



Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service Committee on Catholic Education

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Annual Summary of Activities: 2022

*Prepared by the Office of Certification for Ecclesial Ministry
November 2022*

Feedback from the Synodal Process and Other Conversations

The subcommittee has spent a good deal of time in 2022 receiving direct feedback on its existing resources and work from bishops, diocesan lay ministry leaders, leaders of national ministry organizations and the contributions submitted about lay ministry in the national synod process. These resources have helped the subcommittee to discern with these constituencies what is most needed in support of lay ministry in this critical time, and how to carry those needs forward into upcoming USCCB strategic planning endeavors. Several key points emerged from multiple constituencies:

- Many recognize the need for strategic efforts to re-acquaint especially bishops, priests and seminarians – with the foundational theological and pastoral principles found in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. More consistent attention to formation of current and future priests and deacons about the value and importance of lay ministry was frequently raised in feedback.
- Given how much has developed in ministry formation and the lived experience of lay ministry over these decades, there is hope that a synodal process drawing together this wisdom could inform a potential update of the *Co-Workers* statement. The subcommittee is reviewing options within the Conference to determine how such an effort could proceed.
- Bishops and lay ministry leaders alike highlighted the importance of standards for ministry formation. Bishops are frequently looking for resources on such standards, and they seek counsel on how to best implement such formation in their dioceses. Lay ministers have recognized the importance of measuring competence through established standards in the work of ministry, the value of pursuing ongoing education, and seeking ways to broaden the reach of standards.
- Certification and other forms of credentialing remain vital ways of promoting and measuring competence, especially in fields which require them, such as hospital and prison chaplaincy and campus ministries. There are also areas where the desire to update competencies and promote expanded forms of credentialing based on standards provide new opportunities for the subcommittee to be of service among national organizations and in dioceses. The subcommittee is committed to ensuring that national standards remain a vibrant and viable resource.
- Simultaneously, there are other areas in lay ministry which need greater care, conversation and action. Professional lay ministers – and lay minister formation – have suffered from the cascading effects of diminished concrete support from bishops and pastors, accelerated by a punishing wave of budget-based layoffs and contingencies during the pandemic. Many positions lost during the pandemic’s height have not returned. There has been a consistent years-long challenge of supporting lay ministers’ ongoing formation, education and professional development, along with lagging salary and workplace resourcing issues. Many of the lay ministry organizations in our country are encouraging their bishops, dioceses and the USCCB to more consistently advocate for

the broader needs of lay ministers in the Church. At the national level, the subcommittee is looking at ways we can, within the bishops' conference, address these and other unique needs confronting lay ministers.

As the subcommittee looks at this feedback and seeks to move forward in synod and synergy with formation leaders, scholars, and national ministry organizations, the guidance, wisdom and collaboration of national ministry organizations will be essential.

In addition to the feedback and activities above, there are many specific initiatives on which the subcommittee and our office have collaborated on and consulted in 2022 to advance efforts in lay ministry formation, including some of the needs expressed above.

Enhanced Lay Ministry Standards in Chicago

The subcommittee has had a long-standing fruitful engagement with the **Archdiocese of Chicago** and its work to prepare lay women and men as ecclesial ministers. This fall, the Subcommittee approved updated ministry formation and certification standards and competencies for the archdiocese, as administered in collaboration with the **Institute for Pastoral Leadership** (IPL) at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. The Subcommittee's review praised the IPL team for adapting to new needs in the preparation of lay ecclesial ministers for roles such as pastoral associates, directors and coordinators of religious education, and similar positions in adult faith formation and youth ministry.

Click [here](#) to view a summary of the Archdiocesan program, read quotations from **Cardinal Cupich** of Chicago and **Bishop Gerald Kicanas**, our subcommittee chairman, and to get more information. Special thanks go to **Dr. Linda Couri** and **Mr. David Restek** from IPL for their work on this effort.

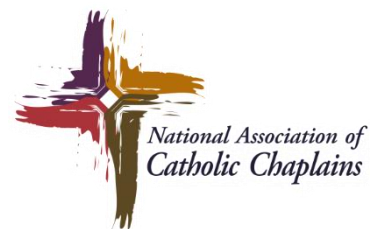


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Diocesan ministry leaders seeking more information about these standards, other diocesan and nationally approved standards, consultation on ways to initiate or update existing diocesan lay ministry formation programs, or engagement with trusted national ministry organizations and institutes which can provide logistical and financial support for ministry formation, please [contact us](#).

