

Launch Out Letter (LOL)

August 2020

Collaborative Ministry

By Jude McKee, Launch Out Candidate



Source: <https://elizabethburr.com/>

Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. *Ephesians 2:20*

Ministry within the church is a shared responsibility that each one of us needs to take up as our Christian duty, yes – our duty! We are called by Jesus Christ, along with the apostles, to look to our fellow Christians for opportunities to share our gifts and callings. So that together we can take Christ from our churches into our homes and our communities. We are one body in Christ, and we do not have to look very far to begin the discussion of how ‘the body’ works – and how it works best. Our physical bodies are a great example of collaborative ministry! All the parts are different, and each part has its own role to play in the physical make-up of the person. All the parts of the body work together to create a working model that if churches (and workplaces) could replicate then the productivity of that ‘body’ would be almost insurmountable.

While Jesus was ministering, He commissioned the apostles *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*. In searching for the true meaning of discipleship we find that in the ancient biblical world, a disciple is someone who has actively imitated both the life and the teaching of the master. In this instance, the master is Jesus Christ Himself. This experience of being made a disciple is one that each one of us have shared. Baptised in the Spirit, the giver of all gifts, but we are not ‘uniformed’. *“There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)”*

Since taking up the great commission earnestly, I have been blessed to work with some amazing people – priests, religious and lay persons. I have been empowered and I have been inspired. I have been mentored and I have been ‘fed’. And - I have made mistakes and I have been humbled. Through all this the learnings are more than I can describe in words. I am a true believer that God works in mysterious ways, God is patient, and God plants seeds that are nourished by the people we are surrounded by, and the seed grows according to God’s plan.

My experience of working in collaboration with other members of the body of Christ is an experience that often has me wonder who is gaining the most from the outcomes. It is almost that the ‘input’ is what is God’s master plan. The outcome will be what it will be – but sometimes it seems the input is the most important part of the plan. The shared direction and the shared understanding of bringing together the gifts of the Spirit and allowing the body of Christ to continue to ‘make disciples of all nations’ is a gift. All priests, religious and lay people need never be frightened to be a disciple with an open heart, and an open mind, to work collaboratively, to imitate both the life and the teachings of Jesus – remembering always Jesus was a gentle and humble, meek and patient man. As St Paul reminds us *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it (1 Cor 12:27)”*

**DON'T JUST GO
TO CHURCH
BE THE CHURCH**

Source: <https://saintmichaelchurch.org/our-faith/church>

Collaborative Ministry—Ideal or Reality?

By Barbara Rowley,
Lay Pastoral Leader, Te Awakairangi Parish



Source: Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity copied from <https://images.app.goo.gl/>

Will true collaborative ministry ever become a reality? Or will it always simply remain as an ideal?

In 1998, faced with the looming shortage of priests, Cardinal Tom Williams mandated the Hutt Valley Forum to come together to seek out ways to prepare and cope with the inevitable problem. The forum consisted of the parish priest and one lay person from each of the Hutt Valley parishes, plus a chairperson. We were given two years to complete the task.

For two years we met fortnightly, prayed, studied church documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Christifideles Laici*, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and had numerous discussions that gradually turned

into meaningful dialogues as we got to know and trust each other. At first, there was no mention at all of laity being a possible part of the solution. Instead, the priests talked about new ways of working together more closely and across parishes, sharing the load as their numbers decreased. This, of course was no solution as it meant placing an even heavier load on an already tired and aging priesthood. We needed to be more creative, we needed more people to share the workload, we needed to involve the laity. But we needed laity that was both confident and competent. We also thought of the possibility of pastoral assistants in each of the parishes to work alongside the priests. In other words, we were starting to recognise a need for collaborative ministry between clergy and laity. When this idea was first introduced by one of the priests, it was a bit like throwing the cat amongst the pigeons. But we continued to pray, dialogue and study, and gradually the seed took root and grew into a shared vision embraced by the whole forum. Our two-year time limit was almost up. We had made good progress but still needed a theology and spirituality to wrap around our vision. At this point one of the members of our forum mentioned a new Apostolic Letter by Pope John Paul II – *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, and suggested we read it. This we did, and in it, we discovered what we were looking for – a spirituality of communion. That was the key. It was exactly what we needed to underpin all our planning, preparation, and endeavours.

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The spirituality of communion, according to my understanding, is based upon contemplation of the Holy Trinity, which is the unique relationship of love that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a dynamic and life-giving circle of love that excludes no one. This in practical terms implies having the deepest respect for each other. It means sharing each other's joys, sufferings, desires, and needs, and offering each other deep and genuine friendship. It implies seeing what is positive in each other, welcoming it and prizing it as a gift from God not only as gift for the brother or sister who has received it, but also as a "gift for me". It means "making room" for our brothers and sisters and resisting temptations to competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy (NMI43)

Twenty years have passed since the day we finally handed our report to Cardinal Tom, who welcomed it and commended us for the "solid theology" (his words) behind it.

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There have been many developments in the Archdiocese since that time, with the Launch Out Formation Programme being arguably among the most notable. As a result of Launch Out, we have confident and competent laity appointed as lay pastoral leaders to work alongside the clergy, lay chaplains, and others in key positions throughout the Archdiocese. Over the years collaborative ministry has been the topic for numerous workshops and formation days. Time and time again we have heard Cardinal John quote *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

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as an underpinning for collaborative ministry. We could say we have done everything humanly possible. And we certainly have made some progress. Whether the glass is “half empty” or “half full” will depend on our individual worldview or perspective. From out of space, an astronaut can observe the speed at which the earth turns while, here on earth, we do not even notice that it does.

I guess though, the real question for us is, what is needed to make the ideal of collaborative ministry more of a reality? As we ponder this question let us also reflect on the truth that our God is not three persons remaining in their own bubble, but a God who is always open to others, welcomes others and makes room for all. Education, formation, good leadership, and pastoral skills are obviously essential but for true collaborative ministry our relationships must be characterised by communion. For this to happen we need continual conversion of heart, and we need to enter the circle of love.



Barbara's commissioning as LPL in 2006

Note: Barbara is the second LPL commissioned by Cardinal John. She has been the LPL of Te Awakairangi for 14 years.

Updates

- Looking forward to seeing you all on our annual retreat on 31 July-01 August at Pa Maria
- The Property Decision would have been out in your parishes by now. Some parishes are having difficulty coming to terms with the decisions. If you have any questions regarding your parish, feel free to get in touch with me or Mary Ann Greaney.
- I hope you have sorted courses you are to take this second semester. If you have any concern or question, please get in touch with me as soon as possible
- Make sure you have calendared 22 August, learning day on Theological Reflection by Anne Powell, to be held at Pa Maria. This is exclusive to the LO Candidates.

Evangelii Gaudium and the laity

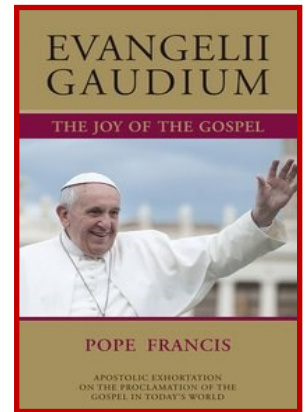
By Bridget Taumoepeau, Launch Out Mentor

If we look at change and reform in the Church over the ages, we will see many ups and downs– the early Church, so beautifully recorded in Acts and the Epistles, as based on community and servant leadership; the gradual rise of the hierarchical church of the Middle Ages, reinforced in the ‘modern’ councils of Trent and Vatican I; the extraordinary gathering of the universal church in Vatican II (VCI) with its documents becoming the magisterium (teaching) of the church; the slowing and resistance to change after VCI and now the re-introduction of the importance of reform, including the role of the laity, in the pontificate of Francis.

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In 2013, not long after his election, Francis wrote the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*. (EG). This has been widely considered as the expression of Francis’ vision for the Church. There are important threads of continuity, in that he refers to VCII, as well as many previous writings of theologians and popes and the Compendium of the Social Gospel of the Church. Importantly, he quotes significant meetings of bishops – Synods in Rome, as well as the great Aparecida meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean bishops in 2007; meetings of bishops of America, France, Italy, the Philippines, the Congo, and India. All this draws in the universal church in continuity with previous teachings and discussions.

EG is specifically addressed to ‘The Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons **and the Lay Faithful**’ and its subtitle is ‘On the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world’. So, in the title alone, we have the task that is set us – all of us - in being instrumental in evangelisation.



