

Current Practices & Models of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Authorization: Reflections, Issues & Questions

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I. Objectives

This paper will:

1. Present some current practices and models related to the authorization of lay ecclesial ministers.
2. Identify and explore the various issues and questions raised by the intersection of current practices and the authorization framework of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*
3. Suggest issues and questions for the consideration of Symposium participants.

II. Introduction

According to *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*,

Authorization is the process by which properly prepared lay men and women are given responsibilities for ecclesial ministry by competent Church authority. This process includes the following elements: acknowledgment of the competence of an individual for a specific ministerial role (often called “certification”); appointment of an individual to a specific position (in some dioceses called “commissioning”), along with delineation of the obligations, responsibilities, and authority of that position (and length of term, if specified); and finally an announcement of the appointment to the community that will be served by the lay ecclesial minister.¹

The *Co-Workers* framework of authorization appears fairly simple and straightforward, clear and linear: acknowledgement of competence, followed by appointment, followed by announcement. Seldom is this the case, however, as we will see. This paper will present various practices and models of authorization currently employed in the United States and assess these practices and models through the lens of the three movements of authorization developed in *Co-Workers*.

As we proceed with this exploration, we will see themes consistently emerge; to name a few:

- **Authorization as an Ecclesial vs. Human Resource Moment:** Whereas *Co-Workers* presents an ideal framework of authorization based on solid theological

and pastoral principles, the current “default” framework for authorizing lay ecclesial ministers is a hiring process. In many, perhaps most of our faith communities, ecclesial authorization practices are virtually indistinguishable from the standard hiring practices of businesses or non-profit organizations.

- **Consensus vs. Multiplicity:** There is no national or even regional consensus on educational/formational standards or a standardized program of lay ecclesial ministry development (except perhaps in Minnesota). This lack of consensus leads to a multiplicity of assumptions, expectations, and practices regarding content, process, and adequacy of lay ecclesial ministry education/formation—leading to the pivotal question: *what, indeed, constitutes adequate preparation that warrants authorization?* Moreover, there is little consensus on how best to accomplish the three elements of authorization of lay ecclesial ministers in the U.S. Catholic Church. There are multiple stakeholders (i.e., USCCB, national organizations, diocesan leaders, formators, academicians, etc.) advancing the conversation on varying fronts, with varying results.
- **Bishop vs. Pastor as Authorizing Agent:** The ecclesiology of *Co-Workers* calls for both bishop *and* pastor to be involved with authorization. The pastor by virtue of his role in hiring parish ministers is frequently the church’s primary *de facto* agent of authorization. How shall the bishop become more involved in the authorization of lay ecclesial ministers? Several of the models presented here offer some practical possibilities.
- **Common Language vs. Confusion:** Of the four pastoral applications of *Co-Workers*, authorization likely generates the most confusion (e.g., “certification” and “certificate” are frequently confused; “certification” and “accreditation” are frequently used interchangeably and mistakenly). Movement toward greater consensus around and resolution of questions and issues is regularly hampered by misunderstandings resulting from the lack of a broadly understood and agreed-upon lexicon of terms related to ecclesial authorization. (See Exhibit B for a glossary of frequently confused terms.)
- **Vision vs. Reality:** Our current reality: authorization typically happens through appointment (being designated or hired for a position of leadership); announcement may happen in the church bulletin or as a pulpit introduction; and systematic and thorough acknowledgement of competence frequently is either skipped altogether, or may take place as a by-product of a recruiting/hiring process. The *Co-Workers* schema of authorization sounds good on paper, but as long as the moment of delegation or hiring (appointment) is the *de facto* moment of authorization, neither acknowledgment of competence nor announcement will likely be given much credence by either pastors or lay ecclesial ministers.

Some further questions related to the Co-Worker’s authorization framework are provided in Exhibit C. There is frequently a disconnect between the authorization vision described in *Co-Workers* and the lived reality of the faith community. *Co-Workers* provides a framework for authorization that can help those responsible for the development of lay ecclesial ministry to chart a trajectory toward ecclesial authorization practices that are more faithful and responsive to our theology and ecclesiology. We

hope that through this paper we might better navigate our way to a place of greater congruence between our vision and practice.

III. Current Models of Authorization

This section will explore the following practices and models of authorization:

- Authorization through Hiring or Designating Leaders
- Authorization through Ministry Formation Programs: Chicago, Trenton
- Authorization through Diocesan and Regional Certification Systems: Cincinnati, Omaha, Minnesota
- Authorization through National Organizations: National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC)

A. Authorization through Hiring or Designating Leaders

As noted above, hiring is perhaps the usual way that authorization of lay ecclesial ministers takes place in the U.S. Through a typical hiring process, an individual's suitability for a given ministerial role is weighed (acknowledgement of competence), an employment agreement is reached (appointment), and news of the hire is shared with the faith community (announcement). How those various steps are accomplished varies from parish to parish and diocese to diocese. Some would engage in a stringent process with hiring committees, education requirements, job descriptions, and salary scales, while others hold a simple interview and offer employment with little guidance and/or formation. Examination of specific hiring practices is not the intent of this paper; however, the intent is to examine how the practice of hiring intersects with the activity of authorization.

Reflections Regarding Authorization through Hiring or Designating

Leaders: Although ubiquitous, a hiring approach to authorization fulfills neither the spirit nor the letter of the authorization framework in *Co-Workers*, for these and other reasons:

- **Acknowledgment of Competence:** Stories of insufficiently prepared/formed hires are rampant across the country. Pastors and local faith communities may be ignorant of or may choose to ignore established standards of ministry excellence. The hiring process may result in an initial assessment of competence, yet lack an expectation of continuing education and formation (compared to certification, in which periodic renewals are based upon proof of continuing education).
- **Appointment:** Hiring is necessarily local and as such is typically not connected in any significant way to the diocesan church and bishop. Although a bishop may understand that he has deputed his ability to authorize lay ecclesial ministers to his pastors, that understanding may be lost on everyone else. The result: lay ecclesial ministers lack a sense of connection to the authority of the bishop, and

the Church loses an opportunity to reinforce its institutional identity as a diocesan, not congregational, church.

- **Announcement:** The kind and quality of announcement typically depends on the given pastor and parish. Again, lacking is a sense of meaningful connection with the diocese and bishop.

B. Authorization through Ministry Formation Programs

In some dioceses, satisfactory completion of a program of ministry formation is tantamount to authorization. Typical ministry formation programs range in length from one to four years, and generally include theological education, spiritual formation, and pastoral skill development (a form of acknowledgment of competence). The completion of the program is often signified by a commissioning or graduation where the local ordinary presides (a form of announcement). Persons involved in these programs range from adults interested in learning about their faith to lay ecclesial ministers engaged in parish ministry who have been designated or hired by their pastor for a specific ministerial role (in the latter, a form of appointment).

We will explore two examples of diocesan ministry formation programs that serve as authorization processes: those of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Diocese of Trenton. Each will be explained briefly in light of the *Co-Workers* framework of authorization. A more detailed explanation of the program and/or process can be found in Exhibits D and E. As you will see, both of these dioceses provide a good example of how the local diocesan church and the academy can work together to prepare and form people for authorized ecclesial ministry. Chicago demonstrates how a formation program and other diocesan offices might work together to develop certified lay ecclesial ministers, while Trenton demonstrates how to align the ministry formation and authorization with the four areas of formation described in *Co-Workers*.

Archdiocese of Chicago TIGS (See Exhibit D)

The Archdiocesan program, *Together in God's Service*, provides the basic framework for the certification and authorization activity of the archdiocese. Upon completion of the TIGS program the Archdiocesan candidate is certified by the Archdiocesan office related to the ministry specialization (e.g., DREs by the Office of Religious Education). It is a program of education and formation for those wishing to make church ministry a life vocation in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The Archdiocese collaborated with the academy in the development of the TIGS program.

Acknowledgement of Competence: Completion of the academic and spiritual formation components of the *TIGS* program is a requirement for eventual certification and calling to the vocation of lay ecclesial minister in the Archdiocese of Chicago. The following are required of those who are authorized for ministry by the TIGS process:

- Participants take part in a three-year program of formation, sponsored by Mundelein Seminary, which includes the theology of lay ecclesial ministry, introduction to prayer forms, development of theological reflection skills, an annual retreat, four annual formation days, ongoing spiritual direction, and

participation in theological reflection groups. The program culminates in an integration seminar held at the University of St. Mary of the Lake.

- Participants also pursue graduate-level education at the Roman Catholic theological school of their choice. In pursuing a master's degree, typically the M.A.P.S. or M.Div., they are guided in their choice of coursework by the requirements of the archdiocesan core curriculum. Currently within this program, the archdiocese works with three theological education institutions that grant both degrees and certificates.

Following completion of the TIGS program, the archdiocesan candidates are certified by the archdiocesan office related to their ministry specialization. Requirements for certification include:

- Completion of the TIGS program
- Two years of ministry experience
- Completion of a portfolio that includes recommendations from the pastor, the academic institution, and diocesan office directors, all of which have been collected throughout participation in the TIGS program

Appointment: Individual appointment or hiring is done by local parishes. Currently, the archdiocese names the following as lay ecclesial ministry roles: Pastoral Associate and Director of Religious Education.

Announcement: Lay ecclesial ministers are commissioned by the Cardinal to a parish in much the same way that priests or deacons are sent to a parish. Accomplished by means of a letter, commissioning establishes a relationship between the lay ecclesial minister and the archbishop, naming the individual a minister of the Archdiocese, not just an employee of the local parish. Commissioning is repeated each time an LEM takes on a new ministerial assignment.

Diocese of Trenton ILEM (See Exhibit E)

The Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry (ILEM) was established for the formation of lay pastoral leaders for service to the Diocese of Trenton. ILEM, a three-year formation program, provides theological education, spiritual formation, and pastoral skills development. ILEM strives to form lay pastoral leaders who will collaborate with ordained ministers in serving the body of Christ.

Acknowledgement of Competence: The program provides comprehensive formation in the four areas of formation outlined in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. Included in the assessment of competence are:

- Completion of a battery of psychological tests prior to admission to the program.
- Completion of an MA in Theology or graduate certificate in theology from a fully accredited institution that meets the core curriculum designed by the diocese.

- Completion of two three-day annual retreats, 18 day-long retreats, and spiritual direction.
- Completion of a series of pastoral skills workshops.
- Completion of requirements for diocesan certification.

Appointment: Individual appointment or hiring is done by local parishes. Between one-half and two-thirds of people formed in the program already are in ministry positions.

Announcement: The bishop commissions lay ecclesial ministers who complete the program at the annual gathering of all ministry leaders of the diocese, both ordained and lay. All commissioned lay ecclesial ministers are included in the listing in the diocesan directory and highlighted in the diocesan newspaper. Additionally, pastors are sent a blessing rite to be conducted in the local parish.

Reflections Regarding Ministry Formation and Authorization: The content and quality of a person's ministry education/formation is a vital non-negotiable in the assessment and authorization for ministry. This reality leads to several important considerations:

- **Acknowledgement of Competence:** There is obviously a close connection between acknowledgement of competence and one's record of ministry education/formation, yet they are distinct. A program of ministry education/formation is one of the ways (perhaps the most frequent way) that individuals achieve competence for ministry. A review of one's theological and ministry formation can reveal a great deal about suitability for ministry. There is, however, an important difference: ministry formation/education leads to competence, but is just one measure of it. Acknowledgment of competence via certification typically takes various other measures under consideration, such as ministry experience, supervisor references, miscellaneous evaluations from recipients/participants of the person's ministry, etc. Put simply: ministry formation/education is a necessary but insufficient single measure of one's suitability for ministry.
- **Appointment:** Most ministry formation programs do not get involved in the action of appointing lay ecclesial ministers to ministry positions. If ministry service is a requirement of the program, which is not true in all cases, then it is left up to the individual and parish to establish this relationship. Sometimes, however, parishes will sponsor a lay leader's participation in a ministry formation program, which further establishes the connection between ministry formation and authorization. It is clear which should come first according to *Co-Workers*, (formation, then appointment), but we often see appointment preceding formation: a person gets a ministry position, then pursues the necessary education and formation.
- **Announcement:** Diocesan commissioning often takes place upon completion of a ministry formation program. The lay ecclesial minister may be commissioned

by the bishop or his representative for ministry. Commissioning ceremonies may be problematic if they confuse the completion of a program of ministry education/formation with authorization for ministry, especially if that is not the intent of the bishop

- **Role of the Academy:** Those who provide theological and ministerial education to lay ecclesial ministers are in a *de facto* relationship of collaboration with the diocesan bishop. In the case of diocesan ministry education/formation programs, this relationship is assumed. However, when academic institutions not under the bishop's immediate authority provide ministry education/formation, the relationship may be much less clear—or may even be characterized by tension around issues of academic freedom. Ideally, the academy will work closely with diocesan representatives and national organizations to forward the cause of lay ecclesial ministry development, while retaining its necessary academic independence.
- **Accreditation Standards:** Insofar as the various institutions that provide ministry education/formation accept and operate out of the evolving national consensus on standards for lay ecclesial ministers, the Church will enjoy a growing sense of interdependence and cooperation in lay ecclesial ministry formation. Conversely, if those institutions choose to operate out of divergent curricula and content, there will necessarily be skepticism about their ability to provide what the Church needs by way of education/formation. That is not to suggest that uniformity is the goal; rather it is to declare that it is in the best interests of all the stakeholders in ministry formation/education to work together in developing standards and norms. The USCCB/CCA, which serves as the U.S. bishops' official accrediting agency, can provide an invaluable service in this regard by maintaining norms and a framework for the development of accreditation standards for programs of ministry education/formation. (It must be noted, however, that current accreditation standards and processes are quite costly in terms of money, time, and organizational resources, no doubt prohibitively so for many. An important challenge will be to increase access to and utilization of USCCB/CCA accreditation by diocesan and university programs without diluting quality.)
- **Portability and Transferability of Credentials:** In a Church and academic environment where there is general consensus on standards and norms, credentials can become meaningful across institutional, diocesan, and perhaps even state boundaries. In our mobile society this can be an enormously positive development, both for lay ecclesial ministers who move from diocese to diocese, and for a Church in need of qualified lay ecclesial ministers.

C. Authorization through Certification Systems: Diocesan and Regional

Co-Workers provides a broad framework for human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. However, it fails to provide specificity regarding content and quantity of ministry education, nor does it provide any mechanisms for assessing and

acknowledging competence, other than referencing *The National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* (NALM, NCCL, NPM, NFCYM, 2003).² Rather, it leaves the determination of specific standards and procedures up to each diocese, while suggesting that “Whenever possible, provinces or regions can develop consistent certification standards and procedures so that lay ecclesial ministers might transfer from one diocese to another in the region with the approval of the sending and receiving bishops.”³

According to the most recent National Pastoral Life Center study of lay ministers, 17.9% of lay ministers report that they have been certified.⁴ The accuracy of this statistic may be disputed, given the common confusion between certification and certificates of completion (see Exhibit B). However, it would seem that some percentage of lay ecclesial ministers has undergone some kind of certification process designed to assess and acknowledge competence.

Diocesan offices have been perhaps the most frequent agents of ecclesial certification, with a fairly long history of certifying catechists and catechetical leaders, and in some dioceses youth ministers, pastoral associates, and music directors. We will examine two examples of diocesan certification: the Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s process for certifying youth ministry leaders, and the Archdiocese of Omaha’s Process of Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (which includes a diocesan certification process). The Cincinnati example shows how one diocesan office can engage in certification and as such assist pastors with authorization by providing certified ministers. The Omaha provides an example of a comprehensive approach to authorization. The eight-step plan described is in the process of finalization and approval before implementation takes place occurs. Again we will provide a brief analysis; for more detailed information see Exhibits F and G.

Archdiocese of Cincinnati Youth Ministry Certification (See Exhibit F)

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati currently certifies youth ministry leaders through the Archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry.

Acknowledgement of Competence: The Archdiocese of Cincinnati has USCCB/CCA-approved procedures for certifying lay ecclesial ministers serving as youth ministry leaders. The certification procedures are based on the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*. Certification is dependent not only upon satisfactory completion of a program of ministry formation, including specialized youth ministry training, but also upon years of ministry experience, observations, an integration paper, child protection training, and other requirements. The process includes an interview with a peer review board. (See Exhibit F for details.)

Appointment: Typically appointment takes place through hiring, or in the case of a volunteer, when a delegation is made and accepted. The certification system is designed to assess and acknowledge competence and is connected to appointment only if a given pastor insists that his youth minister be certified. The Archbishop encourages but does not mandate certification.

Announcement: Announcement is the prerogative of the hiring/delegating pastor, and typically would be done within the faith community. There is no standardized archdiocesan approach to announcement.

Archdiocese of Omaha Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (See Exhibit G)

The Archdiocese of Omaha has mapped out an eight-step pathway to becoming a lay ecclesial minister. The process acknowledges many of the moments on this journey—discernment, assessment, education, and spiritual formation.

Acknowledgement of Competence: Three of the eight steps outlined in the authorization process focus on preparing and credentialing competent lay ecclesial ministers.

- Training and Preparation are necessary to serve the community with faithfulness, grace, and pastoral skill. Pastoral and/or ecclesial presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:
 - Admittance to Loyola’s LIMEX program or Creighton’s M.A. in Ministry program.
 - Admittance into *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, the archdiocesan spiritual formation program (facilitated by the Office of Lay Ministry Formation).
 - *Profiles of Ministry*, Stage I (Archdiocesan assessment tool).
 - *Curriculum* requirements measure the participant’s/student’s progress regularly.
 - Scholarship monies for students who continue to satisfy the academic requirements and who remain “in good standing” with the archdiocesan formation program.

- Professional credentialing by academic institution: graduation pastoral and/or ecclesial presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:
 - Commencement ceremony by the academic institution.
 - Archdiocesan celebration of commencement:
 - Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving with the archbishop or his delegate.
 - Reception sponsored by the archdiocese for graduates, family members, pastors and parochial vicars, and other graduated LEM’s.

- Ministerial service by pastor, deanery, or archdiocesan office pastoral and/or ecclesial presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:
 - “Job” interview as a form of pastoral/ecclesial screening.
 - Background check and safe environment training.
 - Local customs of introducing the lay minister to the parish (e.g., parish bulletin, pastor’s announcements at liturgies and/or committee gatherings, etc.).
 - Job description with regular evaluations by supervisor (e.g., pastor, agency director).

Appointment: The pastor is responsible for individual appointment or hiring of lay ecclesial ministers.

Announcement: The following activities are involved in announcing and recognizing the authorization of the lay ecclesial minister:

- Ritual of Public Call by the archbishop at the Cathedral (a one-time event for the individual).
- Letter of Diocesan Recognition and Affirmation from the archbishop to the certified lay ecclesial minister.
- Publishing of names in the *Catholic Voice* and the *Archdiocesan Directory* (certification valid for a period of five years).
- Liturgical Celebration of Acceptance at the local parish.
- Rationale for a parish liturgical proclamation as explained by the Canadian Conference of Bishops.

Reflections Regarding Authorization through Certification Systems:

- **National Tools:** With the *National Certification Standards* and *Co-Workers*, diocesan offices now have the tools to develop unified and interdisciplinary approaches to certification. Heretofore certification systems have been principally organized around various ministry specializations, leading to separate and different certification processes and administrative systems for catechetical leaders, youth ministers, etc. It is now possible to develop approaches to assess the general competence of lay ecclesial ministers relative to the core competencies they have in common, and specialized approaches for their respective ministry specializations—in a single comprehensive certification system.
- **Need for Greater Cooperation and Collaboration:** The development of such approaches will necessarily entail greater cooperation and collaboration between the various stakeholders: diocesan offices and academic and ministry formation institutions, as well as pastors and parishes. The effort to collaborate will be well worth it as consolidated and simplified certification systems replace multiple, redundant, and sometimes competing ones.
- **Critical Connections:** Two important questions must be addressed if the *Co-Worker's* framework can be useful to dioceses in authorizing ecclesial ministers: 1) Will there be a meaningful connection between certification and appointment (e.g., that appointment is contingent upon certification)?; 2) What is the relationship between authorization and certification? (e.g., are they virtually the same if the Bishop or his delegated office is the certifying agent?)

Regional Certification Practices and Models

In the past twenty years, there have been only a few attempts to institute a regional process for certification of pastoral ministries within parishes and dioceses, most of which have not been sustained through extended time periods. The time and resource intensity of certification is both heightened and diminished as a result of collaboration of dioceses regionally for certification. The key benefit of such a process to the individual lay ecclesial minister is that of transferability of a credential to neighboring dioceses. The benefits to diocesan agencies include joint commitment of personnel and resources to an endeavor so resource intensive that it probably could not be done as comprehensively by a singular diocesan agency. The major challenges to such processes include the time needed to build joint ownership and understanding, as well as change in leadership at diocesan agencies involved.

The Minnesota Catholic Education Association Certification Process (See Exhibit H)

The certification process for lay ecclesial ministers who serve as youth ministry and catechetical leaders is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Catholic Education Association (MCEA) Leadership Forum and the six arch/dioceses of Minnesota. A lay ecclesial minister serving as either a catechetical leader or youth ministry leader with certification has documented his or her attainment of a specified level of competence, ability, training, and/or preparation for ministry. The individual's competence has been evaluated, measured, and/or judged, relative to the established national certification standards and competencies for lay ecclesial ministers, through a peer review process.

The six arch/dioceses in the state of Minnesota have collaboratively developed the certification procedures that are used to certify their lay ecclesial ministers. The six arch/dioceses are the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, the Diocese of Duluth, the Diocese of Crookston, the Diocese of Winona, the Diocese of New Ulm, and the Diocese of St. Cloud. The mission of the MCEA Leadership Forum is to be the voice for lifelong formation, education, and instruction for Catholics in Minnesota. The bishops of the arch/dioceses of Minnesota (Minnesota Catholic Conference) have endorsed and approved this process.

Acknowledgement of Competence: Competence is acknowledged through the completion of a certification portfolio that documents competence in all five national certification standards. This portfolio is reviewed at both the diocesan and state levels. Additionally, the candidate is interviewed by a trained diocesan team.

Appointment: The pastor is responsible for individual appointment or hiring of lay ecclesial ministers.

Announcement: Once certification candidates have successfully completed the certification process, they are certified at the MCEA state convention in a liturgy presided over by the Bishops of Minnesota. Additionally, some dioceses recommend the use of a parish blessing rite that can be used to announce and celebrate the certification

at the parish level.

Reflections Regarding Regional Certification and Authorization:

An evaluation of the MCEA process is in the process of being conducted by the certification committee and the MCEA Leadership forum which consists of representatives from each diocese. To this point, the following preliminary conclusions have been ascertained, by the MCEA Certification Consultant:

- **Staff support by the state agency (MCEA) is critical.** The support provided through the grant from the Lilly Foundation through St. John's University for the certification consultant has been crucial to the development and implementation of the program for quality control of the overall program and the desire to have consistent practices among dioceses. The need for consultant support has been very important in situations where there have been changes in diocesan leadership affecting the diocesan certification administrator (in the past four years this has happened in four of the six dioceses). Additionally, the administrative support through the executive director and the support staff of the MCEA are essential to the success of the process.
- **The joint effort by the six arch/dioceses made this program possible for each diocese.** The amount and type of work called for in developing and implementing certification procedures, as well as limited diocesan resources would have prohibited (especially, the smaller) dioceses from engaging in this beneficial activity.
- **Certification is a tool for them to accomplish their job of supporting and enabling the lay ecclesial ministers and parishes they serve.** However, integrating certification procedures into the structures of each of the dioceses has been a challenge, along with the need to continue to educate key stakeholders about its value. Additionally, because of the state-wide certification effort, each of the dioceses has benefited by engaging other diocesan agencies and staff in important discussions regarding ministry development. In many ways, a structured process such as certification forces action on many underlying issues that have not been dealt with previously, and can become a tool to accomplish many diocesan office responsibilities.
- **Engaging pastors in the process is pivotal to success.** Each of the dioceses has utilized various actions to inform and engage pastors in the lay ecclesial minister certification process. Pastors are actively engaged in the process through their own assessment of certification candidates. However, many dioceses feel that the process lacks support of pastors; this issue needs to be addressed as the process continues to be implemented.
- **There continues to be a need to formalize the ministry formation of lay ecclesial ministers.** The link between certification, formal ministry formation, and theological education has been established clearly through this process. However, the lack of access to ministry formation and theological education remains a challenge due to the rural nature of Minnesota, the lack of funds for formal theological education, and the challenge of integrating formation

into a ministry lifestyle. The lack of formal comprehensive ministry formation and theological education in the majority of lay ecclesial ministers will continue to be the greatest obstacle to the certification process and sustaining pastoral excellence of lay ecclesial ministers.

- **Understanding the Relationship between Authorization and Certification is critical.** In the MCEA certification process, the Bishop is the certifying agent, because of this reality, certification and authorization happen at the same time. Exploration of this issue is pivotal, because while certification is transferable among dioceses, authorization is not since each Bishop is responsible for guiding ministry in his diocese. How the two are related continue to be part of the discussion and work of the MCEA certification committee and the dioceses of Minnesota.

Authorization through National Organizations

National ministry organizations have for many years developed, implemented, and successfully managed certification systems to establish clear standards of quality for ministry and to hold their members accountable to those standards. For instance, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) certifies hospital chaplains, and the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) recently received approval from the USCCB/CCA to certify pastoral musicians.

The USCCB/CCA reviews and approves the certification standards and procedures of these national organizations, and in so doing performs a vital service to the U.S. Catholic Church by establishing standards of ministry excellence and providing a system of accountability so as to ensure those standards are honored. National organizations with approved standards and procedures normally need to re-apply for approval every seven years, thus submitting to ongoing scrutiny in the interest of maintaining excellence.

National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) Certification Process: (See Exhibit I)

The National Association of Catholic Chaplains is a professional association for certified chaplains and clinical pastoral educators who participate in the healing mission of Jesus Christ. We provide standards, certification, education, advocacy and professional development for our members in service to the Church and society. It provides certification for its members. It has been certifying chaplains since 1966 and provides a long history of assisting the Church in dealing with certification.

Acknowledgement of Competence: You must meet the following minimum requirements to be certified by the NACC:

- Roman Catholic in good standing.
- Full membership in the NACC.
- The successful completion of at least four units of clinical pastoral education in an accredited CPE center.

- A Master's degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, or spirituality granted or acknowledged by an accredited academic institution will be required for all those meeting a certification committee after January 1, 2005. "Accredited" refers only to those institutions and/or programs within institutions that are accredited by agencies endorsed by either the United States Department of Education (U.S.DOE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), including the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).
- A current letter of endorsement (for details, see Checklist for Supportive Materials Required for Certification Interview.)
- A letter of recommendation from the person to whom the candidate reports in one's place of employment.
- Final evaluations by the candidate and CPE supervisor of all completed CPE units.
- A narrative statement by the candidate, not to exceed 10 pages, that explains and documents how he/she demonstrates the competencies required for certification.
- A current autobiography, not to exceed 7 pages, that addresses the personal, professional and faith development of the candidate.
- One verbatim by that candidate of his/her ministry.
- Presenter report(s) from any past certification interviews.

Once the criteria have been met and documentation of certification materials has occurred then the certification candidate is interviewed by a regional team of peers, and a recommendation is sent on to the NACC National Certification Commission who conducts certification activities for the NACC.

Appointment: As a national organization the NACC does not become involved in this area of authorization, except in the requirement above that requests a letter of endorsement from an ecclesial authority.

Announcement: Those certified by the NACC receive a communication and certificate from the NACC, certified chaplains are recognized at the annual conference, and newly certified chaplains are identified on the website. Generally, the NACC is not involved in announcing certification to the local community being served.

Reflections Regarding National Certification and Authorization:

- **Relationship with Diocesan Church:** Of particular concern for national organizations is the connection with the diocesan Church. Because authorization flows from the bishop, national organizations that certify people for ministry typically include in their certification procedures an "ecclesial endorsement," by which an individual's certification is approved by the local ordinary or his delegate. Certification is neither complete nor finalized without this ecclesial endorsement. Thus there is ample precedent for national organizations offering certification that rely on the local bishop to "bring home" the certification

through ecclesial endorsement. As developing and implementing certification at the diocesan level can be both time- and resource-intensive (and in fact quite likely beyond the capabilities of many dioceses), national ministry organizations may well be able to step in to fill the breach. If this indeed becomes one way authorization develops in the U.S., several key considerations will necessarily follow:

- **Collaboration:** How will national organizations collaborate so as to obviate a proliferation of divergent certification systems? This concern seems particularly important in light of the widespread grassroots phenomenon of lay ecclesial ministers filling multiple ministry roles—in effect serving as ministry generalists. A proliferation of national certification systems anchored in various ministry specializations (e.g., catechetical leader, pastoral minister, youth minister, music director, etc.) would likely be problematic and counterproductive. With both the *National Certification Standards* and *Co-Workers* now available to provide a truly national common framework for assessing ministry competence, it would be an unfortunate step backwards if the various national organizations independently developed their own standards and procedures.
- **Leadership and Coordination:** Who will provide national leadership and inter-organizational coordination in support of such developments? The USCCB/CCA could become ever more important in this regard, potentially serving as a national clearinghouse, facilitator, resource, and consultant in the development of collaborative, inter-organizational systems of certification. Of course, if under-funded and under-resourced, the USCCB/CCA will be unable to serve in this capacity.
- **Relationship with Bishops:** Will diocesan bishops accept national certification, or will they perceive it as an undesirable national encroachment on their legitimate local authority? Again, the USCCB/CCA could potentially serve as the bishops' designated representative to pave the way for acceptance, if sufficiently resourced and mandated to do so.

IV. The Future of Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Conclusions, Questions and Issues

Congruence of Practice with Vision and Theology: Obviously, with the numbers of lay ecclesial ministers having recently exceeded the numbers of priests in the U.S.,⁵ authorization of lay ecclesial ministers has been occurring for many, many years. At issue is not whether lay ecclesial ministers will be authorized for ministry: they have been, are and will continue to be, typically via an amalgamation of human resource and ecclesial activities (e.g., conventional hiring practices, commissioning services, and the like.) At issue is whether the framework identified in *Co-Workers* will significantly shape how authorization takes place in the future, so that our practices grow more and more congruent with our theology and pastoral vision.

Questions and Issues: Based on and flowing from the foregoing, we respectfully submit the following questions (in italics) and issues for consideration by Symposium participants and the larger Church. In our view, in order for the ecclesial framework of authorization described in *Co-Workers* to prevail, reflection and action on the following questions will be necessary:

- a. **Hiring:** *How will or should the human resource practices in the U.S. Catholic Church become subordinate to and contingent upon the ecclesial framework of acknowledgment of competence, appointment, and announcement as described in Co-Workers?* This will likely entail linking hiring and salary decisions to certification and authorization. It seems clear that in order for authorization to reach its potential as a significant ecclesial moment, all three elements must be present in quality ways. How then, might the Church transition from the prevalent human resources approach to the ecclesial approach described in *Co-Workers*? We contend that unless there are genuine incentives linking appointment to acknowledgment of competence, certification will be optional, underutilized, and impotent. Conversely, if appointment is contingent upon acknowledgment of competence—for instance, if hiring and salary are contingent upon certification—then acknowledgment of competence will become a potent priority in the Church, especially among lay ecclesial ministers, pastors, and bishops.
- b. **National Consensus:** *Is there a growing national consensus on standards of competence for lay ecclesial ministry, standards of ministry formation/education, and standardized criteria for assessment? How will leadership and collaboration among the USCCB, dioceses, the academy, and national ministry organizations be expanded and coordinated?*
- c. **Support of Bishops:** *Will a critical mass of our bishops be identified to provide practical reinforcement for the ecclesial framework of authorization described in Co-Workers?* The *status quo* human resource approach to authorization will likely prevail without significant leadership from our bishops.
- d. **Standardized Certification Systems:** *How can certification systems be developed that are cost-effective, realistic, and reinforced by appropriate incentives?* Ideally, boilerplate language and structures will obviate reinventing the wheel each time a diocese decides to do certification. This will assist the development of certification systems that result in portable and transferable credentials. There are at least two major hurdles before the Church in utilizing certification as a tool to acknowledge competence: (a) developing certification models and templates that flow from *Co-Workers* and utilize the *National Certification Standards*—models that will provide regional and national consistency while remaining adaptable to the needs of the local Church; and (b) making those models widely available with assistance to dioceses in further developing and implementing them.
- e. **Accreditation Standards:** *How can we achieve greater national consensus on the content, quantity, and quality of ministry education/formation for lay ecclesial ministers? Is it a priority?* Accreditation standards and processes must be accessible if they are to be used. The challenge of the expense of time and

money to use the current accrediting process through the USCCB/CCA is an issue for many programs who could be accredited at the current time.

- f. **Blessings and Rituals:** *As the Church better understands the fit of lay ecclesial ministry in the general economy of ministry in the Church, how will it develop appropriate prayer and ritual to accompany the appointment and announcement of lay ecclesial ministers? Should the USCCB or one of the national ministry organizations act as a national clearinghouse for blessings, rituals, commissioning ceremonies and the like?* Of course, great care must be taken in the development and implementation of public commissioning rituals and “announcement” worship services so as not to confuse the faithful about the difference between ordained and lay ecclesial ministry—or to in any way reinforce a mistaken notion that lay ecclesial ministers constitute a new privileged rank or somehow constitute a new elite⁶ among the laity. However, *Co-Workers* clearly names the relationship of lay ecclesial ministers with the Church as new and different precisely because of their authorization. This tension points to the need for additional theological thinking and careful pastoral planning so as to properly celebrate the ecclesial moment of announcement.
- g. **USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation:** *How can or should the USCCB/CCA be uniquely situated to serve as a national facilitator, consultant, and resource in all of the above?* Just as the Commission assisted directly with the initiative that eventually became the *National Certification Standards*, so it can, if adequately funded and with a sufficiently broad mandate, continue to facilitate the ongoing national conversations that will be necessary to further the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the U.S.

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord extends us this invitation and call regarding the implementation of the document:

It [*Co-Workers*] expresses at this point in history what we bishops have learned from the experience of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States. It suggests concepts, goals, strategies, resources, and ideas to consider. *It invites local adaptation, application, and implementation to achieve consistency where possible and to encourage diversity where appropriate.* It calls Church leaders, ordained and lay, to become more intentional and effective in ordering and integrating lay ecclesial ministers within the ministerial life and structures of our dioceses (emphasis added).⁷

We are at a crossroads. It remains to be seen in five or ten years if authorization for lay ecclesial ministry will more closely reflect conventional human resources practices as it does today, or the ecclesial framework described in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. Without visionary national leadership committed to collaboration and consensus-building—along with the investment of necessary and sufficient resources—the future will likely look a lot like today.

This paper set out to identify different practices and models of authorization that address the framework presented in *Co-Workers*; however it was clear in attempting to do so that few such comprehensive or integrated models exist. The development of such models is vital to lay ecclesial ministry, as authorization for ministry is critical to an ordered communion.

On the other hand, if the various national stakeholders—the USCCB, national ministry organizations, diocesan leaders and the academy—commit to making the concepts, goals, and strategies described in *Co-Workers* a living reality, we will enjoy an ever more “...fruitful collaboration of ordained and lay ministers who, in distinct but complementary ways, continue in the Church the saving mission of Christ for the world, his vineyard.”⁸

Exhibit A: Juxtaposition of Human Resource & Ecclesial Characteristics

	Authorization as a Human Resources Moment	Authorization as an Ecclesial Moment
Acknowledgement of Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advertisement ▪ Application and interview: review of education and experience ▪ Testing of “fit” between a person’s capabilities and the job description ▪ Negotiation of <i>quid pro quo</i> re: hours, salary, benefits, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discernment of call and charisms for ministry ▪ Testing of gifts, strengths and temperament ▪ Assessment of spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral formation ▪ Leadership tested in the crucible of the faith community ▪ Ministry rooted in and flowing from relationships in the faith community
Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment agreement (as described in personnel policies or contract) ▪ Job description ▪ Delegation of roles, responsibilities and tasks ▪ Systems of supervision, accountability and evaluation ▪ Provision of material resources (e.g., office, phone, computer, budget, etc.) ▪ Ongoing assessment of outcomes and productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment in writing ▪ Include rights, obligations and any limits to authority ▪ Include relevant employment or personnel policies ▪ Include any special delegation to perform functions proper to the ordained
Announcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public announcement (e.g., in bulletin) that position is filled ▪ Introductions to the staff, faith community, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public announcement and introductions ▪ Installation / commissioning services flowing from Baptism ▪ Invocation of the Holy Spirit ▪ Public ritual of blessing, affirmation and empowerment by pastoral leaders and the faith community ▪ Rooted in initial and ongoing relationship with bishop, pastor

Exhibit B: Glossary of Terms Related to Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

Adapted from the glossary included in the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers serving as Parish Catechetical Ministers, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, Parish Life Coordinators* (Washington, DC: National Association for Lay Ministry, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 2003) and the MCEA Certification Handbook.

Accreditation	Process whereby a duly constituted accrediting body recognizes an academic or formation program that has demonstrated accountability for meeting established standards for quality and effectiveness
Assessment	The means by which competence is evaluated, measured, and/or judged, relative to established standards
Certificate	A formal statement to the effect that an individual has completed a program or course of studies through attendance, participation, and fulfillment of program requirements
Certification	Process that documents an individual's attainment of a specified level of competence, ability, training, and/or preparation for a particular ministry
Certification standards	Published statements related to a ministry's focus, activities, and responsibilities, which identify expectations of a competent minister
Competencies	Specific knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, values, and/or traits needed to fulfill certification standards
Indicators	Specific, concrete, and measurable behaviors or accomplishments by which an individual may demonstrate required competencies

Exhibit C: Essential Questions for Developing the Co-Worker’s Authorization Framework

Acknowledgement of Competence	Appointment	Announcement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What constitutes <i>sufficient</i> preparation (i.e. accreditation standards)? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Core, generic for all lay ecclesial ministers? b. Specializations? 2. How will competence be assessed so as to be acknowledged? 3. How might these be standardized: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Across ministry specializations? b. Across diocesan boundaries? c. Statewide, regionally, nationally? 4. Who is responsible for:: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> d. Establishing standards? e. Developing certification systems? f. Developing lay ecclesial ministry formation to meet standards? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is appointment a human resources function, or an ecclesial function, or both? 2. If both, which “trumps” the other, or is the “default”? 3. What models and methods exist for ecclesial appointment of lay ecclesial ministers that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Respect and don’t obfuscate ordination, but b. Honor the baptismal identity of lay ecclesial ministers? 4. Can these be standardized and made available statewide, regionally, nationally? 5. Who is responsible for developing such? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is announcement a human resources function, or an ecclesial function, or both? 2. If both, which “trumps” the other, or is the “default”? 3. What models and methods (i.e., rituals, blessings, commissionings, etc.) exist for the announcement of lay ecclesial ministers that sensitively and appropriately honor and celebrate this important ecclesial moment? 4. Can these be standardized and made available statewide, regionally, nationally? 5. Who is responsible for developing such?

Exhibit D: Archdiocese of Chicago Together in God's Service⁹

Together in God's Service is a program of education and formation for those wishing to make church ministry a life vocation in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Participants take part in a three-year program of formation, sponsored by Mundelein Seminary, which includes the theology of lay ecclesial ministry, introduction to prayer forms, development of theological reflection skills, an annual retreat, four annual formation days, ongoing spiritual direction and participation in theological reflection groups. The program culminates in an integration seminar held at the University of St. Mary of the Lake.

Participants also pursue graduate-level education at the Roman Catholic theological school of their choice. In pursuing a master's degree, typically the M.A.P.S. or M.Div., they are guided in their choice of coursework by the requirements of the Archdiocesan core curriculum.

Completion of the academic and spiritual formation components of the *TIGS* program is a requirement for eventual certification and calling to the vocation of Lay Ecclesial Minister in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Currently, the Archdiocese names the following as Lay Ecclesial Ministry roles:

- Pastoral Associate
- Director of Religious Education

The formation component of the *TIGS* program is provided through Mundelein Seminary. The academic degree is completed simultaneously at one of the participating Chicago-area theological schools.

- Loyola University, Institute of Pastoral Studies
- Catholic Theological Union
- Saint Xavier University
- Dominican University

In addition to their academic degrees, graduates receive a Graduate Certificate of Studies from Mundelein Seminary at the conclusion of their academic training. The certificate attests to the completion of all the requirements of the *Together In God's Service* program and the participant's readiness for parish ministry.

Certification

Successful completion of the *TIGS* formation program is required for, but does not automatically result in, certification as a Lay Ecclesial Minister in the Archdiocese. Such certification is granted by the Office for Lay Ecclesial Ministry for Pastoral Associates and by the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry for Directors of Religious Education. Candidates can be certified when they have completed the *TIGS* program and can document two years of ministerial experience. For additional requirements,

consult the respective certifying office. Certification as a DRE may require coursework in religious education.

Recognition as a Lay Ecclesial Minister

Calling and Commissioning are separate moments that occur after Certification (see below). The framework that leads to recognition as a Lay Ecclesial Minister (LEM) in the Archdiocese of Chicago involves a five-step process:

1. Call from God - experienced as a vocational call by the individual and tested by prayer, reflection, spiritual direction and discernment with pastors.
2. Training and preparation - i.e. academics and spiritual formation. Academics is professional preparation which utilizes the resources of the Catholic academic institutions of Chicago, with core courses toward a Master's Degree identified by the Archdiocese. Spiritual formation includes the significant impact of the academic courses, as well as more intentional formation activities like spiritual direction, discernment and testing of the call, retreats and formation days, etc. which include input from the faculty of Mundelein Seminary.
3. Certification - professional credentialing granted by the appropriate Archdiocesan office after reviewing transcripts, interviews, ministerial experience, etc. Certification must be maintained through periodic assessments.
4. Call by the bishop - public "Call" by the bishop, as pastor of the diocese, of the individual to lay ecclesial ministry. This vocational moment is ritualized in a public ceremony. "Call" is a one-time event for the individual that is not repeated.
5. Commissioning to a specific ministry role in a local parish - Lem's are commissioned by the Archbishop to a parish in much the same way that priests or deacons are sent to a parish. Accomplished by means of a letter, commissioning establishes a relationship between the Lay Ecclesial Minister and the Archbishop, naming the individual a minister of the archdiocese, not just an employee of the local parish. Commissioning is repeated each time an LEM takes on a new ministerial assignment.

Exhibit E: Diocese of Trenton, Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry¹⁰

The Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry (ILEM) was established for the formation of Lay Pastoral Leaders for service to the Diocese of Trenton. *ILEM*, a three year formation program, provides Theological Education, Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Skills development. *ILEM* strives to form Lay Pastoral Leaders who will collaborate with ordained ministers in serving the Body of Christ. The program provides formation in the four areas of formation outlined in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

Overview of Pastoral Formation

Pastoral Skills Programs or Supervised Field Placement: All candidates are required EITHER to take (or to have previously completed) one of the listings under "Programs"

OR to take part in “Supervised Field Practicum” should *ILEM* administrators recommend this option.

Programs - The Office of Parish Life will contribute \$150 per candidate toward any of the following (or similar) programs (*pending approval of ILEM administration*):

- Leadership Skills for Working with Groups
- Youth and Young Adult Ministry Certificate Program
- Intensive Evangelization Training
- Listening Skills Lab 1
- Spiritual Director Formation Program
- Clinical Pastoral Education, Hospital Chaplaincy Training Program
- NJ State School Administrator’s Certificate Supervised Hours Requirement
- Certificate Program for Administrators of Parish Religious Education Programs – (CPA is a requirement for all *ILEM* candidates in the field of parish-based Religious Education)

Supervised Field Practicum (at the recommendation of ILEM Administrators) – The *ILEM* candidate assumes pastoral responsibilities under the regular supervision of an experienced minister for approximately one year. The field supervisor submits reports to *ILEM* administrators – at the mid-point and end-point of this practicum. Candidates in Supervised Field Practicum may also be asked to take one of the offerings in “Programs” above.

Overview of Spiritual Formation

Spiritual Formation is essential for those preparing for ecclesial ministry. All who minister must attend to their own spiritual journeys, so as to better facilitate the journeys of others in the Body of Christ. To prepare fully for this role, the following is required:

Group Spiritual Formation (GSF) Days: *ILEM-Traditional* candidates will attend 18 GSF days (6 in each year of formation) with their same entry-year colleagues. Intentional community is formed on these day-long retreats. Topics of relevance to the Spiritual Life are addressed, allowing for time for discussion, prayer, reflection and silence. Eucharist is celebrated at the conclusion of each GSF day. Theological Reflection is the primary modality used at the GSF days. These days are planned and paid for by the Diocese of Trenton. *ILEM-Extended* candidates must attend all 18 GSF days within five years.

Silent-Directed Retreats: Each *ILEM* candidate must make 2 silent-directed retreats, of no less than 2-days in duration during the course of formation. Themed or preached retreats do not fulfill this requirement. The silent directed retreats are selected/booked individually by the candidates, and are paid for by the candidate. The *ILEM* administration disseminates brochures and flyers announcing local opportunities for directed retreats to the *ILEM* candidates.

Spiritual Direction: Each *ILEM* candidate must select a Spiritual Director, and meet on a monthly basis with him or her beginning no later than February of the

first year and continuing throughout the *ILEM* formation program. A Spiritual Direction Covenant is distributed to each candidate, who must find a director meeting the criteria outlined in the covenant. A candidate may choose to change directors during their formation. The new director must complete a new covenant and the candidate must submit it to *ILEM* administration. Spiritual Direction is paid for by candidate.

Ministerial Library: Three lists of spiritual and pastoral books are distributed to candidates. Candidates must purchase the required books, but are not expected to read or report on them. The books are considered beneficial to all in ministry. In recommending their purchase, *ILEM* encourages candidates to build a comprehensive ministry library for their present and/or future use. Books are purchased by the candidates, and are not funded by the Diocese of Trenton.

Overview: Human Formation

- Myers Briggs Type Indicator: A personality assessment tool used to shed light on ministerial relationships and styles.
- Opening Workshop: “Knowing God, Self and Others: Ministering in Wholeness & Freedom”
- Human Formation Workshops: Life Skills for Effective Ministry facilitated by Sister Rita Woehlcke, SSJ

All candidates are required to participate in the *Human Formation Workshops* which includes the workshops listed below. Attendance at all 10 Workshops is strongly encouraged; attendance at fulfills *ILEM* requirements.

- Power/Powerlessness: Being Rooted in Clarity
- Feelings: Listening to Their Story
- Listening: The Essential Relationship Skill
- Boundaries: Safeguarding Life
- Boundaries: Safeguarding Life of Minister/Ministry
- Crisis Intervention: Danger and Opportunity
- Self of the Minister: Sharpening the Saw
- Collaborative Ministry: Body of Christ at Work
- Addiction: What Every Minister Needs to Know
- Family / Parish Systems: Honoring the Whole

Overview of Intellectual Formation

The *ILEM* program offers a variety of theological education programs and tracks including graduate, undergraduate, and certificate studies. A set curriculum has been established for each track through the Office of Parish Life. Intellectual formation requirements for each track include:

- Candidates in the M.A. Theology Track are required to complete a total of 30 credits in Graduate Theology.
- Candidates in the Pastoral Administration/Business Management Track are required to complete 12 credits in Graduate Theology and 18 credits in Business Studies for a total of 30 credits.

- Candidates in the Catholic School Leadership Track are required to complete 12 credits in Theology and 18 credits in Education for a total of 30 credits.
- Candidates in the Undergraduate Pastoral Studies Track are required to complete 18 credits in Religious Studies and 6 credits in Pastoral Studies for a total of 24 credits.
- Candidates in the Undergraduate Religious Education Track are required to complete 18 credits in Religious Studies and 6 credits in Catechetical Studies for a total of 24 credits.
- Candidates in the Undergraduate Parish Business Management Track are required to complete 9 credits in Religious Studies and 15 credits in Business Studies for a total of 24 credits.

Exhibit F. Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Following is a brief synopsis of the certification process:

Step One. Application.

Candidates for certification must submit the following:

- Application Form
- \$40.00 application fee, payable to *Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry*.
- College transcripts, if applicable (copies or originals are acceptable)
- Copy of your complete *Certificate of Baptism*
- Certificate verifying criminal background check, as per Archdiocesan policy
- Summary report of youth ministry activities and events over a two-year period. This report will be a bulleted list of your calendared programs, activities, etc., including council presentations, school visits, parent communications and other non-programmatic elements of your comprehensive youth ministry. *Important: This is a list, not a narrative description.*
- Integration paper
- Three observation reports conducted by an Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry staff member
- Report on a ministry project
- Self-Assessment Form
- Copy of Catechetical Leader II certification (or higher) through the Office of Religious Education.
- *Only one* of the following three items:
 - Copy of diploma/certificate of satisfactory completion of an approved* youth ministry training/formation program, *or*
 - Copy of diploma/certificate of satisfactory completion of an approved* general pastoral ministry formation program, enhanced by specific youth ministry training to fill in the “gaps”, *or*
 - A portfolio of ministry training and experience.

(*N.B.: Approval status will be based on: (a) an assessment of the comprehensiveness of the course of study relative to the National Certification Standards; and (b) accreditation, or in the case of non-accredited educational programs and institutions, verification of good standing through references. Contact the Office of Youth & Young

Adult Ministry if you're unsure of the approval status of the ministry formation program that you completed.)

Step Two. Review Board Interview and Recommendation

A Review Board consisting of three ministry peers reviews the candidate's application and then conducts an interview so as to assess the individual's competence relative to the *National Certification Standards*. Based on the application and interview, the Review Board recommends to the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry whether or not to certify.

Step Three. Certification

Upon the recommendation of the Review Board, the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry decides to grant or deny certification. Certification is initially granted for three years, then after the first renewal of certification for five years. Renewal of certification is dependent upon evidence of ongoing continuing education.

Exhibit G: Archdiocese of Omaha's Draft of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Authorization¹¹

The Office of Lay Ministry Formation, in consultation with and the approval of the present Formation Committee, RECOMMENDS that those Lay Ministers who hold the following MINISTERIAL ROLES within our Faith Communities should be supported and encouraged to move-toward-authorization:

- a) Directors of Religious Education (DRE's)
- b) Directors of Youth Ministry
- c) Pastoral Ministers⁷,
- d) Pastoral Associates (a title in *Archdiocesan Directory*, given by the pastor),
- e) Directors of Adult Faith Formation,
- f) Directors of Liturgy,
- g) Directors of Liturgical Music,
- h) Catholic School Principals,
- i) Campus Ministers, and
- j) Directors and Program Directors within the archdiocesan agencies

There are many moments along the path as a lay person journeys toward becoming an "authorized lay ecclesial minister." There are moments of prayer and discernment – being invited by others, sensing a call from God in that invitation, doubting and/or fearing the truthfulness of the call, wondering what God is asking of them, etc. There are moments of ministry (as serving the community, helping the priest(s) and lay leadership). There are moments for education, training, and spiritual growing. There are moments of success and failure. There are moments when sin seems to reign and when God's victory over sin is clearly manifested. In the midst of all these moments, ultimately some lay people sense a call to collaborative leadership with the clergy. "Authorization" entails those moments whereby the Church's competent authority validates and acknowledges this call in the lay person and sends them to the community as a servant-leader. It is important to acknowledge that God authors and directs each

moment along this path – in the intimate struggle of the individual’s heart and soul, through the communal history that unfolds God’s design for God’s people.

What follows is a mapping of the pathway-to-becoming a lay ecclesial minister. What follows acknowledges many of the moments on this journey – discernment, assessment, education, spiritual formation. As the USCCB instructs, authorization of lay ecclesial ministers is a process that occurs towards the END of this journey where there is (specifically Steps 5, 6, & 8 below):

- a time for Certification (and Re-Certification) from the Archdiocese through the Office of Lay Ministry Formation
- a time for Diocesan Recognition and Affirmation of Call as a Lay Ecclesial Minister

The pastor and parish community are encouraged to accept, acknowledge, and announce the authorization received by the Lay Ecclesial Minister from the Archbishop by such means as described as Parish Acceptance of Lay Ecclesial Minister (see Step 7 below).

Eight Step Authorization Process

1. An individual experiences a call from God – mediated through personal prayer and through members of the faith community -- to serve within the Church Pastoral and/or Ecclesial Presence on behalf of the lay person looks like:

- Spiritual direction that challenges and affirms
- Discernment by pastoral leadership on behalf of the lay minister: encouraging, instructing, correcting, inviting, companioning, etc.

2. Training and Preparation are necessary to serve the community with faithfulness, grace, and pastoral skill. Pastoral and/or Ecclesial Presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:

- Admittance to Loyola’s LIMEX program or Creighton’s *M.A. in Ministry* program¹²
- Admittance into *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, the archdiocesan spiritual formation program (facilitated by the Office of Lay Ministry Formation)¹³
- *Profiles of Ministry*, Stage I (Archdiocesan assessment tool)
- *Curriculum* requirements measure the participant’s/student’s progress regularly.
- Scholarship monies for students who continue to satisfy the academic requirements and who remain “in good standing” with the archdiocesan formation program

3. Professional Credentialing by Academic Institution: Graduation Pastoral and/or Ecclesial Presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:

- Commencement ceremony by the academic institution
- Archdiocesan celebration of commencement:
 - o Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving with the Archbishop or his delegate
 - o Reception sponsored by the Archdiocese for graduates, family members, pastors and parochial vicars, and other graduated LEM’s

4. Ministerial service by pastor, deanery, or archdiocesan office Pastoral and/or Ecclesial Presence on behalf of the lay minister looks like:

- “Job” interview as a form of pastoral/ecclesial screening
- Background Check and SAFE Environment Training
- Local customs of introducing the Lay Minister to the parish (e.g., Parish Bulletin, Pastor’s announcements at liturgies and/or committee gatherings, etc.)
- Job description with regular evaluations by supervisor (e.g., pastor, agency director)

5. Professional Credentialing: Authorization as CERTIFICATION by the Archdiocese of Omaha. CERTIFICATION will consist in the following:

- The individual lay minister requests from the Office of Lay Ministry to be certified.
- The Office of Lay Ministry Formation, in consultation with a Review Board—probably a Board for the rural deaneries and one for the urban deaneries—requires:
 - o Copy of degree(s)/certificate(s)¹⁸
 - o Confirmed that SAFE Environment and Background Check are current
 - o Completion of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, the archdiocesan spiritual formation program for lay ecclesial ministry
 - o Demonstrate ministerial experience
 - o Job Description (to verify leadership in the designated roles that will be recognized as LEM)
 - o Years of Service: completion of 2 years if full-time; completion of three years if part-time (15 hrs per week)
 - o Two Letters of Recommendation: by the person’s pastor (where ministry occurs), and by a second minister – lay or ordained
 - o Documentation of regular spiritual direction
 - o Compliance to “Code of Ethics for Lay Ecclesial Ministers”
 - o *Profile of Ministry, Stage II* (Archdiocesan assessment tool)
 - o Interview(s) by Review Board (if deemed necessary by the members of the Review Board)
 - o The Review Board could revoke one’s certification on predetermined and pre-publicized conditions (this language and these conditions have not yet been written or determined)

6. Authorization as DIOCESAN RECOGNITION AND AFFIRMATION OF CALL AS LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER:

- Based upon the above certification requirements, the Office of Lay Ministry Formation recommends the lay minister to the Archbishop
- Ritual of Public Call by the Archbishop at the Cathedral (a one-time event for the individual)
- Letter of Diocesan Recognition and Affirmation from the Archbishop to the Certified Lay Ecclesial Minister
- Publicized in the *Catholic Voice* and the *Archdiocesan Directory* (certification valid for a period of 5 years)

7. Parish Acceptance of Lay Ecclesial Minister – Certification & Diocesan Recognition and Affirmation as LEM

- Liturgical Celebration of Acceptance at local parish
- Rationale for a parish liturgical proclamation as explained by the Canadian Conference of Bishops

8. Renewal of Archdiocesan Certification by Lay Ecclesial Minister

- Re-certification is necessary every 5 years
- Upon the request and initiative of the certified-Lay-Ecclesial-Minister, the Office of Lay Ministry Formation, in consultation with a Review Board, will examine the following:
 - o Recommendation from pastor/agency director and a “second minister” – either ordained or lay
 - o Demonstration of regular spiritual direction

Exhibit H: Minnesota Catholic Education Association Certification Process¹²

The certification process for lay ecclesial ministers who serve as youth ministry and catechetical leaders is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Catholic Education Association (MCEA) Leadership Forum and the six arch/dioceses of Minnesota. A lay ecclesial minister serving as either a catechetical leader or youth ministry leader who has received certification has documented his or her attainment of a specified level of competence, ability, training, and/or preparation for his or her particular ministry. The individual’s competence has been evaluated, measured, and/or judged, relative to the established national certification standards and competencies for lay ecclesial ministers through a peer review process.

The six arch/dioceses in the state of Minnesota have collaboratively developed the certification procedures that are used to certify their lay ecclesial ministers. The six arch/dioceses are the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, the Diocese of Duluth, the Diocese of Crookston, the Diocese of Winona, the Diocese of New Ulm, and the Diocese of St. Cloud.

The certification process has been designed to ensure that competent, formed, and educated laypeople serve in ministerial leadership roles. The process also aims to structure the relationship between the lay ecclesial minister and the local church, especially the residential bishop, since he has the responsibility for the structuring the development of lay ecclesial ministry in his diocese. The process is offered to parish catechetical leaders and youth ministry leaders who serve in any of the six arch/dioceses in the state of Minnesota. Specifically, certification is offered for lay ecclesial ministers who direct or coordinate ministries such as religious education, faith formation, youth ministry, children’s ministry, campus ministry, youth and young adult faith formation, and adult education.

The “Minnesota Catholic Education Association Handbook of Standards and Procedures for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers” was first approved by the United States

Catholic Conference of Bishops' Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA) on March 26, 2004. The second edition of the handbook was unanimously approved by the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota at their meeting of the Minnesota Catholic Conference on December 6, 2006. It was also approved by the USCCB/CCA in March, 2007 and will be reviewed periodically to maintain this approval through 2014.

The first step for any individual responding to the call to serve God's people as a lay ecclesial minister is engaging in ministry education and formation. The types of ministry formation and education programs in the state of Minnesota vary as much as the landscape of the state does. Access and opportunity to participate in the various programs differ within each arch/diocese, especially in those with large rural populations. The MCEA and the bishops of the six arch/dioceses in the state recognize the challenge and importance of creating ways for lay ecclesial ministers to receive degrees and appropriate formation that leads to competent ministry. In light of the fact that lay ecclesial ministers (LEMs) in Minnesota have completed various types of ministry education and formation, three categories have been created: Practitioner, Professional, and Masters. Each category reflects the type of theological education LEMs received in preparing for ministry. Certification candidates in each of the categories are required to demonstrate competence in the five national standards.

- **Category I: Practitioner Certification:** The lay ecclesial minister has demonstrated competence in all of the five core standards and common competencies and in the corresponding specialized competencies for the specialization as a youth ministry leader or catechetical leader through participation in a ministry formation program(s) sponsored by a diocese, independent organization, or institution of higher education.
- **Category II: Professional Certification:** The lay ecclesial minister has demonstrated competence in all of the five core standards and common competencies and in the corresponding specialized competencies for specialization as a youth ministry leader or catechetical leader, through the attainment of a bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree from an accredited college or university in a related field or the equivalency.
- **Category III: Master Certification:** The lay ecclesial minister has demonstrated competence in all of the five core standards and common competencies and in the corresponding specialized competencies for the specialization as a youth ministry leader or catechetical leader, through the attainment of an advanced degree (master's level or higher) from an accredited college or university in a related field or the equivalency.

MCEA Portfolio Contents

Part One: General Portfolio Documentation

- Portfolio Title Sheet, Checklist, and certification application form

- A letter of acceptance from your diocese accepting you as candidate for certification, which means the lay ecclesial minister has successfully completed the application form with three references
- Current resume describing ministerial experience
- Evidence of a successful background check
- Verification of signed acknowledgement of sexual misconduct policy
- Signed professional code of ethics for the area(s) of specialization
- Official transcripts
- Certificate of completion of any diocesan Ministry Formation Program or University Ministry Formation Program or Diploma
- Evidence of safe environment training/protection of children training
- Completed Certification Goal Form A

PART TWO: Documentation of the National Certification Standards

Certification Portfolio Checklist for Standard One:

- Completed executive summary and self assessment for Standard One
- Attach one copy of the Standard One Section of the Certification Observation/Supervision Form from each of the five observers/supervisors completing the form. This documentation demonstrates competence in Competencies 1.5 and 1.6.
- Documentation of competence for at least three of the five remaining Competencies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7 within Standard One

Certification Portfolio Checklist for Standard Two:

- Completed executive summary and self assessment Standard Two
- Attach one copy of the Standard Two Section of the Certification Observation / Supervision Form from each of the five observers/supervisors completing the form. This documentation demonstrates competence in Competency 2.4
- Documentation of competence for at least two of the four remaining Competencies 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 within Standard Two

Certification Portfolio Checklist for Standard Three:

- Completed executive summary and self assessment for Standard Three
- Attach one copy of the Standard Three Section of the Certification Observation / Supervision Form from each of the five observers/supervisors completing the form.
- Evidence of Participation and Completion of Educational or Formational Programs or Courses for at least six of the nine theological competencies
- Documentation of Ministry and Personal Evidence for at least three of the nine theological competencies

Certification Portfolio Checklist for Standard Four:

- Completed executive summary and self assessment for Standard Four
- Attach one copy of the Standard Four Section of the Certification Observation / Supervision Form from each of the five observers/supervisors completing the form. This documentation demonstrates competence in Competencies 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6
- Documentation of competence for at least one of the two remaining Competencies 4.1 or 4.2 within Standard Four

Certification Portfolio Checklist for Standard Five:

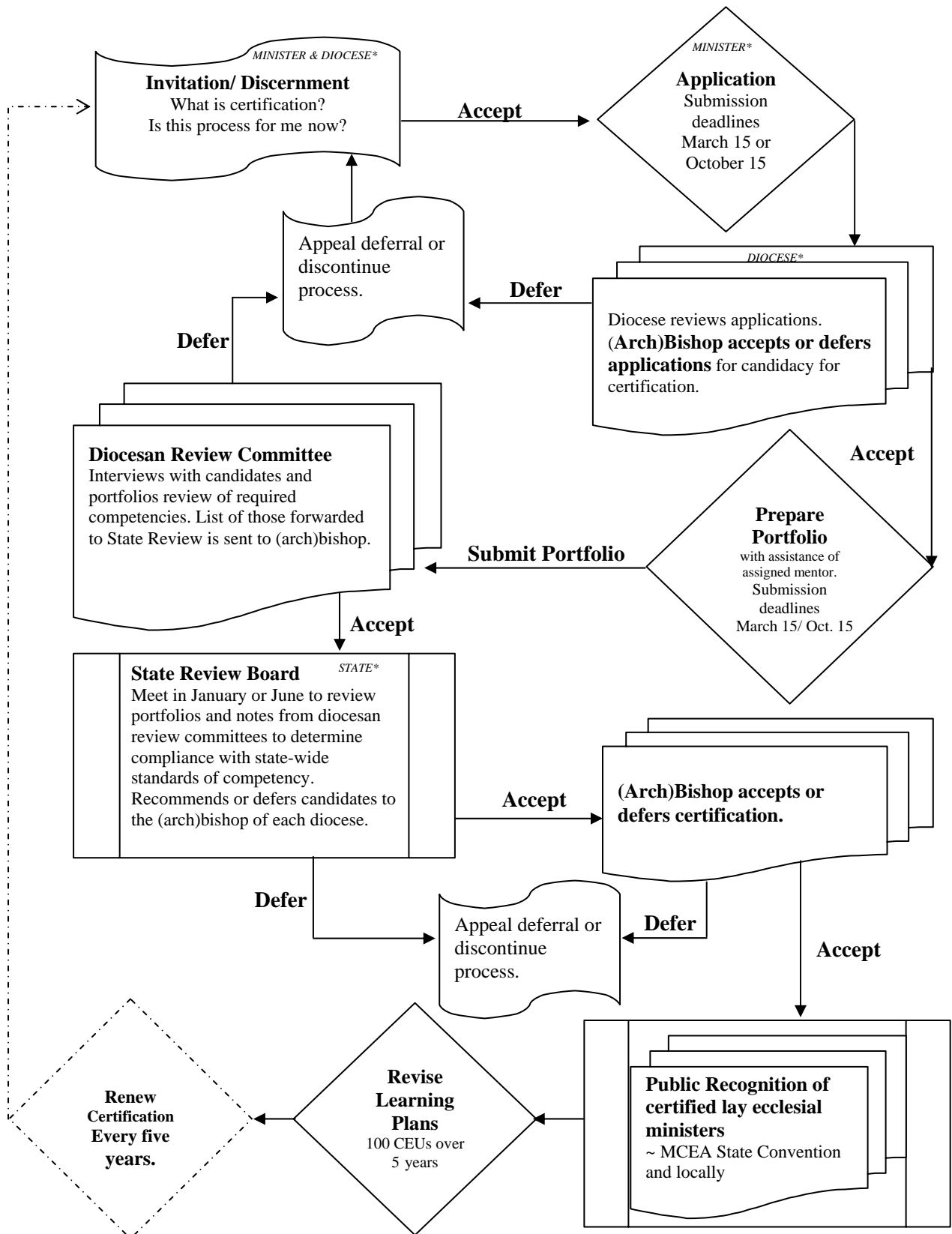
- Completed executive summary and self assessment for Standard Five
- Attach one copy of the Standard Five Section of the Certification Observation/Supervision Form from each of the five observers/supervisors completing the form. This documentation demonstrates competence in competencies 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
- Documentation of competence for at least one of the two remaining Competencies 5.1 or 5.2 within Standard Five

PART THREE: Requirements for Specialization

Specialization Checklist for Youth Ministry and Catechetical Leaders

- Completed executive summary for specialization
- Documentation of formal training in area of specialization
- Documentation of the majority of specialized competencies

Flow of the MCEA Certification Process for Lay Ecclesial Ministers¹³



* Similar shape corresponds to designated group

Exhibit I: The National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC)¹⁴

The NACC Certification process has its own standards and procedures approved by the USCCB. The Standards of the NACC contain the following information:

- Standards Code of Ethics
- Standards for the Accreditation of NACC Centers
- Standards for Accreditation of NACC Clinical Pastoral Education Programs
- Standards for Certification of Chaplains
- Standards for the Certification of Supervisors
- Standards for the Appeals of Certification Decisions
- Grievance Standards
- Standards for Renewal of Certification
- Glossary for Accreditation and Certification Standards

What are the requirements for being certified by the NACC?

You must meet the following minimum requirements to be certified by the NACC:

- Roman Catholic in good standing.
- Full membership in the NACC.
- The successful completion of at least four units of clinical pastoral education in an accredited CPE center.
- A Master's degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, or spirituality granted or acknowledged by an accredited academic institution will be required for all those meeting a certification committee after January 1, 2005. "Accredited" refers only to those institutions and/or programs within institutions that are accredited by agencies endorsed by either the United States Department of Education (U.S.DOE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), including the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).
- A current letter of endorsement (for details, see Checklist for Supportive Materials Required for Certification Interview.)
- A letter of recommendation from the person to whom the candidate reports in one's place of employment.
- Final evaluations by the candidate and CPE supervisor of all completed CPE units.
- A narrative statement by the candidate, not to exceed 10 pages, that explains and documents how he/she demonstrates the competencies required for certification.
- A current autobiography, not to exceed 7 pages, that addresses the personal, professional and faith development of the candidate.
- One verbatim by that candidate of his/her ministry.
- Presenter report(s) from any past certification interviews.

How do I become a certified Chaplain?

- If you wish to apply for certification, you first must become a [full member](#) of the NACC. After you become a full member, you may request a certification packet from the national office.

- You must submit a completed [certification application packet](#) to the national office by the required due date. Note that the due dates for applications are as follows: For spring interviews, February 1; for fall interviews, July 1. (Refer to the [certification calendar](#).)
- A completed certification application packet consists of a copy of the required certification materials (see Checklist for Supportive Materials Required for Certification Interview), the original certification application, and the certification application fee. (You are to keep the original materials so that you can send copies to the interview team members when a team is assigned.)
- These materials are reviewed to verify that you have met all the formal requirements for an interview.
- After your materials have been determined to be in compliance, you will be assigned a date, place, and interview team, honoring your first choice if at all possible.
- When you receive notice of your interview team, you are responsible for sending copies of your certification materials to each of the team members. These copies are to be sent by certified mail at least 30 days before your interview date. The copies will be returned to you after the interview. The office copy will be kept until the process is closed, and then this copy will be destroyed.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (hereafter “*Co-Workers*”), USCCB, 2005, p. 54

² *ibid.*, p. 56

³ *ibid.*, p. 57

⁴ *Lay Parish Ministers: A Study of Emerging Leadership*. DeLambo, David, 2005, p. 71

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 44. “Further, the 1997 study showed that the number of lay parish ministers actually surpassed the number of priests in parish ministry (29,146 vs. 27,154). In 2005 the gap has widened significantly.”

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 26

⁷ *Co-Workers*, p. 6

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 6

⁹ Information about this program came from <http://www.usml.edu/layministry/TIGS/Overview.html> and Dr. Graziano Marcheschi Director Lay Ministry Formation Programs Gmarcheschi@usml.edu

¹⁰ Information about this program was provided by the Diocese of Trenton, Office of Parish Life Lay Ecclesial Ministry, Associate Director: Deanna V. Sass, dsass@dioceseoftrenton.org

¹¹ Information about this program was provided by Marge Koenigsman & Fr. Tom Greisen, tagreisen@archomaha.org, Office of Lay Ministry Formation from a April 24, 2006 Proposal for the Process of Authorization as Lay Ecclesial Ministers. This proposal is still in the approval process and has not as yet been implemented.

¹² Information about this program was provided by Dr. Peter Noll, pnoll@mncc.org and based upon information from both the *2006 Candidate Handbook for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving As Parish Catechetical Leaders and Youth Ministry Leaders* and *SOP Manual*

¹³ MCEA, *2006 Candidate Handbook*, p. 24

¹⁴ Information about the NACC certification process was obtained at <http://www.nacc.org/certification/>