

Ministry of All the Baptized

A guide to being in relationship
with all four orders of ministry

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota (ECMN) is a network of faith communities, called to transformation by engaging God's Mission. The ultimate goal is to engage God's Mission – not our own mission – but God's Mission. In order to be the full Body of Christ, we need each other, we need to recognize and celebrate the fullness of one another's gifts and the contexts in which God calls us to use them.

In the Episcopal Church, our Catechism (or statement of beliefs) tells us that the ministers of the Church are laity, bishops, priests and deacons.

The IX Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, The Rt. Rev. Brian N. Prior, has invited all faith communities to be in relationship with each of the orders.

So, what does it look like to be in relationship with each of the orders? First, it is important to refresh our tenets of belief and descriptions of the four orders. Notice how the first charge in each order is exactly the same: To represent Christ and his Church. That's a tall 'Order!' How that manifests itself in responsibilities and promises is, however, unique from order to order.

The Church

Q: What is the mission of the Church?

A: The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q: How does the Church pursue its mission?

A: The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace and love.

Q: Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

A: The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

The Ministry

Q: Who are the ministers of the Church?

A: The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q: What is the ministry of the laity?

A: The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given to them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world' and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q: What is the ministry of a bishop?

A: The ministry of the bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

Q: What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A: The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q: What is the ministry of a deacon?

A: The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Q: What is the duty of all Christians?

A: The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God

Laity

Leadership skills and characteristics sought in ECMN:

- Tells stories of life and faith – is in relationship with others
- Knows the community and neighborhood – the context
- Commits to a life of prayer and spiritual growth
- Knows their gifts and uses them both in the world and in the church
- Willing and able to take risks for the sake of the Gospel

Ways of being in relationship:

Size-wise, the laity is the largest order – simply put, the laity is everyone who is not ordained. In living out the baptismal covenant, lay persons are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, CEOs, factory workers, salespeople, bankers, spiritual directors, musicians and the list goes on and on.

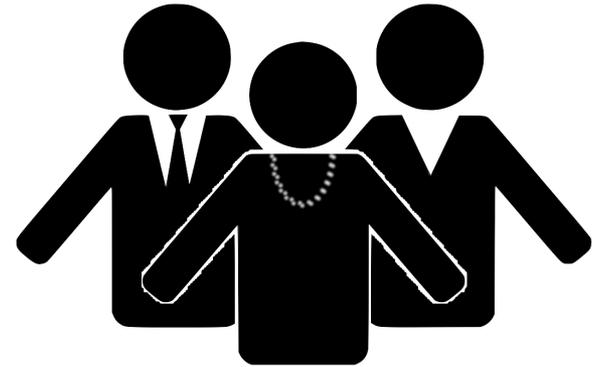
And while there are many roles lay persons can (and do) serve within the church structures (vestry, wardens, treasurers, Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, altar guild, choir, etc.) the rediscovering of the Missional Church thinking implies that it's how we respond to our baptismal covenant vows in the world, in our neighborhoods, and through our vocation that mark us as Christians.

By virtue of saying yes to Jesus' invitation, lay persons have a unique freedom to be Christ-like in all aspects of their lives: in their families, homes, neighborhoods, faith communities, civic organizations, sports fields and workplaces.

For several decades, ECMN has valued and promoted the concept of Team Ministry, also referred to as Total and/or Shared Ministry. One of the hallmarks of this model of ministry is that lay persons within the local faith community engage in discernment, formation and commissioning for ministries such as administration, teaching, preaching, pastoral care, music, neighborhood engagement and other possibilities based on people's gifts and the community's needs.

Close to one quarter of ECMN faith communities utilize Team Ministry, most of which have non-stipendiary priests and deacons who were discerned, formed and ordained alongside the lay leaders.

Emerging in the 21st Century are a few communities who encourage lay leaders to engage more fully in specific ministries as described above in response to being aware of their gifts and choosing to be formed to use them in places where a Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge is present.



Promises taken from Baptismal Vows:

- Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship
- Break bread
- Pray
- Resist evil and repent when you haven't
- Tell about God's Good news in Christ by what you say and do
- Seek and serve Christ in all people
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Strive for justice and peace among all people
- Respect the dignity of every human being

Bishop

Leadership skills and characteristics sought in ECMN:

- Inspires all to know they are uniquely created in the image of God, uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit, and called to use those gifts to build up the Kingdom of God
- Serves in a resource capacity and encourages collaboration between clergy, lay leaders, faith communities and partners so that they can best engage God's mission
- Serves as the chief pastor and shepherd or overseer in the care and sending forth of the faithful to serve God's mission
- Cultivates space for inviting creative thinking/acting
- Leads relationally but able to maintain strategic focus

Ways of being in relationship:

As chief priest and pastor, the Bishop is called to encourage and support all baptized people to embrace their gifts for ministry.