Source: Garrett Publishing

Within the text of the document, lay people are mentioned on many occasions. The phrase ‘pastors and lay faithful’ appears in #44, where Francis talks of the responsibility of accompanying people on their faith journey ‘with mercy and patience’, touching people with ‘the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love.’ He refers to his own experience of working in Buenos Aires with priests and laity. (#49). In #70 he points out the importance of formation of the laity, referring to the fact that this has been downplayed in the past. This is particularly in reference to the passing on of the faith in families, in the context of rising secularism and consumerism. The church should initiate everyone, including laity, into the ‘art of accompaniment’. (#169). We should not only accompany but have an ‘active concern for the poor and for social justice.’ (#201).

However, he reminds us that not all blame should be put at the door of the church or the clergy, as there has been a reluctance by the laity to take on responsibility for apostolic work, and this is particularly significant when we remember that the vast majority of Catholics are lay. (#81, 102). He is clearly encouraging lay people to continue their works of charity and catechesis in the community, despite the historical lack of formation and the rise of clericalism in the church. (#102). We each bring our own unique gifts – the different charisms – which are not confined to a small group but are required to be incorporated into the body of the church. (#130).

EG is unusual in that it devotes a whole section to the homily. As well as, in a humorous way, commenting that the laity may suffer by having to listen to poor quality homilies (#135), Francis considers that priests, deacons and laity can collaborate on ‘discovering resources that can make preaching more attractive!’ (#159).

So, we can see that Pope Francis very much promotes the importance of the laity in the life of the church and in evangelisation. He encourages good formation of laity; he includes laity alongside the clergy and religious, when considering the work of the Church; and acknowledges the various forces at work in the past, that need to be addressed in order for the laity to achieve their full potential.

Let me conclude with a quote from EG (#102) - ‘The formation of laity and the evangelisation of professional and intellectual life represent a significant challenge’. This is the sort of challenge that Launch Out is addressing.



Source: Stuff.co.nz

Pearls of wisdom - from Cardinal Tom Williams

Cardinal Tom Williams, predecessor of Cardinal John Dew, opened the doors for Lay Pastoral Leaders to minister in collaboration with priests. Hence began the Archdiocese’ journey on imbibing Collaborative Ministry as its model of Church. We have asked Cardinal Tom to share some of his thoughts. Captured below are some insights from Cardinal Tom, where we can enjoy his succinct wisdom and sharp realism that comes through with a dash of humour.

- The canons in the 1983 Code of Canon Law are usually 10 lines or less, but the two that describe in awesome detail the “job description” of a parish priest (528 and 529) run to a total of 69.

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- I recall sharing with a priest the content of Canon 528-529, and he blurted out rather irreverently, that “Even Jesus Christ on one of his better days wouldn’t be able to measure up to all those requirements!”.
- The (above) prescriptions are certainly formidable, not only for the pastor but also for those who collaborate with him in parish pastoral care. The canons are by extension their “job description” too. Clearly, to meet all that is required, the parish leadership team of priest(s) and pastoral leader must bring into partnership with them parishioners with the specialized skills to meet the needs of the community they serve.

One such need is particularly relevant in the light of the adverse impact of COVID-19:

- Canon 519 § 51. So that he may fulfil his office of pastor diligently, the parish priest [and parish pastoral leader] is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care. He is to therefore visit their families sharing especially in their cares, anxieties, and sorrows. He is to be especially diligent in seeking out the poor, the suffering, the lonely, those who are exiled from their homeland, and those burdened with special difficulties.
- Given the plight of so many families in recent months due to unemployment, exorbitant rents, inadequate benefits and the increased cost of food, medicines, and travel, it is little wonder that more and more food-banks have become the key to survival.
- One organization, a must in every parish, is the St Vincent de Paul Society. Its person-to-person apostolate has become more essential than ever. Since its primary aim is to alleviate poverty, surely post-COVID-19 it has to be the concern of every pastoral team that there be a Vincentian conference in the parish and that determined efforts be made to build up membership. Stronger conferences make more and effective their work of assisting families and those living alone to overcome their difficulties.

