

22 ESSAYS

ON LAY PASTORAL CARE

EASY TO READ

EASY TO UNDERSTAND

EASY TO USE

FOR USE BY ...

- * LAY PASTORS –Meetings & Ongoing Training
- * INDIVIDUALS – Personal Growth in Faith & Ministry
- * SMALL GROUPS – Interactive Studies in Lay Ministry
- * ALL LAY PEOPLE – Building Up Your Church



by Dr. Melvin Steinbron, Founder of the Lay Pastors Ministry, USA
ed Dr. ByeongChea Seo, Academic Dean of LPM University, Korea

* "He (Christ) is the one who gave...pastors and teachers to equip God's people to ...build up the church..." (Ephesians 4:11-12 NLT)

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BY

Dr. Melvin Steinbron

Founder of the Lay Pastors Ministry

P.O. Box 368, Lumberton, NJ 08048

ED

Dr. ByeongChea Seo

Academic Dean of Graduate Univ. of Lay Pastors Ministry

#648-4, DeukKi-Dong, IkSan, Korea

22 ESSAYS ON LAY PASTORAL CARE

INTRODUCTION.....	page 1
Who the essay are for and how to use them.	
YOU ARE A BONA-FIDE MINISTER.....	page 2
Every Christian s areal minister.	
THERE'S NO ONE TO HOLD HAND.....	page 4
Everyone needs the warmth of another's life.	
TAKE YOUR MINISTRY UP ANOTHER NOTCH.....	page 6
A challenge to move to a higher level.	
ALPHABET SOUP FOR THE SOUL.....	page 8
Ongoing training to build on the basics.	
THINGS...AT HOME.....	page 9
What we are at home impacts our ministry.	
NOT JUST LOUD ONES.....	page 11
Wheels that don't squeak need grease too.	
PASTORING IS LIKE PARENTING.....	page 13
There are no guarantees.	
ONE A DAY...EVERY DAY...FOR SPIRITUAL VITALITY.....	page 15
Words which will connect you to Jesus.	
SOME THINGS TAKE TIME.....	page 16
Give a caring relationship time to develop.	
PASTORING OR PESTERING.....	page 18
Use, not misuse, privileged information.	
WE ARE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST ON ASSIGNMENT.....	page 20
Which is it, <u>assigned</u> to ministry, or <u>called</u> ?	
A LITTLE MEANS A LOT.....	page 22
Even a cup of water in Jesus' name does it.	

LAY PASTORS ARE CONNECTORS.....	page 23
High-touch is needed in a high-tech world.	
LOVE: THE MYSTIQUE OF LIFE AND MINISTRY.....	page 24
Love is the energy of all lay ministries.	
THE "GOOD ENOUGH LAY PASTORS".....	page 26
Capable without being perfect.	
FULL OR LIMITED PARTNERSHIP.....	page 27
A full partnership has no "ifs" or "buts."	
ROADBLOCKS OR PAVING STONES.....	page 28
Use roadblocks as paving stones for success.	
TOO MUCH/NOT ENOUGH OF JESUS.....	page 30
Some get too much; others can't get enough.	
DISCOVERY! WHAT MINISTRY IS AND WHO CAN DO IT.....	page 31
Do clergy have a magic others cannot have?	
MY ROLE MODEL IS JESUS.....	page 32
A role model is leaven in a person's life.	
WHAT A DAY FOR THE LAY PASTORS MINISTRY!.....	page 33
Lay pastors treat people with sounds of healing.	
"LOVE WITH SKIN ON IT".....	page 34
Without love, caring initiatives are an empty shell.	
DIRECTIONS FOR MAXIMIZING THE USE OF EACH ESSAY.....	page 39

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DIRECTIONS FOR MAXIMIZING THE USE OF EACH ESSAY

1. Use one essay per meeting.
2. Read the essay to the group.
3. Mail an essay photo-copy to people expected to attend, requesting them to read, study and think about in preparation for the meeting.
4. For some essays you may wish to invite an experienced and knowledgeable person like the pastor to speak on the theme.
5. There are ideas for using each of the 22 essays starting on page 35. When the suggestion is to divide the people into groups, the ideal size group is three to six. Instruct each group to appoint one member to report their findings back to the total group for further discussion, summary or closure.
6. Your creative juices may produce alternative ideas. They will be best. Use them.

YOUR ARE A BONA-FIDE MINISTER

Bona-fide means genuine, without fraud, Roget's 21" Century Thesaurus lists these synonyms: authentic, real, actual certain, factual, honest-to goodness, kosher, legitimate, official, true, and valid.

Try any of these synonyms for the above title: You are a real minister. You are an authentic minister. You are a honest-to goodness minister. You are an **official** minister. Every lay person should be required to write on the chalkboard 100 times, **I AM A MINISTER.** I have a cartoon of a man with chalk in hand doing just that.

Jerry B. Jenkins, co-author of best seller, *left Behind*, should have to write 100 times, **LAY PEOPLE ARE MINISTERS TOO.** He wrote in the July/August, 2001 issue of *Moody Monthly* about Chuck Cilano, whose life focus was money, partying and fun.... that is, until he found something much better: Jesus Christ.

And this is why Jenkins needs to get to the chalkboard: He tells how chuck cilano left his lucrative car salesman job which financed his wanton life style to, along with his wife, begin to "Prepare for a life of ministry." The two are now missionaries in Italy. In writing that Chuck left his livelihood to "prepare f ora life of ministry," Jenkins repeats the traditional Christian myth that if you want to really serve your Lord you need to be a minister (missionary or pastor), and to be a minister you have to go to seminary.

The Church of Jesus Christ is in a mega transition. Church culture is being turned upside down as it grasps the biblical teaching about the following terms:

MINISTER – Every Christian is a minister, most are volunteer ministers, a dew are vocational.

MINISTRY– every Christian is given spiritual gifts with which to do their ministry.

CALLING – 99% of the Christians in every church are not called to leave their occupation to become ministers, but are to use their ministry gifts where they work and live.

EQUIPPING – The 99% are to be equipped for their ministries by those whose ministry is to "prepare God's people for ministry." According to Eph. 4:11–12 the preparers are pastors and teachers. The church is to be a training center (seminary) for the 99%.

You may find yourself in the roster of ministers listed in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, or perhaps the list of ministries added to the church since 75 A.D. You are sure to find yourself in Romans 12:3, *everyone of you*, and in I Corinthians 12:27, *each one of you*, and in I Peter 4:10, *each one*.

Lay Pastors, you are bona-fide ministers. I find you in Romans 12 as people given the gifts of encouragement and mercy, and in I Peter 5:1–4 as people assigned the task of being "shepherds of God's flock." You have been called, gifted, and equipped. Though not as prominent and not as "full-time," you are just as authentic and kosher as those who go off to seminary, You will share equally "in the glory that is to be revealed," and shall also "receive the crown of life which will never fade away" (I Peter 5:4)

There are no second class Christians, only first class specialists. Lay Pastors are specialists in pastoral care – bona fide ministers.

There's no one to hold his hand

"...whoever you may be, take my trembling hand
and warm it with care and sympathy."

These are the last words of a poem carried for the past 20 years by one of the world's top neurosurgeons, Dr. Fred Epstein. The poem was written by a teenage boy named Chris who died from a cancerous brain tumor.*

Dr. Epstein said of the poem and the boy, "I kept thinking of his line about sitting alone in a cold room and there's no one to hold his hand. And I thought: We in the West, especially doctors, have been so focused on technology that we have not paid attention to what the living person is going through."

God would have someone focusing on "what the living person is going through." This is the privileged role of Lay Pastors. Warmth, caring, compassion, love... that's what the teenager needed and that's what every living person needs. And that's exactly what Jesus had in mind when He assigned the ministry of care to Peter: "Take care of my sheep." Jesus, Himself, was a warm, caring, compassionate, loving person.

Doctors provide diagnoses and treatment, teachers provide education; lawyers and politicians, representation; farmers, food; pilots, transportation; preachers, sermons. Lay Pastors provide warmth, care, compassion and love to people in Jesus' Name.

Dr. Epstein feels so strongly that technology has to be blended with warmth and caring that he gives his home phone number to patients and meets with them immediately if they're frightened even if it's midnight. He goes to their weddings, bar mitzvahs, and funerals. After Chris died in 1979 he wanted to do more. He probably never thought of himself having pastoral gifts, but he did.

He dreamed of building a hospital where the family's emotional needs were as urgently important as the patient's physical symptoms. In 1996, he helped found The Hymen–Newman Institute for Neurology and Neurosurgery at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. Here they offer state-of-the-art technology to remove brain tumors as well as care for the wounded soul.

This world-famous neurosurgeon is a rare doctor, giving his home phone to patients and caring for their wounded souls. All other patients need this same personal attention, but they don't have Dr. Epstein. The fact is that 100% of all people need "love with skin on it" in both bad times and good, and there are so few to be there for them.

"There's no one to hold his hand." If people are going to get the kind of care Jesus plans for them to have, laypeople will have to give it. What a day for the Lay Pastors Ministry!

* From "Thank You Doctor, For Fixing My Brain" in the July/August (2001) issue of *Modern Maturity*, p.64

TAKE YOUR MINISTRY UP ANOTHER NOTCH

Emeril, the chef-humorist on the TV Food Channel, regularly says, "Let's take it up another notch!" And he does. Likewise, Paul and Barnabas, apostles of Jesus Christ, according to Acts 14:1, took their ministry "up another notch"—from just speaking, to speaking so *effectively*. "There (in Iconium) they spoke so *effectively* that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed."

The following four key words of the Acts report suggest four key ideas to lay pastors who want to take their pastoring "up another notch."

SPOKE: Your verbal initiatives, articulating words of care.

EFFECTIVELY: Passionately, clearly, truthfully, with love.

GREAT NUMBER: "So effectively" does more than "Just do it."

BELIEVED: "Mission Accomplished."

Through the years I have championed the Nike slogan, "Just Do It," citing God's promise from Psalm 1:3 – "*Whatever he does prospers.*" This is true! God is prospering all you do! However, God will prosper you even more when you take your ministry up another notch.

You find this higher notch in Romans 12:6–8. (*So effectively* is an ellipse in three of the seven spiritual gifts.)

If your gift is serving, serve so *effectively!*

If your gift is teaching, teach so *effectively!*

If your gift is encouraging, encourage so *effectively!*

Three other gifts include adverbs synonymous for so *effectively*.*

If your gift is contributing; give *generously*.

If your gift is leadership, lead *diligently***

If your gift is showing mercy, do it *cheerfully*.

Lay pastor, God has give you gifts for shepherding a small but significant part of His great flock.

Don't "Just Do It," **DO IT SO EFFECTIVELY.**

here are TOW: (1) Engage your mind-body tie-in; (2) Release your spirit.

First, engage your mind–body tie-in:

- Make sure of your gift and call.
- Spend time with God
- Spend time *with* and *for* your people.
- Listen, get on your people's agenda, focus on them
- Show respect by being thoughtful, polite and courteous.
- Seek ongoing training so as to grow in effectiveness

Second, release your spirit: (Romans 12:9–13):

- Love (agape, fileo and godly eros)
- Sincerity (love must be real, not feigned)
- Hate evil (cling to Christian standards for living)
- Devoted (in brotherly and sisterly love)
- Humble (honor others above yourself)
- Zealous' fervent (with passion and commitment)
- Serving (with a servant spirit)
- Joyful (an inner happiness, delight, excitement)
- Patient (don't rush to judgment)
- Faithful (dependable, consistent, steady)
- Sharing (generous, outgoing, self denying)
- Hospitable (welcoming, open, warm hearted)

Do you wish to take your pastoral care ministry up another notch? I know you do. I know you want to serve your God and your people well. I know you desire to *really* make a difference in their lives. By taking your ministry up another notch, your Chief Shepherd may say at His appearing (1 Peter 5:4), not just, "*Well done*, good and faithful servant," but "*Very well done*, good and faithful servant."

*Another way to say it: *really* serve...*really* teach... *really* encourage. *Really* is a synonym for *effectively*.

**Someone said of the gift of leadership. "If leadership is your gift, then for God's sake, lead!" In other words, lead effectively! Lay pastors, whose gifts are encouraging and mercy: "If caring for others is your gift, then for God's sake, care for others...effectively!"

Alphabet Soup For The Soul

Basic training equips lay pastors with enough principles and skills to get started. Ongoing training builds on the basics. But there's nothing like on-the-job experience to open our ears, eyes, heart and mind to advance learning. The task of tending a mini flock of brother and sister church members is more complex than we think at the beginning. This is because life situations fluxuate, emotions are roller coaster-like, and spirituality zig zags... for both lay pastors and their people. Hence the need for the following ministry-enriching alphabet soup for lay pastors.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A - Accept persons equally | N - Notice body language |
| B - Bond with your people | O - Offer your true self |
| C - Communicate meaningfully | P - Pray fervently |
| D - Depend on God | Q - Quit? Never! |
| E - Encourage always | R - Raise spirits |
| F - Fulfill commitments | S - Stay in touch |
| G - Grow daily | T - Take responsibility |
| H - Hear feelings | U - Understand pastoring |
| I - Identify spirituality | V - Value relationships |
| J - "Just do it" | W - Work hard |
| K -Keep confidences | X - X-ray people's faith |
| L -Love (verb and noun) | Y - Yearn compassionately |
| M - Manager difficulties | Z - Zip the lip |

Some things we learn best by ourselves because much of what we need to know is unique to us, our pastoral relationships, and people's circumstances. I invite you—"in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 4:1)—to imaginatively and creatively expand each letter to its outer limits. You might need 26 weeks to get from A to Z ... and the rest of your life to put your learning into practice.

THINGS.....AT HOME

The baseball population idolized Kirby Puckett, a Minnesota Twins icon and role model for America's youth. He sponsored baseball clinics for aspiring boys, contributed to charities and participated in local and national good-will projects. But, his wife (as write) is suing him for divorce because of adultery and threatened bodily harm.*

A close friend of mine for thirty-plus years, a creative and gifted leader in the field of marriage and family life, is (as I write) going through divorce for reasons quite different from the baseball idol, but just as disappointing and damaging.

So much for the favorable role-model and ministry-impact of these two lives. Probably every one of you has been bruised by similar shattering disillusionments—the failure of societal and church front-runners to have things right at home.

The powerful principle is: *If we are going to influence others for the right, things have to be right at home.* This goes for men and women whose lay pastoral care ministry influences five or ten households as well as for public figures who influence thousands. Home is the laboratory where our mettle is tested, validating or invalidating our Christian witness and ministry.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about this principle: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5:8)

This powerful principle surfaces very early in the Church. In Acts, the New Testament record of the Church's beginnings, three eventful life-dramas accentuate the necessity of having things right at home.

Acts 4:23–31—The importance of missional unanimity. A solid support base was essential to the success of the counter-cultural mission of the Church. This support was the love, trust, unity, and prayers of the Spirit-filled body of believers. When Peter and John got out of jail they had a welcoming place to go where things were right.

Acts 5:1–11—The importance of personal and family integrity. Behavior has to match profession. These two members of the Jerusalem church, husband and wife, lied about their contribution. The reality shocked them: "You have not lied to men but to God." Read the severe penalty God imposed on Ananias and Sapphira so, at its beginnings, His Church would have things right at home.

Acts 6:17—The importance of treating one another unselfishly and without discrimination. Again, behavior has to match profession. There could not be corporate disunity. The Grecian Jews had a complaint against the Hebraic Jews. The Apostles solved this at-home problem immediately so their public ministry would not be discredited. If the Church was to succeed in its witness for Christ, things had to be right in the church family.

How do you keep things right at home, whether "home" is a marriage, a church, or a ministry within a church? When things have gone wrong, how are they righted, short of the severe penalty imposed on Ananias and Sapphira? The answer is God:

God the Father—He is ever active in the lives of His people to make things right within us and around us. (Acts 4:10,19,24)

God the Son—You will become like Him by being *with* Him. Those who were trying to kill Peter and John, "took note that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)

God the Holy Spirit—Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be with us and in us to teach us "all things," part of which is to have things right at home. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 4:8)

Lay Pastors, the next time you get alone with God, the two of you review your life and relationships. Affirm yourself for the things that are right "at home" and identify and things you and He need to work at together. The powerful principle is: *If we are going to influence others for the right, things have to be right at home.*

* Information from the St. Paul Pioneer Press, 02/24/02

Not Just The Loud Ones

"She only has time to talk to the loud ones." answered the first-grader when his mother asked if his teacher ever talks to him.

Only time for the loud ones – this is a child's version of the pastoral attention in most churches. The loud ones need to be heard but what about the silent ones?

To correct this serious imbalance, conscientious Lay Pastoral Care Ministry Leaders feel compelled to assess the state of their ministry and take action to do *one* of the following:

- Strengthen their already effective ministry.
- Persevere until their struggling ministry is successful
- Re-start their failed ministry
- Start a Lay Pastors Ministry if there is none.

Lay Pastoral Care Leaders are accountable, first to God and second to the congregation, to provide every-member care – "Be shepherds of God's flock which is under care." (I Peter 5:1-4) Many of God's flock get lost in churches of 150 members or more.

Those who are not *the loud ones* are not speaking up about their physical, spiritual, emotional, financial, social, Marital, personal, relational, inward or outward struggles. They bear their burdens alone. They either suffer in silence, drop out of church, or attend elsewhere. In any case they are not being loved (cared for, pastored, tended, shepherd) as God intends. His love "with skin on it" is to be passed along to "even the least of these."

The mother who asked her first grade son, "Does your teacher ever talk to you?" wrote:

Imagine you have corn plants...You notice small differences:
one doesn't grow as fast, one is tall but sparse, one looks blighted.

You tend them carefully, each according to its needs.....Now imagine you have a whole field of corn. You still provide care but you do it on a much larger scale. Every plant receives the same mechanized dose of water and fertilizer. Some have been poorly planted, some don't get enough sun, some never tassel. But you cannot see this. To you they are just long rows of green."**

We learn a great lesson about caring for God's people from this mother. If each and every church member is to be adequately pastored, *can the pastor do it alone?* Never! Ever—member care will happen only when a sufficient number of laypeople are called forth and equipped to pastorally connect with five or more households each.

Then all of God's people, not only the loud ones, will have someone there for them: A Lay Pastor who will *Pray* for them regularly, be *Available* to them, *Contact* them faithfully and provide an *Example*. Then not only the loud ones will receive attention. Then not only the squeaking wheels will get greased.

While Lay Pastors are giving specialized care to individual members of the church, the Clergy Pastors will be giving specialized care to the church as a whole by preaching, teaching, equipping, supporting and vision casting. It is only when Clergy Pastors fulfill their God-given assignment and Lay Pastors fulfill their God-given assignment that God's kind of care will be given to all of His people, *not just the loud ones*.

* Joyce Sidman, columnist, St. Paul Press, 5/31/99

Pastoring is like Parenting

Pastoring and parenting have at least one thing in common: the idea that if we do a good job we will get good results. This comes across as absolute truth but it is a *myth*.

Parents, according to Dr. John Rosemond, a family psychologist practicing in Gastonia, North Carolina, suffer from a clinical condition known as *delusions of parenting omnipotence (DOPO)*.

This "self defeatist disorder," Rosemond says, takes two forms:

1. **Pride:** "My child is problem free; therefore, I must be doing something right."
2. **Guilt:** "My child has such-and-such a problem; therefore, I must be doing something wrong,"

Many lay pastors suffer from another form of **DOPO** – *delusions of pastoring omnipotence*. The delusion is that we believe we have the power of God to compel people to respond favorably to treatment.

For lay pastors, let's paraphrase Dr. Rosemond's two forms of this disorder:

1. **Pride:** "Mary Jones is responding to me very well. She is such a joy to contact. I must be doing something right."
2. **Guilt:** "John Smith doesn't respond to me at all. In spite of all my contacts and prayer he hasn't warmed up one bit. I must be doing something wrong."

God gave Adam and Eve life, loved them and spent time with them. And yet as soon as his back was turned they defied the one rule he gave them. Would we say that God failed as a Father?

Jesus called Judas into a special relationship, took him into his heart and spent quality time with him. And yet he turned against his Friend and betrayed Him. Peter denied that he ever knew Jesus. The rest of the disciples deserted him. Would we say that Jesus failed as a pastor?

Dr. Rosemond writes of parenting, "Parenting's Great Paradox is that in raising a child, there are no guarantees." Lay pastoring paraphrase: "Pastoring's Great Paradox is that in caring for people, there are no guarantees."

Dr. Rosemond writes to parents, "It's your job to provide good directions; it's your child's job to follow them." Lay pastoring paraphrase: "It's your job to provide love and care. It's your people's job to accept them." There are no guarantees. Don't be prideful over being accepted; be humbled by how God used you to make a difference in a life. Don't feel guilty over *not* being accepted; be grateful for the privilege of serving God.

Dr. Rosemond writes, "If you're looking to your child to reward' you for good parenting, you may be sorely disappointed because the reward may never come or be considerably smaller than expected. You'd do well to figure out how to reward yourself for a job well done – not one done perfectly, mind you, but done well enough – because when all is said and done, the most meaningful rewards are those that come from within."

Knowing what this psychologist has just said about a *job well done* and *rewards*, you can guess how the paraphrase will read: "If you're looking to your people to reward' you for good pastoring, you may be sorely disappointed because the reward may never come or be considerably smaller than expected. You'd do well to figure out how to reward yourself for a job well done – not one done perfectly, mind you, but done well enough—because when all is said and done, the most meaningful rewards are these that come from within *and from above*."

Please read the following three Biblical lay pastoral care principles twice;

1. I am not required to get results, I am required to be faithful,
2. Hearing my Lord's commendation, "Well done....." is not dependent on gratifying responses from my people, but on how well I did my task;
3. My goal is not to get results from my efforts, but to give myself in love, prayer and care. Sooner or later, results follow efforts.

Lay pastors who suffer from **DOPO**, take heart from Jesus' example: In spite of being betrayed, denied and deserted by the 12 people to whom he gave himself, He was able to say to his Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." His commitment was to do what the Father gave him to do, not to feel good about people's response.

Lay pastors who suffer from **DOPO**, take heart from Jesus' parable; "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ' We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'." (Luke 17:10) The servants' expectation was to serve their master to their master's satisfaction, not to feel good about the results of their serving.

Lay pastors, let's get it straight. It's a myth that if we do a good job we will get good results, the truth is that if we do a good job we will have done what God sent us to do. The "Crown of Glory" promised in I Peter 5:4 is not for results but for shepherding God's flock willingly, eagerly, and exemplary. Don't err in feeling either proud or guilty; feel right for using the gifts God gave you to do his ministry of pastoral care and feel privileged to be able to serve.

One A Day...Every Day....For Spiritual Vitality

(Twelve Christian "Mantras")

For optimum spiritual health, take one word a day for 12 days. Each one-a-day word (underlined) connects with one of Jesus' unique identities (**bold type**) and calls for a specific action related to that identity. Directions:

1. Use your imagination to "see" Jesus as "Bread," etc.
2. Read the verse and context to get the full picture.
3. Meditate on the underlined word for as long as you have.
4. Journal your main thoughts.
5. Practice "Recruiting Meditation" throughout the day.
6. In 12 days you have acquired a new skill for building your spiritual health.

1st DAY: "I am the **Bread of Life.**" John 6:35
Eat and you will never go hungry.

2nd DAY: "I am the **Light of the World.**" John 8:12
Follow Me and you will never walk in darkness.

3rd DAY: "I am the **Gate.**" John 10:9
Enter through Me and you will be saved.

4th DAY: "I am the **Good Shepherd.**" John 10:14
Know your Shepherd. for your Shepherd knows you.

5th DAY: "I am the **Resurrection and the Life.**" John 11:25
Believe in Me and you will never die.

6th DAY: "I am your **Teacher.**" John 13:13
Wash one another's feet as I washed yours.

7th DAY: "I am you **Lord.**" John 13:13
Love one another is My new command to you.

8th DAY: "I am the **Way.**" John 14:6
Come to the Father through Me.

9th DAY: "I am the **Truth.**" John 14:6
Trust Me...I will do whatever you ask in my name.

10th DAY: "I am the Life." John 14:6
Live life to the full for My Spirit lives in you.

11th DAY: "I am the **True Vine.**" John 15:1
Remain in Me and you will bear much fruit.

12th DAY: "I am the **King.**" John 18:27
Listen to Me and you will be on the side of truth.

Some Things Take Time

It takes time to grow the relationship between lay pastors and the people in their flocks. Examples from nature help to understand this:

Mushrooms grow overnight. Oak trees take years.

Dolls are made in an hour. Babies take nine months.