As the guardian of the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church, the Bishop is called to encourage and support all the baptized to be equipped and empowered for ministry.

And as acting in Christ's name for reconciliation, the Bishop is called to encourage and support all the baptized in God's mission to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Promises taken from Consecration Vows:

- Be faithful in prayer and in the study of Holy Scripture
- Boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people
- As chief priest and pastor, encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries, nourish them for the riches of God's grace, pray for them without ceasing, and celebrate with them the sacraments of our redemption
- Guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church
- Ordain priests, sustain and take counsel with them
- Ordain deacons, guide and strengthen them
- Join in ordaining bishops and share with them in the governance of the whole Church
- Be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper



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Priest

Leadership skills and characteristics sought in ECMN:

- Inspires people in Word and Sacrament
- Engages in reconciliation and invites people into it
- Is a cultivator and a collaborator
- Possesses entrepreneurial instincts and skills
- Is able to attract and recruit others to join in achieving the vision
- Is open to be called to serve in greater Minnesota

Ways of being in relationship:

Episcopal priests in the 21st Century are facing an ever-shifting landscape of Church. There is no less need for priests; one could argue there is an increasing need for the gifts of reconciliation, blessing and holding space for the sacramental. However, today's faith communities can no longer guarantee an equation between vocation and job, which is an invitation for those who discern and form for the priesthood to be not only comfortable but also willing, able and excited to live in that reality.

Here are the typical models of ministry based on the role of the priest in relationship to the faith community, but they are evolving, stretching and becoming hybrids – and as long as the end goal of engaging God's mission is in place, it really doesn't matter what the model is. The model needs to come from the known identity of each unique faith community, the context in which it is found (neighborhood, wider community) and the sustainability. There is not a hierarchy – no one model is the best – only the most right at that time and in that place, which means we need to continuously do the hard work of discernment.

- **Rector/Vicar/Priest in Charge** – full time or part time, with or without additional paid program staff, or with a discerned/formed/commissioned team
- **Team Ministry** – non-stipendiary priest(s) joins a team of leaders, lay and ordained, in particular roles based on their gifts; may have discerned commissions/committees from within the faith community
- **Supply** – priest (or often a rota of priests) are present most every Sunday for worship; some Sundays may be lay-led Morning Prayer
- **Shared Priest** – priest may be shared by more than one faith community

How can each of the models help everybody in the faith community truly be about the Ministry of All the Baptized? How can each model be mission-centric and not priest-centric



Promises taken from Ordination Vows:

- Proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts
- Love and serve the people with whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor
- Preach
- Declare God's forgiveness
- Pronounce God's blessing
- Share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood
- Perform the other ministrations entrusted to you
- Respect and be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop

Deacon

Leadership skills and characteristics sought in ECMN:

- Serves as a bridge between the faith community and their neighborhood, bringing together the gifts of the faith community to the needs of the world
- Builds wide-ranging partnerships to build capacity across the community
- Empowers people to use their gifts for ministry to engage God's mission
- Engages in the liturgy as the inviter and sender
- Is able to create and nurture networks of persons to try new initiatives

Ways of being in relationship:

In all of ECMN's faith communities, only 38% have diaconal placements. ECMN is working to identify people with gifts for the diaconate in order to move towards having a deacon in every faith community.

The deacon is constantly looking for the needs of the neighborhood or wider community and how the faith community can meet those needs with their gifts and skills. They are connectors, catalysts, listeners and responders.

Deacons are both foot washers and bridge-builders. In describing the role of the deacon in today's church, liturgical scholar and author Archdeacon Ormonde Plater writes: *"First, as distinct symbols of Christ the Servant, deacons function among the faithful as special models of Christian Service who lead, enable, and encourage other Christians in charitable service. Second, the functions of deacons extend beyond the ordinary charitable work of all Christians... Many deacons serve in administrative positions, often within the diocesan structure, and deacons in general take seriously the bishop's command at their ordination to interpret the world to the church."* (Many Servants, Copyright 2004)

Deacons simultaneously offer an example of servanthood and look for building partnerships in mission – from faith communities to schools to social service agencies to nonprofit organizations to homeless shelters. What are the common goals and how can we do together what we can't do alone?



Promises taken from Ordination Vows:

- Serve all the people, especially the poor, weak, sick, and lonely
- Study Scripture – seek nourishment from them; model your life on them
- Make Christ's love known by your word and example to those with whom you live, work, and worship
- Interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world
- Assist the Bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments
- Show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself