

Giving Birth to a
Lay Pastoral Care Ministry

A Lay Ministry Start-Up Manual

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12 Steps that will take you from where you are
to where your church will have a
Lay Pastoral care ministry in place

Giving birth to a lay pastoral care ministry

(how to start your Lay Pastors Ministry)

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Tip: A short-short version of the manual is the check list on pages 27 & 28. some may choose to start with that and use pages 1-26 only as more details are needed.

The Lay Pastors Ministry

Its History, Purpose, Theology and Nemesis

Its History

For two decades laypeople have been giving grass-roots, one-on-one, ongoing pastoral care by using the Lay Pastors Ministry model. The Lay Pastors Ministry was given birth in 1978 by a dedicated group of men and women who, along with Dr. Mel Strinbron, shared the vision of laypeople doing pastoral care ministry.

It took this group 18 months to design the ministry. Five of them field-tested the plan by giving pastoral care to 50 of the 900 households of their church, the College Hill Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. It worked! From this very small start their model of every-member care has spread throughout the world. It has been adopted or adapted by churches of many denominations (and many non-denominational churches) in the United States, Canada, Australia and several other countries.

Because it works, this "on the cutting edge of the church" ministry has found a significant niche among other lay ministries which energize the Church as it strides into its third millennium. What Balaam said about the nation of Israel fits the Lay Pastors Ministry: "See what God has done"

We incorporated in 1994 as Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc.(LPMI) The offices are in Minneapolis, Minnesota, The Board of Directors come from ten states of the USA and province of Canada.

LPMI sponsors biennial conferences on congregational care by laypeople, publishes a quarterly newsletter, develops resources for ministry leader, and maintains a roster of experienced seminar and workshop leaders. The prophet Isaiah said it for us: "All that we have accomplished [God] has done it for us."

ITS PURPOSE

The ministry is designed to provide grass-roots, one-to-one, ongoing pastoral care to every member of the church. It is a system of congregational care by laypeople.

The mission is to fulfill the Great Charter God sets forth in Peter 5:2, "Tend the flock of God which is your charge."

The hovering parent of the Lay Pastors Ministry is Lay Pastors Ministry, Inc.(LPMI). Its statement of purpose is: *LPMI serves churches by partnering with them in mobilizing and equipping laypeople to provide competent, consistent and loving care for members for the congregation.*

ITS THEOLOGY

1. The Chief Shepherd calls for this ministry.

"Take care of my sheep," John 21:16, Variations of this command are found in Acts 20:28 and Peter 5:1-4. Moses provides the model in Exodus 18.

2. The Holy Spirit distributes pastoral gifts to individual Christians as he determines. "We have different gifts.....If a man's gift is *encouraging*, let him encourage.....if is showing *mercy*, let him do it cheerfully," Romans 12:6-8. This theme is continued throughout I Corinthians 12. See also I Peter 4: 10.

3. Lay Pastors are to be equipped for their ministry, "Pastors and teachers (are) to equip God's people for the work of ministry." See also II Timothy 2:2

ITS NEMESIS

Warning: Unless the leaders are ready to give themselves to this ministry, it is best not to start.

There are many nemeses (agents of downfall). This is why a Spirit-born vision, serious prayer, careful planning, a well-built structure, and a diligent maintenance are all essential. It is not a program to be carried out machine-like. It is a ministry in which God himself participates. Maximum personal commitment and personal involvement are required.

The reward for perseverance and excellence is promised in I Peter 5:4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory which will never fade away."

VISION AND PRAYER

Vision means seeing something which is not yet here, visualizing something before it exists. If your church is to have a lay pastoral care ministry, there must be a person or group of persons who see the following:

1. That every member needs pastoral care;
2. That God mandates the pastoral care of his people;
3. That the present system of pastoral care is not working;
4. That laypeople can give effective pastoral care; and
5. That the Lay Pastors Ministry will provide adequate pastoral care for every household.

In brief, this vision is (1) seeing the need for the pastoral care of the members of your church, (2) picturing in your mind the ability of laypeople to give pastoral care, and (3) envisioning the benefits of a lay pastoral care ministry.

If the vision comes from God, passion for bringing it to reality will burn like a fire. This insatiable conviction will compel the person or group to conclude; "God wants this ministry in our church and we'll make it happen." Prayer will fuel this fire, give God the opening he needs to guide the planning, and move the person or group to action.

Usually the vision will start with one person, This vision has to be shared with others. If the pastor has the vision, it must be shared with associates, the board, and/or other leaders. If the one with vision is a lay person, he or she needs to share it with one or more close member-friends, then with the pastor (or vice versa). If the vision is from God and the time is right, the person sharing the vision will be surprised to find that God has given the same idea to others.