Senator Daniel Moynihan, chairman of the president's commission on modifying the Social Security system, gave the following reason for the commission not being ready to report: "Some things take time."

One of those things take time to grow is a relationship. Do you remember that pastoral care take place in a relationship? A personal connection between the lay pastor and the members of his or her flock is what makes caring initiatives effective. The more mutual the connection, the more effective the caring. And it is the mutuality of the connection that takes time. Social agencies and church clothing centers can care *for* a person without caring *about* them. Lay pastors cannot care *about* a person without also caring *for* them. Caring *for* them flows out of caring *about* them.

Caring *for* people can be very impersonal. Programs, even church programs, can be carried out without caring *about* people. It is the personal relationship that makes lay pastors "ministers." Paraphrasing a hackneyed political charge sharply focuses the personal connections within which pastoral care take place: "It's the relationship, stupid."

And bona fide relationships take time. Relationships are like oaks and babies; not like mushrooms and dolls. God provides the beginning of life in the seed for the oak, in the embryo for the baby, and in the first contact a lay pastor makes with his or her people. Think of that acquaintance contact being the embryo of the relationship. All three growths (oak, babies, relationships) result from a day-by-day infusion of critical elements.

Oaks require a dependable infusion of water, air, sunlight and more. Babies require a

dependable infusion of nutrients from the mothers. Relationships require a dependable infusion of a least eight elements:

<u>CHARACTER</u>	You are what you really are, not your persona.
<u>INTEGRITY</u> <u>PRESENCE</u>	You do what your brochure says you will do: P. A. C. E. 90% of pastoral care is just showing up.
<u>FRIENDSHIP</u>	After a contact: "I really like my lay pastor."
<u>ACCEPTING</u>	No reservations about loving people God loves.
<u>EMPATHY</u>	"My lay pastor understands what I'm going through."
<u>ENCOURAGEMENT</u>	An affirming hug, prayer, compliment, and more.
<u>REALISM</u>	Patience, prayer and perseverance are required.

Mutuality in relationships take place at different speeds. Each relationship is unique. Each quality, endurance and timing is one-of-a-kind. Accept the uniqueness with love and without partiality. Peter, James and John were closer to Jesus than the other nine, but he loved all twelve equally. One relationship turned sour (Judas) but Jesus continued His side of the relationship anyway. Accept people where they are, who they are, and however they respond to your caring initiatives. To the degree you accept people, sooner or later they will accept you. And a relationship will develop. Give it time because "some things take time."

Pastoring or Pestering

You may have seen the anti-drug ad showing a social girl walking toward home in the twilight. The captain reads: "My kid will be home at _____ today. Then, in small print: If you can't fill in the blank you need to start asking. It's a proven way to steer kids clear of drugs. Its not *prestering*. It's a *parenting*."

When I read that ad I thought, "The *prestering-parenting* antipode surely sounds like *pestering-pastoring*." Just as it's the parent's responsibility – not an invasion of privacy – to have personal information about their children, it's the lay pastor's responsibility – not an invasion of privacy – to have personal information about their people. Such information is essential to pastoral care. Let me explain.

First, we need to define pastor. Used as a verb pastor means to care for, tend, nourish and supply what the soul needs. Used as a noun it means shepherd, or protector. The Greek work *poimane* is translated both *pastor* (Eph. 4:11) and *shepherd* (I Peter 5:2). Take your pick. When Jesus assigned Peter the shepherding–pastoring work (Jn 21: 16), He was not concerned about the right metaphor to *name* the task, He was concerned about the right person to *do* the task.

Lay pastors need personal information to care *about* and *for* their people.* It's when this information is crudely or prematurely sought, and when it is used for judging, criticizing, condemning, gossiping envying or gloating, that they are pestering, not pastoring. Such shepherds "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn 10:10) rather than love, feed, nurture and protect.

If lay pastors are to be shepherds they need to know some things about their people's faith, marriage, family, behavior, church life, finances, relationships, job, leisure, traditions, values, moral and more.

How does one obtain this essential personal information? The answer is simple – *listen*. When you have built trust, people will just naturally tell you some things. When you have their confidence, cautiously venture this question after

they tell just a little: "Do you feel like telling me more about that?" Do not hurry to offer advice; people normally are neither wanting nor looking for it. Just *be* there and listen. The time to offer your insights will come in due time. II Tim 4:1-2 cautions us to "correct, rebuke and encourage – *with great patience and careful instruction.*"

If lay pastors are hesitant to enter another person's inner sanctum, they should remember that God, who appointed them to this ministry (Jn 15:16; I Pet 5:2), holds them responsible for obtaining this information, holding it non-judgmentally, keeping it confidential, and using it only for prayer and care.

God is very clear about the use and misuse of privileged information: 1) "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment" (Rom. 14:1); 2) "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge....who are you to judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12); 3) Jesus taught that we are to get the plank out of our own eye before we try to remove the speck out of our brother's (or sister's) eye (Mat 7:3-5). He wants us who think we are standing firm to be careful that we don't fall (I Cor 10:12).

What do these Scriptures say to the lay pastor who discover that one of his or her people, well respected in church, is a alcoholic; or that a young mother of three was arrested for shoplifting; or that a husband and father of two boys is having an affair with a Sunday School teacher? Judge, accuse, castigate, betray with slander...or love, understand, draw close, pray with and for, be empathic, keep it confidential?

Jesus, our model, lived the answer. He loved, accepted and respected the adulterous woman – truly protecting and restoring her without countenancing her behavior. How he treated her earned Him the right to counsel, "God now and leave your life of sin" (Jn 8:1-11). That's not being a pest! That's being a pastor!

* I say "their people" because these people were assigned to them.

We are Servant of Jesus Christ

Assignment communicates the action God takes to move us into ministry much better than the word, *call*.

The following words aptly describe God's initiative regarding us and our ministry:

- O He *assigned us (to a designated role)*
- O He *appointed us (to fill a position)*
- O He *chose or selected us (for a task)*
- O He *commanded us (to certain job)*
- O He *sent us (on a special mission)*
- O He *ordained us (to a divinely determined function)*

Paul's initiation into Christian ministry defines the distinction between *call* and *assignment*.

- a. Paul's call was Jesus' summons to submit to His Lordship. Acts 9:3–5 records Paul dramatic conversion. The Greek word, *proskaleomai*, translated call, is the act of Jesus, through His Spirit, calling a person to Himself: *the call toward oneself, or the summons to eternal salvation* (Thayer's Lexicon).
- b. Paul's *assignment* was to preach the gospel as a "chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15). Following his *call* to submit to the Lordship of Jesus (Acts 9:1–5), he was commanded: "Now get up and go into city, and you will be *told* what you must do."
- c. In relating his radical conversion later (Acts 22:2–16), Paul told how he responded to the blinding light and heavenly voice, "Who are you, Lord?" and "What shall I do, Lord?" Then he reports his Lord's answer "get up and for th Damascus. There you will be *told* all that you have been assigned to do. Later, when he told his conversion story again, he added, "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven" (Acts 26:19).
- d. Only twice in Paul's history does the word *call* relate to his ministry. Both times the weight of the word is more on his conversion than his ministry.

Acts 13:2: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I called them."

Acts 16:10: "...concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (the Macedonians).

The proper understanding in both passages is that Jesus *called* Paul to Himself as a prerequisite for assigning him the task of preaching the gospel. In defining *proskaleomai*, translated *call*, Thayer writes, "The Holy Spirit and Christ are said to call upon themselves those to whom they have decided to entrust a service." My friend,

that's you!

Conclusion: Our response to Jesus' *call* to come to Him determines whether we are saved or lost. Our response to Jesus' *assignment* to do a ministry determines whether we are obedient or disobedient.

Q: Who are we?

A. We are servants of Jesus Christ on special assignment.

Q: What do we do?

A: We take care of Jesus' sheep.

He has called us to Himself for the purpose of assigning us this task. Let's serve well.

A little Means A lot

A new study published in *Circulation*, the American Heart Association Journal, indicates that a nutrient *lutein* prevents clogged arteries and wards off macular degeneration, an eye disease which causes blindness. Egg yolks and spinach contain lutein.

A LITTLE LUTEIN MEANS A LOT OF TO ONES' BODY!

While a pastor in Cincinnati, Ohio, I was called to the hospital emergency room one evening by a frantic mother. Her high school son had just been kicked in the head during a hotly contested soccer game. He was in serious condition. I immediately left home, went to the hospital and waited with the anxious parents, but he came out of it okay and was released after a few days.

What did I do? Mostly, I was just *there*. I stood with the parents, said almost nothing, and tried not to get in the way of the very busy doctors and nurses. What I was doing is known as the *ministry of presence*. What seemed to me to have the importance of an observer's presence at a NASA rocket launch, was of inestimable importance to the parents. How do I know? Five years later, even after many post hospital thank-you's, the boy's mother sent me a Hallmark card to tell how much my presence meant to her and husband that night.

A LITTLE PASTORAL ATTENTION MEANS A LOT TO TROUBLED PEOPLE!

"I did first half in 2:02," as she tells it. "Then around mile 19, hit the wall. My legs felt heavier than I ever dreamed possible. I willed them to walk. A friend was there cheering me at mile 20. It was the most uplifting gesture I have ever had." This recharged his energy and he finished the 25-mile race in 4:48.

A LITTLE SUPPORTING CHEER MEANS A LOT TO A TIRED RUNNER!

Lay pastors, don't ever underestimate the value of an encouraging word, a hand on the shoulder, a card in the mail, an e-mail, a visit, a 30-second prayer with a person, "even a cup of cold water" in Jesus' Name.

A LITTLE "LOVE WITH SKIN ON IT" MEANS A LOT!

LAY PASTORS ARE CONNECTORS

LAY PASTORS PROVIDE CONNECTION Kelvin Miller, Editor of *Leadership Journal*, responding to the question, "What's next for the culture and the church?" said in a recent forum:

In the culture, I see an intense desire for connection.

What do people look for when they go to Starbucks:

it's not coffee, but connection.

The cliché, "high-touch for a high-tech society," is more true by the day. People have become attachments to their computers. The closest companion is an electronic machine. Their internet relationships have insulated them from the warmth of personal touch, the chemistry of eye contact and the nourishing sounds of pleasant conversation. After all, *virtual reality* is not reality.

The lay pastoral care ministry leadership team of one church captured the moment by calling their lay pastors, "Connectors." The ministry of lay pastoral care is known in their church as, "First Connections: Members Caring for Members." A caption in their publicity brochure reads:

EVERYONE NEEDS TO FEEL CONNECTED

The church is right on target, assuming the Kevin Miller's observation is valid. And I believe it is. The following parts of their brochure fleshed out their response to our culture's "intense desire for connections":

First Connection is a system of providing care and communication to all members of First Reformed church by assigning each member family a trained lay care giver called a "Connector."

Connectors agree to for areas of responsibility to their assigned families...

P--Pray

A--Available

C--Contact

E--Example

By providing a number of trained "Connections," members of the church

have a better opportunity to receive the love and care they might expect as member of the church.

Their ministry is loaded with "high touch" lay pastoral care, making it a great day for the Lay Pastors Ministry in their church...and in yours!

Love: The Mystique of Life and Ministry

Two separate but related commands of Jesus converge to produce the "living water" of lay pastoral care.

- ★ LOVE ONE ANOTHER
- ★ TAKE CARE OF MY SHEEP

"Love one another" (Jn 13:34) is an every-Christian command. "Take care of my sheep" (Jn. 21:16) is a specific-Christian command. The first, which was originally given to all the disciples, is universal; the second, which was originally given only to Peter, is individual. Loving one another is mystical and is to be practiced by all Christians. Taking care of Jesus' sheep is functional and is to be practiced by those Christians to whom Jesus assigns the task of pastoral care.

To understand and properly fulfil Jesus' command to love one another, we need to know that love is the hallmark of every Christian's life. Jesus calls all of us to love all others at all times under all circumstances.

To understand and properly fulfill Jesus' command to take care of his sheep, we need to know that, whereas "love one another" is for all Christians, "take care of my sheep" is for specifically chosen Christians. Jesus appoints certain person to be shepherds of His people.

This means on the one hand, every one of us will be held accountable by our Lord for loving one another. On the other hand, only some of us will be held accountable for taking care of his people.

Along with all of Jesus' followers, lay pastors are to be people of love and are to practice this love universally. However, love is not the ministry. Love is the mystique of the ministry – that awesome aura of enfleshed agape and Spirit-generated energy which makes a lay pastors ministry productive.

Loving one another is, in fact, the mystique of all ministries, not just the Lay Pastors Ministry. This mystique appears in each of the four New Testament

writings which teach about the variety of gifts required for the variety of ministries. For example, Romans 12 lists seven different gifts required for seven different ministries. While each of these ministries has its distinctive identity and purpose, each is to be permeated with the same mystique—love.

Let's look at some of the ministries the Lord assigns to people. The person who has received the gift of *prophecy* is to use that gift to preach and/or teach God's word. The one who has received the gift of *servicing* is to serve. The one gift with *leadership* is to lead. Two of the seven gifts are for the ministry of pastoral care – encouraging and showing mercy. The people receiving these gifts are to use them to fulfill Jesus' command, "Take care of my sheep." The commodity all the ministries have in common is love.

Some people assume that the command to love one another is the mandate for the Lay Pastors Ministry. They do not realize that mandate for the Lay Pastors Ministry is not the every-Christian command, "Love one another," but is the specific-Christian command, "Take care of my sheep." Lay Pastors are involved far more in the lives of their people than is expected of other Christians. God has given them special gifts for this special involvement.

Lay pastors, always be inspired and humbled that God chose you to do the ministry of pastoral care! And be a little fearful, knowing that you are accountable to Him for not only doing your ministry, but doing it in love. Love is the mystique of your life and ministry.

The "Good Enough Lay Pastor"

Some lay pastors become discouraged in their ministry of caring because they feel they are not capable, not qualified, nor perfect, and not doing it well enough. I have an encouraging message for you. It is the promise the prophet Azariah gave to Asa, king of Judah: "But as for you, take courage and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded." (II Chron. 15:7)

Let me bare my soul. Aware of my many inadequacies, I have often needed to place my name in Azariah's promise: "But as for you, Mel, take courage and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded." I think I get the point: *Mel, just do it what you can; do it the best you know how; what you do will be rewarded.* I understand reward to be success in ministry, making difference in people's lives.

It's not on lay pastoral care-givers who become discouraged because of feeling they are not doing their ministry well, many mother care-givers are also discouraged because they feel they are not doing their mothering well. They feel this way for the same perceived reasons: they do not feel qualified, they think they are not doing well enough, they know they are not perfect mothers. They err in equating capable with perfect ("I'm not perfect, therefore I am not capable). However, knowing we are not perfect drives us to grow toward perfection.

Just as Azariah had an encouraging word for Asa, a famous child psychologist, Dr. D.W. Winnicott, has an encouraging word for mothers. He coined the phrase, "the good enough mother," meaning a mother who is capable and caring does not have to be perfect in order to raise a child successfully. Note that Winnicott does not equate *capable* with *perfect*.

Neither mothers nor lay pastors should be discouraged by feelings of inadequacies. Being aware of imperfections drives both conscientious mothers and conscientious lay pastors to grow *toward* perfection. Growing toward perfection is like a sunflower growing toward the sun. The sunflower will never reach the sun, but growing that direction makes it taller and stronger, more capable to stand the storms and to be the most beautiful and productive it can be.

God, who called you to be a lay pastor, will use your caring initiative to make a difference in the lives of those He assigned to you. Believe God! He assures you of success: In all that you do you will prosper (Psalm 1:3c). Just do it! He will use what you do as you care for His people; He cannot use what you do not do. "Take courage and do not give up. Your work will be rewarded." You are a "good enough lay pastor."

A FULL OR LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

Jesus gives himself totally to me. To "become a partner with Christ" (Heb. 3:14) presumes giving myself totally to him, i.e. deny myself take up my cross and follow him.

Individuals determine for themselves whether their partnership with Jesus will be a full partnership or a limited partnership. The following monologue indicates a potential full partnership reduced to a limited partnership by the "ifs" and "buts." (Of course, whether a limited partnership is a partnership at all is a big question)

"Jesus, save me from my sin...but not all of it.
Jesus, love me...but don't get too close all the time.
Jesus, be Lord of my life...but not all the time.
Jesus, fill me with your Spirit...but not to the top.
Jesus, help me be like you...but not in every way.
Jesus, I accept your values...but I'll also hold on to mine.
Jesus, I'll do things your way...If it's politically correct.
Jesus, we want to be as one...but let's not take this too far.
Jesus, we'll share the money...but I'll let you know how much.
Jesus, I'll be all you want me to be...with one condition.
Jesus, I'll will do all you want to do...but not yet.
Jesus, I'll go where you want you want me to go...if its fits my plans.
Jesus, we'll share life together...but not all.
Jesus, we'll partners...but not in everything."

(your name)

(date)

Roadblocks or Paving Stones?

You want to be a successful lay pastor. God provides the paving stones which lead to success as he did for Joshua. "...then you shall have success." (Joshua 1:8) Our problem is that the paving stones look like roadblocks.

First there is **fear**. A new lay pastor may be fearful of making the first contact. Is fear a roadblock which will shut down movement or is it a paving stone to use in reaching success. It can be either.

Fear provides the energy to do your best in a new venture. When you're afraid, you are ready to trust God. (Ps. 56:3-4) **Fear** becomes the "trust God" paving stone. When you're afraid, your sense sharpens; you have more adrenaline, more precious focus and more energy. These are psychosomatic paving stones. Never forget that God wired you psychosomatically. His intent is for fear to produce paving stones, not roadblocks.

Granted, fear is uncomfortable. As much as you want to move directly from fear to success, you have to deal with feeling uncomfortable. Accept the feeling but do not let it block your action. Instead, use it as a paving stone. You will be more adequately compensated by the success of your visit. It does not take long for you to discover that fear-induced discomfort gives way to joy when you move ahead to make the contact.

There there is **guilt**. Every lay pastor has felt guilt at times for procrastinating, neglecting, doing something wrong or leaving something unfinished. Unless we use guilt as a paving stone, it will be a massive roadblock. Guilt is anger at ourselves. However, guilt provides the energy to confess our omissions and to change. It makes us face up to our faults. By confession to God we transform the roadblock to a paving stone.

Guilt is the catalyst for resetting our priorities, for positioning our ministry where our Lord puts it, so we will get it done. The change guilt produces is renewed commitment to P.A.C.E. our people regularly with enthusiasm and in the power of the Spirit. Miraculously, instead of guilt being a roadblock, guilt

become a paving stone on our road to success.

Next is **discouragement**. Who of us has not been discouraged? The middle letters of discouragement, *cour*, means heart in French. Encouragement is courage, strength from the heart. To be discouraged means that our courage, our heart, has been taken away.

The causes of discouragement are both subjective and objective. You may feel discouraged. It seems people are not responding, that your caring initiatives are not appreciated, that your attempted contacts are useless. "It seems..." It's subjective; your self-assessment. Or it may be that you really are being rejected, that a person really is not changing, that a relationship is really not developing. It's objective; it's the way it really is.

There are two ways discouragements can be paving stones rather than roadblocks. First, talk with God about your discouragement and its subjective or objective causes. He will encourage you. He will remove the "dis" from discouragement and replace it with "en." He is the great *encourager*! Second, be with other lay pastors. Meet with them at the monthly or quarterly meetings. Share your true feelings, tell it like it is. As you do this, the I Thessalonians 4:11 principle will be at work, "Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

God gave you gifts for your caring ministry. He called you to do it. By turning what looks like roadblocks into paving stones you have discovered the way to be a successful lay pastor, "...then you (too) will have success."

Too much/Not Enough of Jesus

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus: Why's it always about Jesus?" This headliner for *Bulletin Board*, a daily feature in the St. Paul Pioneer Press, introduced the "Cute kid stories" section. Four-years-old Jennifer was starting to attend Sunday school in Marquette, Michigan. When class ended the first day, Jennifer's mom asked her what she did in class, and what the story about. She replied that the story was about Jesus. The next week her mom asked what the story was about. Jennifer replied: "it was about Jesus ---AGAIN!"

When I was in seminary, I overheard another student grumble through tightened lips to a small group of friends, " If I hear the word *Jesus* one more time I'll go crazy!"

Fourteen years ago, just getting started in a part-time staff position at Hope Presbyterian church in Richfield, Minnesota, I was having a get-acquainted lunch with another new part-time staff person. Between bites, I became aware of how she persistently steered the conversation to Jesus. Her galvanizing words, her spirited voice, her speaking eyes – all surrounded by her sunny countenance -- communicated to me that Jesus was her very close friend, that she love Him devotedly. My first impression has been confirmed over and over through the years. She still can't get enough of Jesus.

The Pharisees, teachers of the law and others had too much of Jesus and sought ways to get rid of Him. Judas has had enough of Him and found a way to get out of his "gang." Pilate didn't really care what happened to Him (though Pilate's wife did).

On the other hand, "a woman who had lived a sinful life...brought an alabaster jar of perfume...wet his feet with her tears...wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them (Luke 7:37-38). She couldn't get enough of Him. On-again, off-again Peter finally got his life together by confessing to Jesus, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you (John 21:17). After this, Peter couldn't do enough for Jesus.

Some get too much of Jesus; some others can't get enough.

Discovery! What Ministry is and who can do it.

In the traditional church, clergy are the providers of professional services for church members. The "consumer" (church member) has spiritual needs, the "provider" (clergy) is trained to look after those spiritual needs.

Consumers come to church needing inspiration, encouragement and direction, and clergy provide a sermon. Consumers need to learn....clergy offer instruction. Consumers need support or guidance...clergy dispense insight and counsel.

There are three problems with this consumer-provider model:

1. The proliferation of needs become too heavy, leading to clergy burnout and/or leadership patterns which stunt congregational growth.
2. The congregation is energized largely by the energies of the clergy, leaving the vast reserves of the people's energies untapped.
3. The people's embryonic spiritual gifts remain undeveloped while an unhealthy dependence (a.k.a co-dependency) on the clergy infects the congregation.

In his book, *Letting Go: Transforming Congregations for Ministry* (Published by Alban Institute), Roy Phillips tells how that early in his ministry an older minister told him that people would not be happy if anyone other than the minister came to visit when they were in the hospital. Read Phillip's analysis of this counsel:

"It was to the detriment of my ministry and the congregation's ministry that for too long I believed what he told me. It meant that the load I carried wore me out and that I always felt guilty because of all the people I missed. It meant also, that too many patients waited in vain for a visit."

The young clergyperson unwittingly communicated to the congregation the far too narrow understanding about who had the gifts to carry out its ministry. His proprietary acts suggested that clergy hold in their possession a magic other

Christian are denied.

But...the Lay Pastors Ministry is challenging this centuries-old err. Formerly both clergy and laity perceived the Church as a hierarchical institution; now they see it as a Living organism, a Body of whose Head is Jesus Christ. The consumer-provider church is giving away (howbeit, stubbornly) to a partners-in-ministry Church where clergy ministers and lay ministers are the partners. We are rediscovering what ministry is and who can do it.

My Role Model is Jesus

Jesus is my Savior, my Lord, my Friend, my Hero. Recently, I have been reading one or the other of the four gospel, just to get to know Him better. Not aware of what this goal was doing in me, I was surprised to discover that Jesus is a also my Role Model – a very influential Role Model!

I am driven by an escalating desire not only to follow Him, but also to emulate Him. I want my spirit to be increasingly leavened by His Spirit. I have found the pearl of great price: Jesus' life and ministry qualities! They are of far greater practicable value than those I acquired from psychology, sociology, post graduate studies in college and seminary and 50 years of Christian ministry.

In a 15-minute reflection time this morning, the following life and ministry qualities of Jesus rose to the surface of my mind — undoubtedly those which are presently shaping my life and ministry. I wrote them down as they surfaced. They are quite private, but I am eager to share them with *you*, my brother and sisters in Christ and in ministry.

Stand for truth..... Be Assertive..... KEEP CLOSE TO THE FATHER.... Serve those nearest me....PRAY A LOT.... LISTEN TO PEOPLE CAREFULLY.... love and help society's outcasts...FREELY GIVE YOURSELF TO AND FOR OTHERS...PRIORITY #1 IS GOD'S PLAN FOR MY LIFE...Share my deeper self with a few selected people.... ENDURE CRITICISM AND BEING MISUNDERSTOOD.... GO PUBLIC BUT SHUN THE LIMELIGHT...love and respect people of other religions without endorsing their religion...MAJOR IN GODLINESS....RESIST ALL TEMPTATION....do not be blindsided by Satan (be alert to his presence, power and craftiness).... RESPECT AUTHORITY...CALL A SPADE A SPADE....equip people by example, experience and teaching....EFFECTIVE TEACHING SKILLS ARE SIMPLE, ENGAGING AND CLEAR.

