep people connected, have open arms ... so that when they decide to come back to Church, we too will be ready. We ask our staff to be open, be listening, and be ready to act in a way that is faithful to our message.* [Lay Participant]

The experiences of participants indicated similarities between the roles and ministry of lay pastoral ministers and school-based interviewees. Yet the latter did not feel recognised by the Church's hierarchical leadership as lay people exercising pastoral ministry within the Church, even though they all self-identified with the pastoral ministry and experienced some recognition at a local level. Such recognition is appropriate if Catholic schools are understood as Catholic communities within the broader Church community, that is, as specific ecclesial contexts within which the mission of the Church is carried out. In this instance, Catholic school staff and ministers in other contexts might be viewed as co-workers, collaborating in building the Catholic community. Some school interviewees described relationships that indicated such collaboration: for example, the personal relationships between principals and ordained ministers, and regular meetings between principals and parish leadership teams.

> *The school is part of the parish. We are connected ... And the Church as a body, to remain functioning, to remain vital, needs all people to be functioning, to be contributing, to be part of it, working towards that common goal. ... I think that it is unreal and cruel to think that this pastoral role is the domain of priests or of clergy. I think there might be some older people in the Church that think like that, and they think that people like me* [a principal] *are not qualified and should not be. But it's unavoidable, where I am, it's unavoidable. If I say that I am a leader to a Catholic school, that's part of what leadership in that school is. And if I'm not doing it, I'm not doing the right thing by the school.* [Lay Participant]

Relationships with the Diocese and the Australian Church

Diocesan, parish-based and school-based participants articulated the value of good working relationships between the diocesan and local contexts. Diocesan interviewees felt it was important to remind local communities that they were part of a greater whole: the wider diocesan community, the Australian Church and the universal Church. If lay pastoral ministers focussed exclusively on the local context, they could become parochial and isolated. It was suggested that, when ministers worked within a broader perspective, they discovered support available in other parishes and from their diocese. For instance, some participants described how wealthy parishes helped support less affluent parishes in terms of funding pastoral associate roles.

It was also noted that diocesan pastoral planning offices and other diocesan agencies such as human resources and work health safety offices, Catholic Education Offices, child protection and youth services, family services and counselling services could provide invaluable assistance. This aid could take the form of resources, training programs and accreditation processes, facilitation and support, templates, structures, and frameworks. It could also provide policies and procedures regarding, for example, induction, professional review, performance and discipline, accreditation, grievance, bullying and harassment, accidents or incidents, work health and safety, hours of work, leave, travel, confidentiality and data protection and cessation of employment. In a number of places, lay diocesan pastoral planners or support personnel and human resources teams provided assistance. In return, local ministers contributed to diocesan initiatives, for example, by representing their parishes or settings on diocesan bodies or committees.

> *In terms of diocesan involvement, quite often the parish priest will go to* [HR manager] *and just say 'Can you be on the interview panel to get that perspective and a bit of distance?'* ... [The HR manager] *will help them with the process from start to finish: from advertising, to selection, shortlisting, interviews, the process of getting Bishop's approval, then doing the actual contract. And everybody gets the same ... But there is room in there for flexibility for particular types of work, because no two pastoral associates have got the same structure in terms of work in each parish. They are similar, but there are many, many variations. And then, HR just steps back, having made sure that all mandatory requirements - the police checks, the child protection, the WHS, and that all that training - are in place, and away they go. And we suddenly have consistency in the ways which people are employed, consistency of payment ... general consistency in terms of expectation of work, flexibility around hours, and flexibility around the work, because that's what the parish might need. Some are full-time, some are part-time.* [Lay Participant]

Participants indicated that the bishop had a central role regarding ministry throughout the diocese. In some cases, the bishop initiated influential projects to explore models of ministry leadership and structures of canonical settings in different areas and communities. In other areas, he exercised his pastoral oversight by reviewing and approving candidates for lay pastoral ministry positions, by making appointments directly, or by commissioning ministers prior to the commencement of their roles. Participants maintained that the support and encouragement offered by bishops for lay pastoral ministry in their respective dioceses was fundamental to the growth and development of this form of ministry in particular contexts. The pastoral oversight offered by the bishop, and the support offered by diocesan agencies, provided safeguards, direction, and mediation when difficulties and challenges arose in local communities. Furthermore, the person of the bishop and diocesan pastoral plans and policies provided a measure of constancy and consistency in the face of the transitory nature of pastoral ministry. However, a number of participants who had bishops who were supportive of lay ministry, noted the tenuous nature of lay involvement if a new bishop was appointed who did not share such views. One assistant priest went as far as to suggest that the local bishop's role was crucial to success in lay pastoral ministry.

Good relations with the Australian Church were also evident. Participants at diocesan and local levels were complimentary about the resources provided by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and its offices and agencies. Numerous participants mentioned the significance of several documents provided by the National Committee for Professional Standards, a joint committee of Catholic Religious Australia and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, particularly *Towards Healing, Integrity in Ministry,* and *Integrity in*

> *The bishop is not the employer in the parish: that is the priest. It's that governance and that canonical role that the priest has ...* [In this diocese] *the bishop has to give approval, because the bishop's part in this is really important ... There are all sorts of reasons why the bishop has to be a visible head in all of this. When the bishop approves he gives an authorisation, but the priest employs.* [Lay Participant]

the Service of the Church (National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, 2010, 2004). These documents were welcomed in diocesan and local communities, where they were used for ministry formation and drawing up standards, policies, and processes. Participants were certain that the present initiative of the Bishops' Conference to draw up guidelines on lay pastoral ministry would prove indispensable for the development and nurture of this form of ministry, and greatly anticipated and appreciated the provision of clarity around its foundations, structures, and practice.

Chapter 7.
Quality, Stability and Sustainability Issues

In the planning stages of this research project, the research team had identified a number of areas of concern with respect to the quality, stability and sustainability of lay pastoral ministry:

1. the formation of candidates and/or ministers, ordained, religious, and lay;
2. the varied responsibilities and flexible work schedules of lay pastoral ministers which occasion work-life balance concerns;
3. the instability of the landscape attributed to the movement of clergy.

In relation to these areas of concern, the participants in the research suggested that:

1. undergirding the issue of adequate formation of ministers are the matters of selection, accreditation and authorisation;
2. the flexibility of the lay pastoral ministries is a symptom of both the needs of the community and the manifold attempts in local contexts to address these needs within evolving structures and understandings of ministry and lay leadership;
3. the effect of clergy movement is arguably the greatest challenge to the sustainability of lay pastoral ministry, notwithstanding the structures or models that may be put in place.

Most participants thought that only individuals who had undertaken, or were willing to undertake and show aptitude for, extensive formation relevant to a proposed role should be selected, authorised or appointed to exercise the ministry. Those who had undertaken this formation should receive certification, and so become accredited for the role according to an agreed standard. A distinction was made, however, between authorisation and accreditation. Attaining accreditation did not, by itself, authorise the person to perform a ministry role in the service of the Church, nor should it guarantee the person's appointment to a role. If accreditation was achieved before appointment, the candidate still had to enter into a selection process. Yet, in some cases, individuals were appointed and authorised to exercise ministry without having achieved, or being expected to achieve, accreditation.

In the view of the participants, selection should involve a process of discernment, wherein the gifts of the person are identified and their suitability for the role determined. An essential part of this process would be some form of personal and communal discernment of the individual's vocation for pastoral ministry involving, for paid roles, at least, an interview process and vetting procedures.

In parish contexts, the parish priest or leadership team, sometimes in consultation with, and with the support of, the diocese, had the responsibility for conducting this selection process. But there was often little clarity around who authorised, appointed, and commissioned the lay pastoral ministers. Some participants claimed it was the parish priest's responsibility, because he was canonically entrusted to organise the resources of the parish to meet the needs of the community under the authority of the bishop. One could infer that the same would be true for a moderator. Other participants felt that the bishop should approve candidates prior to their appointment, and this should be understood as constituting authorisation. In different instances, the priest or bishop commissioned the ministers, which was understood as a public ritual of authorisation.

A rigorous selection, formation, accreditation and authorisation process should ensure that suitable candidates were admitted to and authorised to practise ministry. This, in turn, would encourage good quality ministry practice.

Both the flexible and transient nature of lay pastoral ministry roles and the movement of clergy could adversely affect the stability of this form of ministry. Some participants noted the high burnout out rate among certain specialised ministries because of the burgeoning responsibilities, high expectations, and excessive working hours. To address these issues, participants emphasised the value of teamwork or collaboration and the real sharing of responsibilities. Some further advocated having structures of supervision and support for lay pastoral ministers and networking with people in similar roles. It was necessary to dedicate time to family and recreational activities in order to maintain an appropriate work-life balance.

> [Moving of priests] *is a disaster because not every priest, naturally, has the same mindset. The cultural environment of the workplace changes. So it can be quite random the expectations that are put on people. And even though there may be a generic role description, the emphasis changes. And sometimes it's not good communication around that. It's not that things will change. People will always expect that when there is a new person in a role, whatever that role, it will change. But the insecurity that people are left with, will they have a job or not - is unfair. There needs to be some way of protecting people's stability in all that.* [Ordained Participant]

Regarding the movement of clergy, certain participants explained that it was not the movement *per se* that was the issue. Rather, difficulties arose when a priest who was moved into a particular location did not share the same understanding of lay pastoral ministry as the individuals already in that location. Priests have the authority to make changes to the structures within which lay pastoral ministers were working, and sometimes the discussion or communication around such changes was inadequate. One lay participant noted:

> As a parishioner we need to own our parish, and what we want. Because now we are going to see priests coming and going, and we can't just wait for the next one to say 'take us on a new direction', because we're going to get lost. So we need to be strong in what our direction is and take the priest with us ... obviously, the priest has the right to say we're not heading in the right direction, but if we're spirit-filled we should be fine.

Another lay participant appreciated the empowerment of lay people by priests:

> It is leadership. So when that priest is moving around it does weaken the leadership. One of our priests was brilliant in empowering us – we didn't need his permission. And I think that was important.

Several suggestions were made by participants seeking to address the issue of the movement of parish clergy, including:

- induction for priests and all ministers into parishes and existing parish leadership teams or lay leadership structures;
- initial and ongoing formation for clergy regarding lay pastoral ministry, beginning in the seminary;
- shared formation, team building and supervision of ministers on leadership teams to encourage and enable effective teamwork and co-responsibility.

In some parishes there was considerable comment by participants about how hard it was to get other parishioners involved with the various ministries in the parish. A few participants had reflected

upon this in relation to the future of the Church. One participant noted that, in her own parish, it was not just that the population was ageing, but that those involved in lay ministry were ageing faster, because older people were the ones most involved in the parish and in ministry. In a number of settings there were also many comments about the lack of young people and young families involved in ministry. For example, in one parish, the local parish schools were seen to be performing well. However, although the children received the various sacraments through the parish, that did not seem to equate to an increase in family Mass attendance, nor family involvement in other activities within the parish. However, as was noted by one participant, the same families were happy to actively contribute in various ways to the parish school.

In another medium-sized rural parish, the leadership had struggled to get parishioners to help out with Mass during the Easter services. The chair of the liturgy committee lamented that, because no-one else had volunteered, an 82 year-old women had ended up operating the PowerPoint slides at one of the Masses. In that same parish, a finance council member reflected on this same lack of involvement from parishioners: *"How can we stimulate more ownership from the various people who come here?"* He also recognised the need to ask younger people how they wanted the Church to be, although he was unsure how the older people might respond if there was a desire among the young people to do things differently in the parish. On the other hand, the researchers noted that thanksgiving campaigns and other means of inviting people to participate in the life of the parish had led to a change in attitude and an increased involvement in parish life.

After visiting a parish which was struggling to get parishioners involved in lay ministry, one researcher observed that for some Catholics Mass attendance seemed to be a personal, individualistic ritual, which required no commitment to parish involvement; their sharing in the Eucharist seemed a means of nurturing their individual connection with God, rather than as a way of growing in community, or being strengthened for mission. Signs indicating this were mentioned by some participants, who noted the propensity of parishioners to leave Mass straight after receiving communion. The researcher observed this at one Sunday morning Mass in the parish church, where there were many people in attendance. In contrast, the previous evening at the Vigil Mass, at another Mass centre within the same parish, thirty or forty parishioners stayed for some time after the conclusion of the Mass. Many of these people were involved in other activities and ministries within the parish. This occurrence led the research team to question the correlation between an individual's faith engagement with the meaning of the Eucharist (and the celebration of Mass) and their sustained involvement in church ministry.

One way in which the issues of both quality and sustainability were met was through the development of recognised paid pastoral positions. As training was provided and people recognised that there was employment in certain types of pastoral work, more people made themselves available. However, in some instances, parishes had to search outside their own boundaries and communities to find suitable people to fulfil particular roles and tasks.

Chapter 8.
Recommendations Regarding Guidelines for Lay Pastoral Ministry

Specialisation in Ministry

The social context in Australia is changing rapidly. In most areas of work, there is increasing specialisation. For example, most people in the educational sphere have their particular specialisations, not only in subject areas but in the year levels that people teach, in teaching gifted children and children with special needs or in being able to run specific programs. As technology changes the face of medical work, specialisation is even more apparent and those who are GPs are often the initial contact point for specialised medical facilities and treatment. The specialists are surrounded by those who run the blood tests, do ultra-sounds, take X-rays, and provide the data that is needed for diagnosis. In administration and finance, there are increasing specialisations relating to areas such as tax, risk management, program development, insurance, budgeting, human resource management and legal liabilities, for example.

Specialisation means the development of high levels of training and practice in specific skills. It can contribute to much more effective ways of operating, but only if the structures are in place for high levels of collaboration in which each person respects the input of the other members of the team. It is unrealistic to expect one priest to be a highly trained and effective practitioner of all areas of administration, pastoral care and counselling, education, music and liturgy, social welfare and social justice, children's ministry and youth work. Parishes will greatly benefit from putting in place teams of people with specialist interests and skills who work collaboratively to achieve the purposes and vision of the parish.

Some parishes benefit from being able to employ teams of people with high levels of specialisation. Others use unpaid people for different tasks. There may be people who can devote themselves to the music or liturgical life of the parish. Others may focus on programs for children and their parents and the preparation for the early sacramental rites. Others again may focus on youth ministry. Some parishes have people whose primary role is pastoral counselling in the local context while others are involved in hospital visitation. Some may focus on ministry among the elderly. Others will be concerned for the welfare programs of the parish, while others bring in financial support through running an Op Shop. As a great variety of people contribute to the life of the parish, so the level of vitality in the whole parish is enhanced. Lay ministry, of many kinds, contributes to the life of the parishes and to the wider community.

Professionalisation and Expert Systems

There is another social trend that requires increased specialisation and its careful management. In communities in which people do not know well those with whom they interact, they depend on the 'system' to ensure that those people are trustworthy.

In small face-to-face communities where everyone knows each other, people establish their credibility through the personal relationships that they build. However, in more complex societies, as was true in many of the case studies, where people are often dealing with people they do not know well personally, it becomes necessary to develop 'patterns of professionalisation', based on what the social theorist, Anthony Giddens, has described as 'expert systems' (1990).

When it is not possible to develop trust and credibility through personal relationships, people have to trust 'the system' which trains, accredits, and employs the person. They also need to be able to trust that that system will also hold people accountable, will evaluate their performance, and will correct, or ultimately dismiss, those who do not perform their roles adequately or who do not act appropriately while in those roles. As contemporary societies, particularly in town and cities, have become increasingly impersonal over recent decades, the need to develop 'expert systems' that people trust and professional standards which employees adhere to has become apparent. Failure to do this adequately within the churches has been one of the causes for the significant decline of public confidence in the churches which has occurred in recent decades (Hughes and Fraser 2014, p.116).

In many areas of life, our society has built systems in which people are trained and accredited for their particular roles. They often have their certificate of accreditation hanging in their offices. It is proclaimed on their websites. It is noted on their calling cards. In many instances, people are employed by companies which have the responsibility not only for appointing them, but for ensuring their training remains current, and that they maintain their competence in their practice. Thus, within the system, people are held accountable for the work that they do. In most systems, there are means whereby complaints can be made and issues resolved.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the wider community, it is necessary to develop the professionalism of lay roles, just as it is necessary to develop transparent professional systems of training and accountability among the clergy. Dixon has called for such a rethink about parish leadership in light of the shortage of priests in Australia. He specifically draws the comparison between the professionalisation of Catholic schools and Catholic health institutions, which have continued to flourish since professionalisation of their workforces and that of mainly clergy leadership in parishes, which have struggled (Dixon, 2014, pp. 278-281).