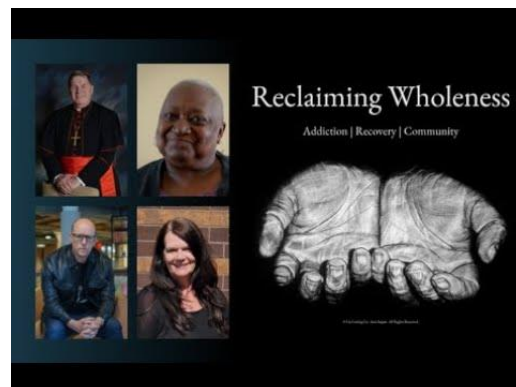
Towards Expanded Offerings in Pastoral Care

We have continued to offer consulting support to the **National Association of Catholic Chaplains** (NACC) as they, under the leadership of their new Executive Director, **Erica Cohen Moore**, are working to not only build upon their strength in resourcing ordained and lay Catholic chaplains through board certification, but to expand engagements in other areas of spiritual care through the Partners in Pastoral Care initiative. This ongoing collaboration with partners in prison ministries, palliative care, home-based care, seafarer and port of call ministries, and more, has been a great blessing. This initiative has established 3 working groups – discernment, curriculum development and fundraising, and 6 areas of focus, ranging from competencies and curriculum to partners and marketing. NACC is looking to enhance the value in its Certified Associate Chaplain offering, and is working with Catholic, ecumenical, and interfaith partners in spiritual caregiving. These efforts hold promise as additional resources of great support for lay minister formation in a wide array of ministries that are either institutional, or diocesan level. NACC also seeks to find ways to engage parishes and dioceses in support of this expanded approach to pastoral care. NACC's updated standards for certification were [approved](#) by the subcommittee last year.



Prison Ministries

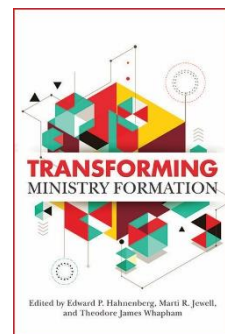
The **Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition** (CPMC) continues to grow and evolve, and consulting support with this vital group has helped bring about an increasingly strong network of diocesan leaders in the area of prison ministries and pastoral care. Efforts to form prison ministries volunteers based on [standards approved](#) by our subcommittee, and held in the joint care of NACC and CPMC, have also expanded. Cohort participants utilize a [hybrid model of learning and ministry engagement and mentorship](#) in the local setting for a total of 30 hours. Participants receive a certificate of completion, and are in a position to seek enhanced trainings and certifications in specialized prison ministries roles through such groups as NACC. The collaboration between the two organizations has demonstrated the great value in forging common ministry standards among various ministry groups and working strategically around common areas of interest and need. CPMC offers an amazing array of [prison ministries specific webinars](#) all available for free on their website. One such web event focused on [addiction recovery in prison contexts](#), and featured Cardinal Joseph Tobin and other excellent speakers. The online event was co-sponsored by our subcommittee, as an educational endeavor supported by our approved standards.



If there are similar events – virtual or in-person – which are serving to form lay ministers and reference existing standards or other endeavors which the subcommittee would support, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) to discuss co-sponsorship.

Transforming Ministry Formation

The **Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry** (AGPIM) continues to be a supportive partner with our subcommittee and to national ministry organizations and lay ministers who continue to receive quality instruction and formation from theologians and experts in ministry across the country, either through the degree programs at their institutions or through certificate programs run in conjunction with various dioceses across the country. AGPIM has been a strong supporter of national formation standards and has used these resources to inform their own formational programs. Their recent book, [Transforming Ministry Formation](#), based on essays from their 2018 conference discussing the history and current developments of standards and other trends in Catholic ministry formation was published last year by Paulist Press, and is an excellent resource.