A member of one church had this kind of energy in her spirit. She shared it with others by securing 30 copies of the book, *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*, asking 30 of her friends to read it and let her know their thoughts about such a ministry. The result was that 14 of these people felt the same as she. They met together, prayed, planned and (with the blessing of the pastor and official board) launched the ministry.

For the ministry to succeed, in addition to someone having the vision for the Lay Pastors Ministry, the vision must be a part of the church's larger vision and valued system. The pastor must be on board and the ministry must be adequately supported by budget, encouragement, and accountability.

Even though the dream for this ministry comes from God, making the dream come true takes work. Work is the bridge connecting the vision with the ministry start-up. The following 12 steps will move the vision to reality, giving birth to a successful and lasting lay pastoral care ministry.

(PLEASE NOTE: The Twelve Steps To Giving Birth To A Lay Pastoral Care Ministry, with a minimum of creative adaptation, can be used effectively to give birth to other lay ministries such as evangelism, small-group ministry, missions, community care and compassion, clothing center and many others.)

STEP ONE: Form a Ministry Leadership Group (MLG)

This group meets regularly to design and build the organizational structure, set policy, and formally make the decision that the Lay Pastors Ministry is "just what our church needs." Four to twelve people are sufficient, depending on the size of the church and the number of people who share the vision.

As soon as the ministry is in place the group shifts from production to maintenance, following its birth with guidance through infancy, adolescence and mature years,. This MLG has ongoing "ownership" of the ministry.

One way to successfully form a MLG is to assemble interested and concerned people and covenant with those who share the vision to meet regularly to;

1. Study the book, *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*, other relevant books and papers, and search the Scriptures for fundamental guiding principles.
2. Work together collegially, openly speaking thoughts, ideas and convictions without pushing a personal agenda, and listening seriously to one another. Mutual love and respect allows the synergistic principle to work, producing a ministry that is far more effective than any one person could design.
3. Pray for the Spirit's guidance in developing the ministry, and pray for one another.

The agenda for the MLG meetings should include five parts:

1. Log-in (Each one tells the highs and lows of their lives.)

2. Worship (Not long, not formal, but genuine)
3. Nurture (Growth in ministry knowledge and spiritual life)
4. Business (Ministry development)
5. Fellowship (A time for snacking and small talk)

The tendency is for the group to do only business, but it is a mistake for people who design a ministry which delivers love and care to the congregation not to experience love and care from one another. Doing the business will be harmonious, joyful, and far more productive by including all five parts in most of the meetings.

The following positions will need to be filled by individual members of the group: (1) Group Leader, (2) Ministry Leader, (3) Secretary, (4) Communications Coordinator, (5) Calling–forth Coordinator (recruiter), (6) Equipping Coordinator, (7) Koinonia Coordinator (fellowship), (8) Evaluation Coordinator.

Additional information is in the Monograph by Mel titled *The Lay Pastors Ministry Leadership Group*. It is available from the LPMI office.

STEP TWO: Formalize The Decision To Have A Lay Pastors Ministry

Moving the vision forward to reality involves four action words beginning with "D":

DELIBERATE: Think over, discuss carefully, and pray seriously before reaching a decision. The MLG needs to determine (1) the need for this ministry, (2) what this ministry will do for the congregation and (3) how this ministry will fit into the total life of the church. The MLG must be convinced that its time has come.

DECIDE: It is best to formalize the decision in some definite fashion. The method may be (1) Polling the members one by one for a verbal "yes" or "no" (2) written ballot, (3) standing, or (4) raising hands. Before taking the vote, spend time in prayer seeking the leading of the spirit of God. Depend on God's promise in Isaiah 30:21: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'.

DOCUMENT: Be true to put your decision in writing, date it, and have each member of the group sign it. Copies of this will be valuable in presenting your decision to the official board for approval, and in publicizing the decision to the congregation through the church newsletter or by mail.

DECREE: Request a place on the church's official board's agenda to present your decision. It is assumed that you made periodic progress reports as you developed the ministry. Secure the necessary action for authority to launch the ministry. Such action gives the Lay Pastors Ministry a place among the other ministries in the church. When the birth happens. celebrate!

STEP THREE: Build THE Structure

Building a ministry is like building a building. If it is to fulfill its purpose and last through the years, it must be built well. Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish builder has the wise one building on a rock, It stood through the storms. Not so with the building built on sand (Matthew 7: 24-27). The Lay Pastors Ministry Group must build well, for it's God's building (I Corinthians 3:9).

The MLG will want to lay the following foundation stones in the numbered order, taking the necessary time and effort to shape, smooth, and place each one. Think of them as "living stones"(I Peter 2:5).

STONE #1 TASK The MLG must determine specifically what the Lay Pastors will do. (See chapter five in Can The Pastor Do It Alone?) The acronym PACE is the "job description:"

- P Lay Pastors *Pray* for their people faithfully.
- A Lay Pastors are *Available* to their people.
- C Lay Pastors *Contact* their people regularly.
- E Lay Pastors are an *Example* to their people.

STONE #2 QUALIFICATIONS The MLG needs to establish the qualifications for Lay Pastors. You may want to adopt or adapt the following: To be a Lay Pastor, a person must (1) confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, (2) have a good reputation and character, (3) seek to be equipped, (4) have pastoral gifts, (5) sense a nudging (call) from God and, (6) not be encumbered with too many other pursuits.

STONE #3 COMMITMENTS The following eight commitments may be adopted or adapted by the MLG:

1. Commitment of self to Jesus Christ;
2. Commitment to P.A.C.E.;
3. Commitment to time and energy;;
4. Commitment to pastor as long as the Lord leads;
5. Commitment to ongoing equipping;
6. Commitment to accountability;
7. Commitment to the church, its leaders and your ministry leaders;
and
8. Commitment to meet together regularly.

STONE #4 RESPONSIBILITY Lines of responsibility need to be identified and respected. The following order may or may not fit your church and ministry organization. It is a sequential, not a hierarchical order ("There are leaders among us but not over us")

1st, the official board of the church.

2nd, the church staff.

3rd, the Ministry Leadership Group.

4th, the Shepherds (the Lay Pastors of the Lay Pastors)

5th, the Lay Pastors (front-line people doing the ministry while the others make the ministry possible.).

STONE #5 NAME What shall we call these people who give grass-roots, one-on-one, ongoing pastoral care? Unless there is some compelling reason not to call them "Lay Pastors," that is the name of choice. If another name is chosen, it must match what these pastoral caring people are expected to do. (For further treatment of the name, see the Monograph *by Mel* titled, *Shall We Call Them Lay Pastors?* And/or pages 178-180 in the book, *The Lay Driven Church*, both available from LPMI)

STONE #6 THE START-UP What specific action will get our ministry started? Follow a "Time Line". Here is an example, using a 1999 calendar:

May 29 Begin to communicate the ministry to the congregation.
See pages 11-13 for ideas.

Sept. 12 Begin registering people for the equipping seminar.

Oct. 1,2 Conduct the equipping seminar. Specifics for this are given on pages 15-17.

Oct. 3,4 Assign households to the Lay Pastors. The suggested process and guidelines are on pages 17 and 18.

Oct. 10 Commission the Lay Pastors. The preferred time and place for this is a worship service. If Lay Pastor pins are used, this is the ideal time to present them..(Official pins are available from LPMI. Some churches have crafted their own.)

Nov. 18 The first Lay Pastors meeting. The First Visits are all to be completed by this time.

STONE #7 OMNIBUS This stone comprises several items, some are already present and some you will add as the ministry evolves. At this point, the MLG should have made decisions regarding (1) Accountability, (2) Affirmation, (3) Support, (4) Fellowship, (5) Evaluation and, (6) Maintenance.

These are all treated in detail in the Monograph by Mel, The Twelve Foundation Blocks, available from LPMI.

STEP FOUR; Communicate With The Congregation, Lay Pastors and LPMI

Informative, motivational, biblical, clear and colorful communication with both the congregation and the Lay Pastors is as important to the success of this ministry as advertising is to Coca Cola. Many ministries have faltered at this point, even though the planning and implementation was near perfect.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE CONGREGATION

You need to communicate effectively with the congregation for two reasons:

1. Both the givers and receivers of pastoral care come off of the pews. "And how can they hear without someone preaching to them:" (Rom. 10:14)
2. To cultivate the culture. The culture of a church is either favorable to a lay pastoral care ministry, or unfavorable. For example, If most of the members of a church believe that one of the high priorities of their church is pastoral care and that God has given every Christian gifts for ministry, that culture is favorable to the Lay Pastors Ministry. Therefore, the ministry will likely succeed. A favorable culture has to be created in many churches and needs to be cultivated in all churches.

All means of communication should be used:

1. Preaching, teaching, and writing.
2. Sunday worship guide, monthly newsletter, special congregational letter(s), posters, informational meetings, special presenters to church organizations, lay witnesses in the worship services, drama, phone-call blitz, faxes, e-mail, study groups, etc.
3. These beliefs are to be inculcated:
 - a. Every members is a minister, having been given ministry gifts by the Spirit of God.
 - b. "Pastors and teachers are to prepare God's people for works of service."
 - c. The Bible requires the care of God's people.

NOTE; The book, The Lay Driven Church, available from LPMI, is a rich resource for basic beliefs regarding lay pastoral care.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE LAY PASTORS

The most effective communication tool is a monthly newsletter. It will survive best if kept to the two sides of one sheet of paper. Some gifted(or interested) member of the MLG should take this on. Contents should be (1) informational, (2) motivational, (3) affirming, (4) provide ongoing equipping, and (5) sometimes humorous. Many churches copy or excerpt articles from NETWORK NEWS. The importance of a well-done newsletter cannot be overstated.

A two-way communication between the church office and Lay Pastors is imperative. The Lay Pastor can relay information about sickness, hospitalization, crises, and deaths to the church; the church needs to report the same to Lay Pastors for their caring initiatives.

COMMUNICATE WITH LAY PASTORS MINISTRY, INC.

LPMI is a resource for much of what a church's ministry needs. The secretary, president, board members and regional directors are available to answer questions, listen to problems and give support. LPMI also stocks a supply of video tapes, equipping manuals, and other ministry tools. They also can recommend successful ministry leaders to contact in any particular region. Information about the international conference, regional conferences and equipping events can be requested. A roster of seminar leaders and speakers is available.

STEP FIVE: Call Forth Prospective Lay Pastors

The terms "calling forth" is more in sync with the biblical concept of procuring people than "enlist" or "recruit." The biblical process has God first calling people to himself, then giving them an assignment. (See Matthew 10 :1,5.) We who need people to make the Lay Pastors Ministry viable are merely "in the loop" to activate God's process.

"Recruit" and "enlist" infers only human strategy and effort. The ministry will succeed to the degree the Spirit of God is the main Person in the procurement process.

Three spiritual principles give success to "calling forth:"

1. Pastorally caring for God's people is God's work. Jesus is the Chief shepherd. We who lead the ministry are only servants, given this special assignment.
2. The Spirit of God has given pastoral caring gifts to a sufficient number of church members to care for the whole. Our task is to discover these people.
3. The Spirit of God moves people's hearts to give themselves to this ministry. Our task is to alert them to the possibility that God is sending them to do this ministry and to provide the ministry structure, equipping and support for them to do it.

There are two general ways of calling people forth: (1) Casting the net, and (2) Selecting individuals.

Casting the net is inviting the whole congregation to learn about the Lay pastors Ministry and consider becoming Lay Pastors. This is done by worship service bulletins, announcements and drama, articles in the church newsletter, sending a letter to the congregation, scheduling information meetings, mounting attractive posters in strategic places, setting up a registration table in an accessible location, inviting the congregation to "nominate" people whom they believe would be good Lay Pastors, and any other creative means of issuing the general invitation for people to consider becoming Lay Pastors.

If you cast the net, you may need to separate one or two of the fish out. Usually the pastor or pastoral staff should review the list and make the

decision about some individuals not becoming Lay Pastors. The loving act toward the ones not accepted is for the pastor to counsel with them.

The second way of calling people forth, selecting individuals, takes a review of the congregation by the pastor(s) and/or the MLG, listing those they believe may have the gifts and passion for pastoral care. The next step is to pray about contacting these people. The next, of course, is approaching them to give information about the Lay Pastors Ministry, the upcoming equipping event, and to ask them to seek the Lord's guidance in prayer, ("Don't say yes until you have thought about it; don't say no until you have prayed about it.") For further information on calling forth, see pages 79–92 in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*

STEP SIX: Equip The Saints For Their Ministry

One of the major responsibilities of the MLG is to plan for both basic and ongoing equipping. Equipping is an essential part of the formula for lay ministry of all kind—"....equip the saints for the work of ministry("Eph.4:12).

Four decisions must be made about basic equipping: Which are the essential subjects; *Who* will do the equipping; *When* it will take place; and *How long* it will last?

First: Which are the essential subjects: Many years of training people in scores of churches indicate that the twelve units of equipping found in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* constitute adequate basic training. This book is a primer for getting people started in ministry and then becomes a valuable ongoing resource through the years for both managers and doers of the ministry. LPMI has developed other equipping tools. (1) An equipping

manual—*A Complete Equipping Seminar*, and (2) An equipping video album— *A Complete Equipping Seminar on Video*.

We recommend that each person being trained have his or her personal copy of the book *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* The participants should try to read the book prior to the equipping event. Once people are doing the ministry they will need it as a reference regularly. Ministry leaders can use selected portions of the book for studies with the Lay pastors as part of the monthly meeting.

Once the basic equipping is completed and the ministry is in place, it is imperative that the MLG plan for ongoing equipping. The monthly meetings should always include a time for equipping. Some churches have an annual day-long retreat, part of which is given to ongoing equipping.

Second: Who will do the equipping? Some churches have a pastor or qualified layperson do the equipping. Some have a number of persons share the teaching. Some are using LPMI's manual or video to do the equipping. Others invite someone from LPMI to equip the first Lay Pastors and then again in one to five years to give a booster seminar. Your MLG needs to commit to providing the very best training experiences possible, knowing that the quality of training largely determines the quality and quantity of ministry.

Third: When will it take place? Again, the MLG must decide what is best for their situation. Some churches plan an overnight retreat for their basic equipping, a Friday night and Saturday, or a Saturday and Sunday. The bonding which occurs in such an experience lasts through the coming years and adds to the strength of the ministry.

Some run it Friday evening in the church building and pick it up again on Saturday. Doing this over two consecutive days also has the bonding advantage. Others have found that spreading it out over several Sunday mornings or week-day evenings suits their situation best.

Fourth: How long will it last? The recommended number of hours is 10 to 15. 10 hours barely provides enough time to adequately train people while more than 15 seems to cut back on the number of people who will take the training. The MLG often tries to balance two risks: the one, *more equipping, better performance/less equipping, lower performance*, the other, *more equipping, fewer attending/less equipping, more attending*. Because of the importance of this ministry and the critical necessity for adequate equipping, wise MLG groups opt to risk fewer people with more training. Some, to their surprise, find another principle at work: more equipping/more people. Usually people of worth respond to more challenge rather than less.

One final word about equipping, Lay Pastors need equipping in personal spiritual life and faith as well as in skills, principles and techniques. Perhaps even more so. Paul counseled Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely." (I Tim. 4:16)

The equipping event will ordinarily end by asking the participants to fill out an application form. (A sample is on page 237 in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*) The applications are reviewed by the MLG; People are told they are accepted; households are assigned; the Lay Pastors are commissioned; the letter of introduction is sent to their people; the First Visits are made; and your ministry is under way!

STEP SEVEN; Assign Households To The Lay Pastors

Your MLG will sense that this part of bringing your Lay Pastors Ministry to birth is of strategic importance. The people have been equipped; their applications have been approved; and they are about to be commissioned (or have already been). There is a process for assigning and there are guidelines.

PROCESS

1. A designated working group of the MLG meets to assign households to Lay Pastors, and Lay Pastors to Shepherds. (Shepherd, sometimes called Pastoring Leaders, are Lay Pastors of Lay Pastors.) This working group will need the following.
 - a. A list of the Lay Pastors to receive assignments and their zip codes.
 - b. A list of non–assigned households whose zip codes match those of the Lay Pastors. If the Lay Pastors Ministry in whole or in part is designed for special target groups, these households will be given priority.
 - c. The list of households requested by Lay Pastors (is the opportunity has been given for them to make such requests), names submitted by the pastoral staff, or any other special requests.
2. Prayer is the first order of business, providing an opening for the Holy Spirit to guide the assignments.
3. Record the assigned households and related information (name, address, phone number, children, ages, marital status, etc.) for processing and for future use by the MLG.
4. Mail assignment forms (including related information) to the appropriate Lay Pastors for their review and acceptance. This gives them a voice in

shaping their "flock," even though it may result in modifying the list somewhat. A cover letter should include:

- a. Confirmation of their call to be a Lay Pastor
 - b. Affirmation of their decision.
 - c. Process and schedule for returning the signed form.
 - d. Information about follow-up activity such as the letter notifying the people of their assignment, the scheduling of their "First Visits," and the first meeting of the Lay Pastors.
5. The pastor of the church sends letters to the assigned households informing them that they now have a Lay Pastor, who it is, and to expect being contacted by them soon. The Lay Pastors are sent a copy so they will know when they can begin to make their contacts.
6. The Lay Pastors are to be provided with a supply of your LPM brochures, Availability Cards, First Visit Report forms and Monthly Report forms. (Samples are found on pages 245–248 in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*)

GUIDELINES

1. Assign between 5 and 10 households to each Lay Pastor. Fewer than 5 may mean that the Lay Pastor will not take the ministry seriously enough to grow in expertise; more than 10 for most people, is not manageable. With due caution, exceptions may be made.
2. The goal is to assign each Lay Pastor a "mix" of people (age, gender, marital stage, with or without children). Exceptions to the "mix" may be requests by Lay Pastors for a specialized "flock" such as troubled people, widows, retired people, young couples with children, etc.