Meeting these professional standards can be difficult for parishes that are not as well-resourced as others, that find it difficult to get people within the community to become involved in Church activities and ministries, that have an ageing congregation, or that have huge geographical areas to cover. In such communities, the experiences of participants indicated how external guidance, facilitation, or support could be very valuable. Diocesan assistance is one example that proved instrumental in some of the research locations. Some participants also proposed that having an independent facilitator might also prove helpful in some cases.

In many aspects of life, there are increasing regulations that add to the assurance provided by the 'expert system'. So, it is now mandatory in Australia for those working with children to have 'Working with Children' police checks. Those providing financial advice to members of the public have to be registered and must declare all 'conflicts of interest'. Members of boards, whether it be of companies or educational organisations, must have certain police checks and must not have been declared bankrupt. These systems and forms of regulation are designed to increase the confidence that the public can have in those who undertake work for others and to ensure that work is done to a satisfactory standard.

Churches have long existed in communities where most people have known each other personally. Priests have established their credibility through the development of relationships with parishioners, often over very long periods of time.

However, as we move into an era in which most people live in large societies where they do not know many of the people around them, an era in which people are highly mobile, and where

professional standards are expected, so it has become necessary for churches to develop the features of 'expert systems' that will give people confidence in their interactions with church personnel.

Failures of these systems in relation to sexual abuse and its cover up led to a significant decline in confidence in the churches between 1990 and 2015. The majority of Australians have little or no confidence in the churches today. This can only begin to be remedied as 'expert systems' are developed.

This report has focused on the development of lay pastoral ministry. It has noted that such ministry comes in a great many forms in Catholic parishes across Australia. Often it has been developed to meet particular needs in specific locations. However, in order for such forms of ministry to be highly effective, in order that they be developed in ways that will give the public confidence in them, these various forms of lay pastoral ministry need to be exercised within guidelines which underlie an 'expert system' which gives credibility to and builds public confidence in lay pastoral ministry.

Collaboration in Ministry and Mission

There is also a need to bring about an attitudinal change in some parishes. In the light of the frequent comment that it was hard to find people willing to take on positions in the parishes and the evidence that, in many cases, the burden of much parish work fell on the shoulders of a few people who did volunteer, the parishes, dioceses and Australian Church need to work together to strengthen the sense that all parishioners have responsibility for the life of the parish. One parish reminded its parishioners of the following passages from Scripture as it sought to establish its strategies:

> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (I Corinthians 12:27).

> For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them (Romans 12:4-6).

There is a need in many places to build a culture in which people expect to make a contribution to the life of the parish rather than just come to the Mass. A sense of empowerment and respect for the contributions people make, partly through the public recognition of their voluntary contributions, or through respect for decisions that they make within their spheres of responsibility, encourages such a culture. In one parish where large numbers of people were involved in a great variety of forms of lay ministry, the priest had all committees meeting on the one night at the parish church. This had the impact of ensuring that no individual was on more than one committee. It also meant that the priest could not possibly attend all the committees. The priest placed great emphasis on the fact that he would respect the decisions that the lay people made within their committees.

All parishioners have different responsibilities in relation to work and family and in many other spheres of service. Not all have the capacity to take on ministry roles within the parish. However, the work of the parish needs to be spread. Some will be able to give time. Others will be able to contribute money. It is important, however, that all recognise that 'being part of the body of Christ' means that they have some part to play.

The Catholic Church has depended on priests and religious who have devoted their lives to the Church. They have received very little pay, but they have had few family responsibilities. It has been expected that they would always be available for the needs of the parishioners. They did not

'come home' from work at the end of the day. On the other hand, they have generally been well looked after and given a high level of security in terms of housing and the necessities of life.

This system cannot be used for lay people who are employed or who volunteer to be engaged in parish ministry. Many lay people have families for whom they are responsible. There are other spheres of life in which they need to be engaged. Indeed, family and contributing to the wider community are part of their Christian responsibility. Therefore it is inappropriate that lay people be expected to work beyond their agreed hours of responsibility, that they always be available, and that they work without adequate recompense.

The principles outlined in *Good Works: The Catholic Church as an Employer in Australia* are applicable not only to work done in agencies, but also to parish work. The following recommendations reflect, in part, those principles.