Now that Jesus' qualities and their impact on my life and ministry has surfaced, I am intentionally setting them as goals. I invite you to the same experience. As your Role Model, Jesus, by His Spirit, will also leaven your spirit with the qualities listed above and others you will discover on your own.

What a Day For The Lay Pastors Ministry!

The April 2000 issue of *Psychology Today* ran an article titled, "Mind over Cancer." A reader, Kip Little, Burlington, Ontario, Canada wrote a letter to the editor for the July/August 2000 issue, affirming the premise suggested by the title:

"When my cancer returned in 1990, a mass under collarbone caused swelling in my arm and hand while damaging nerves and blood vessels. Over four months of tests and consultations, many treatment options were put forth both by conventional and alternative medicine. I ultimately found doctors who gave me Tamoxifen and radiation — not a cure, but a relief of my physical symptoms. But I chose *people*, places and *sounds of healing* for my mind and spirit. Today I am without cancer."

Kip Little ends her letter, "When are we going to recognize that illness doesn't happen just to our body?"

Three supremely imperative principles surface in Kip Little's experience which underscore the strategic importance of the Lay Pastors Ministry: 1) a powerful non-medical healing choice is people; 2) illness doesn't happen just to the body; and 3) *sounds of healing...heal*.

These principles strongly endorse the ministry of thousands of Lay Pastors, people who are legitimately involved in the lives of other church members, some of whom are physically afflicted. Lay Pastors "treat" these members' minds and spirits with sounds of healing: words of encouragement, words from the Bible, words of prayer, and even sounds of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Eph. 5:19).

What a day for the Lay Pastors Ministry!

"Love With Skin On It" — That's What Lay Pastors Are!

It doesn't cost money....but there is a price to pay.

It doesn't require training...but it has to be practiced.

It doesn't make demands...but it inspires one to self-sacrifice.

It doesn't restrict...but it rules out self-destructive conductive.

Q: What is "IT?"

A: "It" is LOVE!*

"IF I pray for people, am AVAILABLE to them, CONTACT them to the point of pestering, and deny self so I can be a great EXAMPLE, but do not have love, I gain nothing; I am an empty shell; I am only an echo of what I could be."
(paraphrase of I Cor. 13:1-13)

Love is patient — It insists that I wait for those members of my "flock" who do not yet accept me, by accepting people and loving them.

Love is kind — It finds ways for me to be creativity thoughtful, generous, hospitable and respectful of the people in my "flock."

Love is does not envy — It turns envy inside out so I can use people's goof fortune to affirm, praise and congratulate them.

Love does not boast — It reminds me to stay on their agenda, to not upstage them by flaunting my "greater" events.

Love is not boast — It is humble, making a distinction between self-affirming servanthood and self-aggrandizing arrogance.

Love is not rude — It respects another's feeling, life situation, convictions, traditions, privacy and rights.

Love is not self seeking — It is self-giving, not out to get what it wants, but out to give what another needs.

Love is not easily angered — It is angered, but not easily. It reins in anger with Eph. 4:26: "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."

Love never fails — It is not turned off by rejection, indifference, misunderstanding, insult, neglect, abuse, or anything else.

Love is the greatest — Faith is quintessential: hope is imperative; love leavens faith and hope and everything else with the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, and every lay pastor's archetype of "love with skin on it."

* See 1 Corinthians 13

HOW TO USE EACH ESSAY FOR ON-GOING TRAINING

YOU ARE A BONA-FIDE MINISTER

1. Assign each of the 10 synonyms for bona-fide to 10 people. They are to use the word in a sentence, then, in one minute or less, tell what the sentence means to them. Example: "I am an authentic minister."
2. Divide into groups. Assign each of the following to a different group:
 - a. Share thoughts about the "myth" in paragraph four.
 - b. Share thoughts stimulated by "Minister" and "Ministry."
 - c. Share thoughts stimulated by "Calling" and "Equipping."
 - d. Share what you think the Bible teaches about the last sentence and how it is practice practiced in your church.

THERE'S NO ONE TO HOLD HIS HAND

Divide into groups. Assign these essay parts, one to each group:

- a. Answer this question: Is the 3rd sentence of paragraph 3 true? Give examples of warmth, caring, compassion and love... and life circumstances requiring each of the four initiatives.
- b. List the six occupations in the order of their importance to society and the reason for ranking them in that order. Where do you place lay pastors in the list?
- c. Talk about two points in the last paragraph: 1) the kind of care Jesus plans; 2) lay pastors can give Jesus' kind of care.

TAKE YOUR MINISTRY UP ANOTHER NOTCH

Divide into groups. Assign these essay parts, one to each group:

- a. Give opinions about lay pastors wanting to take their ministry up another notch, and what another notch would look like.
- b. Serving and serving so effectively — what is the difference? Plan to demonstrate the difference to the whole group.
- c. Share your thoughts on how the six body-mind items engage both body and mind. Example: The mind identifies one's gift(s); the body activates the gift(s).
- d. Share your thoughts on the ways the first six of the 12 items release your spirit.
- e. Do the same with the last six items.

ALPHABET SOUP FOR THE SOUL

1. Select two essay readers. One shouts the alphabet one letter at a time. The other reads what follows each letter after it is shouted.
2. Divide into groups. Assign clusters of two to four letters, asking to "imaginatively and creatively expand each letter to its outer limits."

THINGS... AT HOME

1. Read newspaper clipping(s) of morally objectionable behavior. Then ask: "Would our church's ministry be affected if this person were a member?"
2. Cite three questions post-modern people are asking: 1) Do you really believe what you say you believe? 2) Are you living what you believe? 3) What difference does it make?
3. Divide into groups. Ask them to share their views on:
 - a. The extent to which our culture accepts (and promotes) immorality.
 - b. Whether Christians are immune to immoral behavior.
 - c. Whether there are things needing correction in our church "home."
 - d. The impact questionable behavior by a lay pastor would make.

NOT JUST THE LOUD ONES

1. Select two people to dramatize the first sentence; then read the essay.
2. Divide into groups to talk over the following:
 - a. The 4th paragraph assumes that lay pastors are hearing the “silent ones.” As you see it, which of the four actions do we need to take?
 - b. Do we have members who are lost to the church? So what?
 - c. Differences between clergy pastoral care and lay pastoral care.

PASTORING IS LIKE PARENTING

1. Select two readers to read alternate paragraphs.
2. Ask two parents to tell what parenting and pastoring have in common.
3. Divide into groups to discuss the following:
 - a. Their pastoral experiences lending themselves to pride; and their pastoral experiences lending themselves to guilt.
 - b. Why pride is an error in light of the last 4 paragraphs.
 - c. Why guilt is an error in light of the last 4 paragraphs.
 - d. The guaranteed basis for ministry satisfaction (last 2 paragraphs).

ONE A DAY... EVERY DAY... FOR SPIRITUAL VITALITY

1. As you read the essay, pause after each day, ask people to close their eyes for a Guided Imaging experience for one minute. Ask them to visualize Jesus sitting beside them with His hand on their shoulder, telling them, “I am the Bread of Life.” Then ask them to visualize “eating” that Bread. After one minute ask for volunteers to tell what they saw. For each day, locate Jesus in a different place such as in their home, garden, lawn, deck, patio, a park, grocery store, etc. Ask attendees what they saw.
2. Select two to five “Days” to expand into 3 to 6-minute teachings.
3. Ask for two volunteers to report their mantra experiences next meeting.

SOME THINGS TAKE TIME

1. After reading the essay, define relationship. Elaborate.
2. Divide into groups. Assign one of the following to each group:
 - a. What in nature besides oaks and babies, take time? Why?
 - b. Why building a relationship takes time.
 - c. What the difference is between caring about and caring for people.
 - d. What the first four “elements” have to do with relationships.
 - e. What the last four “elements” have to do with relationships.
 - f. What you believe your relationship to be with each of your flock.
 - g. What you think about the last four sentences of the essay.