3. Assignments should take into account gender, age, family, temperament, occupation, marital status, church activity, community involvement, social status and spiritual maturity. No one type controls the decision, but all types are considered. An example: You would not assign a 25 year-old single person all people in that life situation. You would possibly assign an 85 year-old person and a middle-aged couple in addition to single young people.

4. Attempt to get as good a "match" as possible so as to give the relationships the best chance of speedy development.

5. Some assignments should be obviously avoided, such as assigning a 23-year old single girl to a 25 year-old single male, or a single person (or a man or woman whose spouse is not a Lay Pastor) to a married couple of "matches."

STEP EIGHT; Provide Essential Materials

Lay Pastors will need the following materials in order to do their ministry properly.

1. A brochure. A sample is on page 30 of this manual. Create your own by borrowing what you wish from the sample. Design it for three uses: (1) distribute to the congregation to inform them about the ministry; (2) include with the letter from the pastor to the newly assigned people so they know what to expect; and (3) for the Lay Pastor to use on the First Visit in clarifying expectations.

2. Equipping Seminar notes. If the LPMI's manual or video is used, copies for participants are available from LPMI. When your pastor or others lead the seminar, notes should be secured long enough before the equipping event so as to photocopy them for the participants.
3. Application form. A sample is on pages 237–238 in *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?* The ideal time to use this is in the last moments of the seminar.
4. Report forms. This is for MLGs who have decided to use reports. The sample form for the First Visit is on page 245 of the book; a sample of the monthly report form is on page 246. Many MLGs wisely use words other than report such as Record of Contacts.
5. Availability Cards. These assure the "flock" members that their Lay Pastor is available to them. A sample is on page 248 of the book.
6. Letterheads and envelopes and/or cards are provided by some ministries for their Lay Pastors to use in corresponding with their people.
7. Notebooks are provided by some ministries for the Lay Pastors to keep their papers in from the equipping seminar and ongoing equipping. Some provide a notebook for keeping a record of their contacts to help the Lay Pastors connect their visits.

SEPT NINE: Commission the Lay Pastors

The preferred time and place for commissioning is a worship service. Since the "Laying on of hands" has a long Judeo-Christian history(see Num. 8:10; 27:18; Acts 6:6;9:17 | Tim. 4: 14), the elder or other church leaders should

gather with the Lay Pastors at the time of commissioning to place their hands on them. If Lay Pastor pins are to be used, this is the time to give them. A ritual for commissioning is on page 32.

This significant act does the following:

1. Affirms their call to ministry;
2. Publicly acknowledges the importance of their ministry;
3. Symbolizes a special anointing of the Spirit; and
4. Sends them forth with their leaders' blessing.

STEP TEN: Send The Letter of Introduction To Households

A letter from the pastor of the church to each assigned household is the most important link between the Lay Pastor and the First Visit. For better or worse, in most churches the pastor of the congregation is the "legitimizing" of everything that goes on in the church. The pastor's endorsement helps make the first lay pastoral care contact an event to look forward to.

The letter should include:

1. Some very brief information about the ministry;
2. An announcement to the household that they now have a Lay Pastor;
3. The name of the Lay Pastor or Lay Pastor couple;
4. The intention of the Lay Pastor to phone them soon to make an appointment for the First Visit;
5. An optimistic assurance that the relationship with their Lay Pastor will be mutually pleasant and beneficial; and
6. A Lay Pastors Ministry brochure.

The letter should go in the mail the day after commissioning. A copy needs to be sent to the Lay Pastor in the same mailing. The copy is a signal to the Lay Pastors that their people have received the letter. The next step is the Lay Pastors phone call to their people to arrange for the First Visit.

A sample letter is on page 31 of this manual.

STEP ELEVEN; Make The First Visits

"The day of home visits is long past," many say. But 20 years of Lay Pastor Ministry has disproven this myth. Allowing for some recent exceptions, clergy pastors no longer make home visits. But Lay Pastors do. In fact, there has been a resurgence of this neglected heritage as indicated by the recent book, *Visiting In An Age of Mission* (Harper, 1994). The author, Kennon L. Callahan writes "Visiting is a genuine art..... that needs to be shared and practiced. When muscles are not used, they atrophy and wither. Just so with the art fo visiting. Unused, it fades away."

When you share visits with a sense of joy and a spirit of fun, you will bless the lives of others. When you are glad to see people, people are glad to see you.