Recommendations

The guidelines that are developed for pastoral lay ministry should take note of the following:

1. A range of discernment and accreditation processes should be provided to be used in relation to the diverse lay pastoral positions. These processes should include examining people's aptitude for particular tasks as well as their skills and past experiences.

2. Where people are doing substantial work for a parish or diocese or the wider Church over a significant period, they should be offered a contract including some offer of remuneration in relation to that work. We suggest that remuneration apply when the amount of work is four hours or more per week over a period of three months or more. The offering of a contract does not mean that all will or need to accept that contract. However, it would be a way in which the ministry and mission of the parish might be shared among those who had some time to give to it and those who might contribute to it financially.

3. Contracts should contain a detailed role description and be realistic in what is expected in those hours of work, recognising that people may not be able to work voluntarily beyond the expected hours. The contract, policies and procedures should be in writing so there can be no misunderstanding as to their meaning or application and available at any time to each employee.

4. As is advocated in the discussion of the employment policies of the Church in *Good Works,* remuneration for lay pastoral workers should not only have to comply with legislative minimums or standards, but also adhere to the Social Teaching of the Church that often demands a higher standard than the legislative minimum.

Employment policies should reflect the primary principle of human dignity: 'By their work, employees should be able to live in an manner worthy of human dignity, in order to fulfil their family and social responsibilities' (*Good Works,* p.22).

5. Contracts should generally specify a specific length of time prior to renewal. This will give some security to the work and the worker. However, giving a specific length of time will allow contracts to be renewed and re-worked if, for example, there has been a change in the context of work, or changes in the team of those employed to undertake work in the parish, or if priests are moved in or out of a parish.

This also means that a priest entering a new parish would not have the right to simply dismiss people who had been employed there. As noted in *Good Works*, a dismissal should only occur if there has been a failure by the employee 'to maintain the attendant responsibilities associated with that person's right to work' (*Good Works,* p.28). As *Good Works* (p.29) states, redundancy prior to the end of a contract should be 'an absolute last resort and not an economic choice regardless of the relative economic need' and should be accompanied by the resolution to find alternative acceptable work and training for other work.

6. The guidelines should contain procedures and systems for the resolution of grievances and disputes that should be put in place by each diocese. Again *Good Works* provides an indication of the sort of principles on which these should work, based on the principles of natural justice. They should:

- be transparent and, therefore, readily available to Church employees
- be intent, in the first instance, on resolving the issue directly between the employer and employee
- when direct conciliation fails, seek the assistance of their trade union or employer adviser or a mutually agreed independent mediator
- focus on exhausting all avenues of conciliation in order to mediate diverse and/or opposed perspectives
- recognise their mutual obligation to act in a constructive and expeditious manner at all times during the disagreement or conflict
- recognise the frustration caused by human or other limitations, to heal painful experiences and to promote the full development of the employee. Justice must always be tempered by mercy.

If the matter cannot be settled by conciliation, then the relevant industrial tribunal or an independent arbitrator should be utilised (*Good Works*, p.29).

7. The guidelines should contain recommendations for appropriate training and professional development for lay pastoral ministers. It is possible that some training and professional development opportunities could be provided nationally using on-line facilities. Having recognised training for various types of lay ministry tasks will assist in parishes and the wider public having confidence in those who exercise these types of ministry. It will also assist in the development of 'career paths' whereby people are able to move from one ministry situation or parish to another. It will give those who exercise ministry more confidence in their own work. Some shared formation with religious and ordained pastoral ministers may contribute to effective mutual collaboration.

Recognising that the roles that lay pastoral ministers fulfil vary greatly from one location to another, we recommend that one year 'certificates' might be offered in such areas as:

- pastoral care and counselling in the parish
- parish administration
- liturgy
- youth ministry
- adult education
- children's ministry
- sacramental preparation.

It would then be expected that lay pastoral ministers would undertake these certificates as appropriate for their role.

8. The guidelines should contain templates for the commissioning of both paid and unpaid lay pastoral ministers that could be used in parish liturgies, and parishes should be encouraged to commission both paid and unpaid workers who are expected to be involved in work for the parish for at least three months on a continuing basis. Commissioning is important in publicly acknowledging the roles people play in the life of the parish, both for the sake of those who involved in that work and recognition of that work by the parish. Commissioning may also assist in helping to build the sense in the parish that the life of the parish is the responsibility of all its members.