PASTORING OR PESTERING

1. After reading the essay, tell the people you want “popcorn” responses (spontaneous and rapid) to some words. Get a volunteer to write the responses on a chalkboard, easel or overhead. Ask: “What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the word pester?”... “parent?”... “pastor?”... “shepherd?”... Call attention to the recorded responses what “parent” and “pastor” have in common; then, what “pastor” and “shepherd” have in common.
2. Divide into groups, assigning each group one of the following:
 - a. Knowing that both “pastor” and “shepherd” are English translations of the same greek word, do you prefer one of the other for yourself?
 - b. Your thoughts about the 4th paragraph.

- c. Your thoughts about the 5th and 6th paragraphs.
- d. Your thoughts about the 7th and 8th paragraphs.
- e. Your thoughts about the 9th and 10th paragraphs.

WE ARE SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST ON ASSIGNMENT

1. Ask someone, a news reporter if possible, to explain what it means for a TV anchor, radio newscaster, or newspaper reporter to be on "special assignment."
2. Relate what has been said to lay pastoral care; then read the essay.
3. Divide into groups. Assign each of the following to a separate group:
 - a. Apply the seven italicized verbs in the 2nd paragraph to the action verbs in Matthew 18:16-20, John 15:16 and I Peter 5:1-4.
 - b. Discuss the relationship in paragraph 3 between call, assignment and obedience ("not disobedient").
 - c. Share thoughts about paragraphs 4 and 5, adding personal experiences with "call," "assignment" and "obedience."
 - d. Share your thoughts about the two Q's and A's and the final sentence.

A LITTLE MEANS A LOT

1. Invite a health care professional to give a brief talk on what little quantities of nutrients or care do for the body and one's health.
2. Ask four people to prepare for sharing their personal experiences of how much a "little" pastoral attention, support or love meant to them.
3. Read the essay. Assign the following interaction to all the groups: Share your experiences of "little" significant things in your life, and the conclusions you draw from them for lay pastoral care use.

LAY PASTORS ARE CONNECTORS

1. Make giant-size P A C E letters to put on the wall or some other conspicuous place.
2. Read just the first paragraph of the essay; then ask: "How important is it to you to connect with other people and where do you make these connections?" Provide plenty of time for good participation.
3. Read just the 2nd paragraph; then ask those who have computers to give their opinion on the content of the paragraph.
4. Start at the beginning and read the full essay; then, pointing to the letters P A C E one by one, elaborate briefly on each.
5. Divide into groups to interact with how P A C E connects with people after each has had opportunity to tell their use of P A C E.

LOVE: THE MYSTIQUE OF LIFE AND MINISTRY

1. After focusing on the essay topic, sing a shepherding hymn.
2. Recruit people to dramatize John 13:12-17, 34. After the drama, ask: "What does it mean in practical terms to love one another?"
3. Recruit people to dramatize John 21:15-19. After the drama, ask for examples of the "take care" part of "take care of my sheep."
4. Read the essay.
5. Ask the pastor or someone else to explain the difference between "every-Christian commands" and "specific-Christian commands."
6. Ask the group: "What kind of people does Jesus appoint to shepherd His sheep?" Discuss.
7. Divide into groups to interact with the essay's last 4 paragraphs.

THE "GOOD ENOUGH LAY PASTOR"

1. Ask two mothers, one young, one older, to share how they feel about the quality of care they are giving or have given to their children. (They will need a few days prior to the meeting to reflect and prepare.)
2. Read the essay. Stop at the end of the quote in the 2nd paragraph to ask them to repeat in unison Azariah's promise, inserting their names as Mel did. Ask them to repeat it a second time, emphasizing their names.
3. Speak briefly about: "take courage," "do not give up," and "your work."
4. Finish reading the essay. Divide into groups. Ask all to discuss:
 - a. Do you ever get discouraged in your lay pastoral care ministry? If so, what discourages you? If not, what is your secret?
 - b. To what extent are you experiencing God's promise in Psalm 1:3c?
 - c. Nothing we do is perfect. How do we feel about being imperfect?
5. Hold up a potted flower as you elaborate on the 5th paragraph.

A FULL OR LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

1. After reading the essay, give people a chance to give their ideas about whether a limited partnership with Jesus is a partnership at all. They may be a little slow in responding. Give time to think.
2. Divide into groups. Assign each group one of the 14 lines. If you do not have 14 groups, assign more than one line to each group.
3. When they reassemble and have heard the reports, ask what kind of partnership they would be prepared to sign. Then, go to prayer.

ROADBLOCKS OR PAVING STONES

1. Make three large rock-like blocks (or use cement blocks). Print FEAR on one, GUILT on another, and DISCOURAGEMENT on the third. Do not let them be seen until you come to the word while reading the essay. Then place the block on the table; proceed to the next word, etc.
2. Divide into groups. Assign one of the three words to each group, asking them to discuss the three paragraphs dealing with their assignment. These questions will stimulate the interaction:
 - a. Do you ever experience the "roadblock?" If so, in what way?
 - b. How does this "roadblock" block? What does it block?
 - c. How can you turn it into a paving stone leading to success?

TOO MUCH/NOT ENOUGH OF JESUS

1. Select people to dramatize the five scenes in the essay. They will need a week or two to figure out what to do and practice.
2. After each drama, read the appropriate paragraph. Discuss its point.
3. After the 5th drama either divide into groups or discuss the following in the large group:
 - a. Are we likely to err in "overdosing" or "underdosing" on Jesus?
 - b. Give examples of "too much;" give examples of "too little."
 - c. What does this essay have to do with lay pastors?
4. Sing a hymn or gospel song about giving ourselves to Jesus.
5. Provide time for private introspection. Follow with time for prayer.

DISCOVERY! WHAT MINISTRY IS AND WHO CAN DO IT

1. Read the essay. Divide into groups. Assign one of these to each group:
 - a. Is ours a “consumer-provider” church, or are we “partners-in-ministry?”
 - b. Have you observed any of the three problems in our church?
 - c. Talk about the difference between the church as a “hierarchical institution” and a “loving organism.”
 - d. What is ministry and who is doing it in our church?
2. Ask the pastor to conclude the meeting by sharing his orientation.

MY ROLE MODEL IS JESUS

1. Ask for people they know or know of who are role models — negative or positive — in 1) sports, 2) entertainment, 3) business, 4) religion, or 5) politics. Ask if there are role models in your church and, if so, who they are and what they model.
2. Ask for role models who influenced them... and what their influence was.
3. Ask if it is possible for Jesus to be a role model. What does He model?
4. Sing a hymn or gospel song about Jesus.
5. Read the essay. When you come to the list of Jesus' qualities, have a different person read each one, starting at the end of the first row.
6. Do “word association,” only this is “phrase association.” Ask, “What words come to your mind when I read this quality?” Then read the first one. Do this with each of the 20.
7. Brainstorm qualities of Jesus they want to leaven their spirits. Have someone write them on a chalkboard or easel as they are spoken.
8. Conclude by asking them to cluster in groups of two or three to pray. Then, sing a hymn about Jesus.

WHAT A DAY FOR THE LAY PASTORS MINISTRY!

1. Ask the people to each tell one important occurrence going on in the world at the present.
2. Conclude their offerings by declaring that an organized ministry to pastorally care for congregations is one of the important occurrences. The Lay Pastors Ministry is in churches of more than 40 denominations in more than 15 countries of the world... and growing.
3. Ask three people whom you selected prior to the meeting to tell what they believe about and how they feel about their lay pastoral care ministry.
4. Invite a health care professional to give a talk on what is commonly called the mind-body connection — how the mind affects the body.
5. Read the essay. Conduct a general discussion on its content.
6. Ask the group about the “Three supremely imperative principles.”
7. Conclude by asking the people to repeat three times with loud voices in unison: “What a day for the Lay Pastors Ministry!” and then, “What a privilege to be a lay pastor!” (or shepherd, or lay minister, or whatever pastoral care title your church uses).

“LOVE WITH SKIN ON IT” — THAT’S WHAT LAY PASTORS ARE

1. Ask the people to sing a hymn or gospel song about love.
2. Word association: Announce: “Be ready to tell what first pops into your mind when you hear this word. Are you ready? Here is the word — LOVE!”
3. After many have told what popped into their heads, have I Corinthians 13 read dramatically.
4. Read the essay to the group. Have 10 people prepared, each to read one of the **Love** lines.
5. Divide into groups. Assign one of the **Love** lines to each group for interaction. Each group is to appoint a person to report “gems” from the interaction when the large group reassembles.