Benefits and Learnings of Collaborative Ministry- the ADW Experience (A Visual Sharing)

by Mary Ann Greaney, Director Parish Leadership Ministry

Benefits



Learnings

For the first time in my priesthood I have the luxury of time to really focus on my Sunday homilies - it is such a gift

I am not on my own with some of the bigger tasks. It is good to have the support of the whole Team

Learnings - from priests

The Lay Pastoral Leader has brought gifts to this parish that I do not possess

I am allowed so much more time to be a Priest in a way that has never been possible before. I feel I am truly exercising my vocation

I am so grateful to be ministering with a Lay Pastoral Leader as without her I would have no option but to retire

More learnings - from priests



Note: These are selected slides from a PowerPoint presentation Mary-Ann helped Cardinal John put together for a talk he gave in Dublin, Ireland in 2018

Collaboration – what it is not!

By: Joe Green, Lay Pastoral Leader, Wellington South
BA (Hons), Dip. Pastoral Leadership, Dip.Bus.Stud., Dip. Outdoor Leadership



Joe Green's commissioning as Lay Pastoral Leader in 2016

Loughlan Sofield (ST) and Carroll Juliano (SHCJ) are leaders in the field of collaborative ministry. In their publication *Collaboration – uniting our gifts in ministry* (Ave Maria Press, 2000) they devote a chapter to exploring what collaboration IS NOT, what they term 'myths of collaborative ministry'. It is an interesting and informative approach. Not the least because if we do not examine the misconceptions about collaborative ministry, we may well be setting ourselves up for frustration and eventual failure.

Some might see collaboration as easy – it is not! It requires us to work in a close relationship with others. This requires effort. And this effort requires us to deal with all the characteristics that relationships have, including conflict as we find a way to work together. As Sofield and Juliano point out; 'we are dealing with fallible human beings like ourselves'. Collaboration demands 'a strong commitment based on beliefs about mission and gospel'.

Collaboration is intentional, it is not based on just being part of a group or team. Team members will recognise and respect each other's gifts and talents and will work to those strengths. If the members of the group or team are unable to identify each other's gifts and talents, the team is unlikely to be able to work together well. A sound team will 'identify and release the gifts of others'.

Collaboration is not an end in itself. That approach makes a team inward looking. Collaborative teams are looking to extend their collaborative effort to all the baptised. Above all, collaborative ministry will be mission and service focussed and based on the gospel. Unless it is, it is doomed to be dysfunctional.

Collaboration is not primarily about decision-making, power, and authority. Too often so-called collaborative teams are more concerned about power and authority, about the status of each member of the team in relation to others in the teams. Sofield and Juliano observe that 'in some situations competing and vying for power and authority become the primary focus'. They point out that power and powerlessness are real issues for the church, but an 'obsession' with these detracts from fruitful ministry.

Often, we think that consensus is the only appropriate decision-making process: that everything has to be brought back to the leadership team table for a decision. Sofield and Juliano point out that ‘there are times when consensus is both the most appropriate and most effective form of decision making, like wise there are countless times when it is neither the most effective, nor the most appropriate form’. The form of decision making will depend on the decision to be made.

In collaborative teams, team members need to discern when a decision needs to be brought to the team table, and when individual members of the team can make the decision required. This is about trust and understanding, and respect. And about having discussed the parameters for decision making within and outside the team. Sofield and Juliano point out that leadership is a gift, and as not all people in a team have that gift, those with the gift of leadership have a responsibility to exercise it. Conflict may occur in the team, ‘sometimes mature engagement in conflict produces the most Christ-like results’ – so long as we are all mission focused.

Sofield and Juliano keep mission and vision to the fore. I leave the final word to them:

‘collaborative ministry is always oriented toward mission. Groups that are collaborating should have a common and explicit vision (their emphasis) that is mission oriented. This vision must be discussed, negotiated, articulated, and shared by the group. It should be a vision which is capable of moving the group beyond itself to respond to the needs of the wider community. The Old Testament prophets caution that when there is no vision the people perish. When the vision lacks a specific mission dimension, the group frequently becomes self-serving and narcissistic’

“The solution lies not in increasing the number of clerics, nor in working to ensure their presence or services are available. Our solution lies in entering into the pastoral reality in which we find today. That is to say, to fully enter this changing church of ours, a church struggling to become, a church which-is-not-what-it-was and not yet what-it-will-be. A church in which the declining clerical role is but one of the many changes. This church does not need more priests but is screaming for a new understanding of priesthood.”

*By : Eddie Condra in Remapping Our Souls: Spirituality for Disillusioned Catholics
(Eddie is currently working with Challenge 2000).*



*When he had finished eating, he said to Simon,
“Launch out into the deep water and let down
your nets for a catch”.*

Luke 5: 4