9. The guidelines should include reference to a safe and supportive workplace, in line with the instructions in *Good Works* (p.35):

> Church employers should make every effort to ensure that their workplace is safe and that they take appropriate responsibility for the physical and mental wellbeing of their employees.

Similarly, the instructions regarding discrimination and harassment should be included in the guidelines:

> At any level, Church organisations should develop policies that prohibit discrimination (direct and indirect) and harassment (physical, emotional, racial, religious and sexual). This includes working towards a balance of men and women in the workplace, and especially of women in leadership positions. This might require the adoption of policies and practices that are flexible and accommodate the demands of family and personal life. Further, Church organisations should examine their recruitment and promotion profiles for persons from underrepresented groups to ensure that they are not being excluded from the working life of the Church (*Good Works,* p.36).

10. The guidelines should outline measures that can be undertaken in parishes to ensure that there is a high level of collaboration between all those involved in team ministry, including reference to having clear areas of responsibility, authority in decision-making, line accountability, regular meetings of all team members, and induction processes as team membership changes. The guidelines may also make recommendations regarding how lay pastoral ministers are inducted into new contexts and how structures such as mentoring might be implemented to provide a supportive environment.

The guidelines will provide a single resource to which people could refer when forming lay pastoral positions. Because they draw on a number of sources, in consultation with various stakeholders, they will represent the cumulative wisdom of the various communities who have been developing resources and structures around these forms of ministry. The guidelines themselves will assist in developing a shared vision, common understanding and recognition of lay pastoral ministry at national and local levels and will contribute to developing common language about such positions, common training and employment policies, and patterns of commissioning, accreditation and accountability. They will enrich the whole Church as they provide a basis for people to be called to use the gifts, skills and charisms which Christ has given. Through the exercise of such ministries, people serve each other and the wider world, and find the dignity of work through which they are aligned with the activity of God (*Good Works,* p.8).

In addition to the development of the guidelines, the ACCPLM should be encouraged to share examples and suggestions of effective pastoral initiatives. These will encourage the on-going formation of people within Catholic communities and contribute to the growth and development of lay pastoral ministry. At the same time, further research monitoring the development of lay pastoral ministry will enable the guidelines to be refined and developed over time.

Glossary

Canonical Setting

In the Catholic Church, the basic canonical setting is the parish, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a '**pastor'** (parish priest) under the authority of the local diocesan bishop (canon 515 §1). The bishop can alter parishes (canon 515 §2): for example, bishops can unite separate parishes into one, thus creating single parishes with multiple Mass centres. When circumstances require, the pastoral care of different parishes (that maintain their distinct identity as parishes) can be entrusted to several priests, with one priest as '**moderator'** who is directly answerable to the bishop (canon 517 §1). In these circumstances, those parishes may be called **twinned** (i.e. 2 parishes) or **clustered** (i.e. 3 or more parishes). In circumstances caused by a shortage of priests, the bishop can decide that the participation in the exercise of pastoral care of a single parish, or twinned and clustered parishes, can be entrusted to someone other than a priest. In this case, a priest is still appointed to direct the pastoral care (canon 517 §2). For the purposes of this project, the research team also refers to this priest as a '**moderator'.** Table 2 indicates the variety of canonical settings found in the case studies.

Religious Persons

These are persons who belong to an active or apostolic congregation (or community of consecrated life), under the authority of a superior, which follows the charism of its founder, has a specific rule of life, and makes public perpetual vows to observe the evangelical councils of poverty, chastity and obedience.

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Documents of the Second Vatican Council

AA   *Apostolicam Actuositatem, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

GS   *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*

LG   *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

PO   *Presbyterorum Ordinis, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*

Papal Documents

CL   *Christifideles Laici, On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World* (John Paul II, 1988)

EG   *Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel* (Francis, 2013)

Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action (Benedict XVI, 2012)

Opening Address of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the theme: 'Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility' (Benedict XVI, 2009)

Other Vatican Documents

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2000)

Code of Canon Law (1983)

Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest (1997)

All these documents can be found on the Vatican website, www.vatican.va

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