The First Visit has special significance for it is different from subsequent contacts. Something almost sacramental happens when you get into another family's home, especially when the people are Christians. You have been welcomed into the private "palace" cherished by those you are visiting. Bonding of kindred spirits and the exchange of lives begins.

Having been in the home gives subsequent contacts by letter, card or phone a depth they could not have without that intimate experience.

After the First Visits have been made, the reports of these visits are to be turned in.

Special First Visit training is on pages 107–111 of *Can The Pastor Do It Alone?*

STEP TWELVE: Plan The First Meeting

The first meeting of the Lay Pastors is a prototype of what will be months and years of regularly scheduled events of coming together. It is therefore essential that this first one be a positive experience for them, assuring them that every meeting will be worth their time. Good planning is the key!

According to the "Time Line" on pages 10–11 (Stone 116), the Lay Pastors are to have completed all of their First Visits by this time. The central purpose of this meeting is for Lay Pastors to tell their First Visit experiences, what they did, how they were received and how they feel (or what their thoughts are) about the visit.

When all have had their turn, the leader should summarize the successes, joys, surprises and expectations of future contacts. These should be balanced by citing disappointments, failures and negative surprises. These not-so-pleasant occurrences will provide challenging content for the next meetings.

Some of the meeting time should be used for a taste of ongoing equipping. Then celebrate! Your ministry has just been born! It is alive! It is moving, breathing and gurgling!

Maintenance & Prayer

It is one thing to start a ministry and quite another to maintain what you have started. Neither physics nor Christian ministry have the benefit of perpetual would not come unraveled (I Cor. 9:27).

Part of planning the ministry is planning its maintenance. The MLG will need to do both. As soon as the First Visits have been made and the first meeting held, you have been catapulted from implementation into maintenance.

The MLG may lose some people at this point for the reason that some people are simply not maintenance people. So, there may be a period of time in which you bid farewell to some who have worked together for several months and bid welcome to others. Because of the change, there are new dynamics. Sharing your faith and the vision for this ministry, the mutual exchange of selves, worshipping and praying together will make the transition exciting.

Some of the maintenance items are:

1. Processing reports. If people do not get feedback from their reports, they will not keep submitting them.
2. The monthly Lay Pastors newsletter.
3. Plan, schedule and conduct the regular meetings.
4. Ongoing equipping.
5. Calling forth, equipping and assigning new Lay Pastors.
6. Review the list of households at least annually to replace people who move or die.
7. Support the Lay Pastors when they get discouraged, become overwhelmed or have problems they need help with.

8. Connect the ministry with the official board, church staff and congregation.
9. Maintain connections with LPMI and the region.
10. So much more.

The MLG will need to meet regularly, most likely at least once a month, to work at the ministry. For this reason, only a few of them can also be Lay Pastor. However, it is good practice to have one or two Lay Pastors in the group so as to get a hands-on perspective to all the MLG does.

Prayer is the key to a successful MLG and Lay Pastors Ministry. Not just opening and closing prayers, but extended times for intercession, supplication and thanksgiving. You need God's guidance when making policy changes, approaching additional people to be Lay Pastors, struggling with indications of ministry weakening, supporting a Lay Pastor who has become discouraged or is not functioning, and so much more. MLG members will also be praying for one another as they exchange their personal life situations.

12 STEPS TO GIVING BIRTH TO A LAY PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

Place a check mark when the task is completed and write the date of completion following the statement.

Step 1: Form A Ministry Leadership Group (MLG)

- A Ministry Leadership Group is formed.
 - We have studied Can the Pastor Do It Alone?
 - All necessary positions are filled.

Step 2: Formalize The Decision To Have A Lay Pastors Ministry

- The decision to have a Lay Pastoral Care ministry is made.
 - The decision is in writing.
 - The decision has been presented to the official board.

Step 3: Build The Structure

- The ministry structure is complete.
 - The Lay Pastors task is stated.
 - Lay Pastors qualifications are in place.
 - The commitments are clarified.
 - The lines of responsibilities are identified.
 - We have decided what to call our pastoring laypeople.
 - A "Time Line" has been drafted.
 - We have given adequate attention to the omnibus issues:
 - Accountability; -- Affirmation; -- Support;
 - Fellowship;--Evaluation;----Maintenance.

Step 4: Communicate With The Congregation, Lay Pastors & LPMI

- We are communicating with the congregation; -- have plans to communicate with the Lay Pastors --and with LPMI.

Step 5: Call Forth Prospective Lay Pastors

- Our plans for Calling Forth are complete.