The work of the subcommittee, the prior Commission on Certification and several USCCB staff members are highlighted for the partnership with AGPIM over the last 30 years. Each member and consultant of the subcommittee was provided a copy by our office and we are in conversation with AGPIM leaders to determine how the content of the book can spark conversations within the subcommittee and the ministry formation community.

Installed Catechist Conversations

It is also important to lift up the work of the **National Association for Lay Ministry** (NALM). In addition to many significant research and advocacy efforts highlighted on [their website](#), they have contributed an important [white paper](#) to the USCCB working group that is preparing guidance for the implementation of the installed lay ministry of catechist called for by Pope Francis. Our subcommittee is represented on the working group and will have an opportunity to elicit and provide additional feedback as the work continues.



National Conferences

The year saw a continued hybridity with national conferences. Representing the subcommittee, the office director participated in virtual events with AGPIM and NALM, the **Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network** inaugural in-person conference, sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute and co-sponsored by CPMC and others, and the **Association of U.S. Catholic Priests Conference**. There was a presentation about the work of the subcommittee and our collaborative relationships at the **Catholic Campus Ministry Association** conference and the NACC conference as well. [Please reach out](#) to us if you would like us to present or speak at ministry conferences in 2023. There are presentations our office is scheduled to give at AGPIM's annual conference, the **National Association of Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA)** and together with an African Catholic leaders' panel at the **African National Eucharistic Congress**. Fees received from organizations who participate in the development and use of USCCB-approved ministry formation standards help defray costs for these presentations, and allow us to enhance our support of similar endeavors across the country.

Other Consultations

Additionally, the subcommittee started or continued consulting efforts with the following groups:

V Encuentro Young Adult Hispanic Leadership Initiative (*VEYAHLLI*) | Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston | Diocese of Charleston | Diocese of Tucson | Diocese of San Bernardino | Diocese of Stockton | *Federación de Institutos Pastorales* | Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions | Federal Bureau of Prisons | National Association of Pastoral Musicians | National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry | National Association of African Catholics in the U.S.

In addition, we continued to expand synodal conversations and collaborations with national ministry organizations after several successful virtual listening sessions over the past two years. These efforts will continue and will help frame the beginning of our subcommittee's contribution to the next four-year USCCB strategic plan. It is also not too early to begin thinking about activities and events that can focus our attention towards 2025 and the **twentieth anniversary** of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord!* [Let us know](#) if your organization would consider collaborating with us on particular efforts around this important anniversary, or if we can consult with you on lay ministry formation matters.

For more details on other activities of the subcommittee, please visit [our website](#).

Gratitude for USCCB Subcommittee and Colleagues

The Office of Certification expresses deep gratitude to the members and consultants of the subcommittee for their dedication, care and interest in the work of supporting ministry formation, certification and ecclesial service. Please remember them in your prayers: **Bishop Gerald Kicanas**, our chairman, **Archbishop Alfred Hughes**, **Bishop Earl Boyea**, **Bishop James Golka**, **Bishop Jorge Rodríguez** and **Bishop Michael Saporito** who serve as members of the subcommittee; and **Bishop George Rassas**, **Very Rev. James Greenfield, OSFS, Ed.D.**, **Fr. Wayne Cavalier, OP, Ph.D.**, **Linda Couri, D. Min.**, **Dorothy Mensah-Aggrey, Ph.D.**, **CPO, Sr. Maria Teresa Montes Lara, OP, D.Min.**, and **C. Vanessa White, Ph.D.**, who serve as consultants. Special thanks to Bishop Boyea as he concludes his time with the subcommittee this year. The subcommittee is grateful for the support of the USCCB Committees represented on the subcommittee - **Catholic Education; Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations; Cultural Diversity in the Church; Evangelization & Catechesis**; and **Laity, Marriage, Family Life & Youth**, and their staff colleagues who are support the ongoing work. Special thanks also to the Secretariat of Catholic Education: Executive Director, **Mary Pat Donoghue**, Associate Director for Policy, **Jennifer Daniels**, Assistant Director for Certification for Ecclesial Ministry, **Marc DelMonico, Ph.D.**, Assistant Director for Higher Education, **Barbara McCrabb**, and staff assistant **Mary Gigliotti**, as well as former assistant **Paul Major**, who moved on from the Conference earlier this year.