Step 6: Equip The Saints For Their Ministry

- Our plans for equipping are complete.
- The subjects have been determined.
- The leader(s) has been secured.
- The date(s) and hours have been decided.

Step 7: Assign Households To The Lay Pastors

- We have established the process and guidelines for assigning.

Step 8: Provide Essential Materials

- We have made provision for the necessary materials.

Step 9: Commission The Lay Pastors

- The date for commissioning has been set and plans made.

Step 10: Send The Letter of Introduction To Households

- Arrangements have been made for the Letter of Introduction

Step 11: Make The First Visits

- The expectations regarding the First Visit are clear.

Step 12: Plan The First Meeting

- The date has been set for the first Lay Pastors Meeting.

Brochure

A Lay Pastor is LOVE With skin on it!

Lay Pastors receive their gifts and call from God; they are qualified, equipped and commissioned by their church..

Lay Pastors offer four gifts of love to their families:

P PRAYER

A AVAILABILITY

C CONTACT

E EXAMPLE

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. --I Thessalonians 5:11 NRSV

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.....

—Ephesians 4:11–12 NRSV

"God does not want people in our churches to lament as the Psalmist did, There is none who takes notice of me'(Psalm 142: 4). How many people in our churches today cry this in one from or another because the professional pastor is the only one pastoring? People are neglected because we are not pastoring God's way, which is equipping lay people He has called to tend the flock."

Meadow Park Church of God
2425 Bethel Road
Columbus, OH 42220 (614) 451-8745

Lay Pastors at Meadow Park

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care...." —1 Peter 5:2
NIV

Who Are Lay Pastors?

They are God's people caring for God's people—pastoring the flock of God as God intended. Jesus tells us that if we love him, we will feed and tend his sheep (John 21:15–27). The word "pastor" has its roots in the Latin word pascere, which means "to feed." Many New Testament passages refer to our responsibility to care for his people. Lay Pastors are persons like you who are equipped to nurture and care for the body of Christ.

Lay Pastor "rejoices with those who rejoice; and mourns with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).

How does it happen?

Lay Pastors minister wherever God's people live, work and worship: in neighborhoods and at church, in hospitals and nursing homes, even at the grocery store or the mall. Each Lay Pastor cares for seven to ten family units through regular prayer, phone calls, visits, cards and letters according to the needs of the family or individual.

Lay Pastors are.....

- * Men and women of Meadow Park Church gifted by the Holy Spirit to offer pastoral care to others.
- * Representatives of Jesus, caring for one another in times of weakness and in times of strength
- * Equipped to be encouragers and listeners

Do you feel gifted in the area of caring and nurture? Perhaps the Lord is calling you to this ministry! If you would like to know more about Lay pastors, fill out the attached form and place it in the offering plate or return it to the Church Office mailbox.

HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

7132 Portland Avenue South, Richfield, Mn 55423 612/866-4055

Dear name of household

You are among the favored in (name of church) for you now have a Lay Pastor!

I am sure you know about this important caring ministry in our church, the Lay Pastors Ministry. The enclosed brochure explains its purpose. Our goal is to provide a Lay Pastor for every household of our church.

I am happy to announce that (name of Lay Pastor) is your Lay Pastor. He took the training and was commissioned (date).

He will be wanting to visit you before long, so you can expect his phone call soon. I believe this relationship will be mutually enjoyable and beneficial. It is an ideal way of fulfilling Christ's command to love one another.

If you have any questions or comments, please call me or (name of MLG leader).

Blessings!

COMMISSIONING LAY PASTORS

People committing themselves to minister as Lay Pastors and approved for pastoring will be commissioned at a regular worship service.

Even though it is not appropriate in most churches to use the word "ordain" in setting people apart to minister as Lay Pastors, the spirit of ordination as Jesus used this term in John 115:16(KJV) is to characterize their commitment. The Greek word, tithemi, translated ordain, means to place, appoint, ordain, set forth.

When the time for commissioning comes, the presiding person will ask the following questions:

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord and acknowledge Him to be head of the Church?
2. Do you believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
3. Will you be faithful in the work and worship of this church and diligently seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?
4. Will you be a Lay Pastor in obedience to Jesus Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father?
5. Will you minister in Jesus' name under the authority of the officers of this church and subject to the Holy Scriptures?
5. Will you seek to pastor your people faithfully and with love?

The following question is asked of the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, accept these brothers and sisters as Lay Pastors among us?

The questions having been answered in the affirmative, the Lay Pastors are to be set apart for this ministry by prayer and laying on of hands.

The following declaration will then be made:

" _____ , you are now commissioned as a Lay Pastor to minister as the pastor of an assigned group of _____ Church members. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."