

# Daily Journal

(by Dr. Byeong)  
**President of Melvin University  
Oyugis Kenya**



## **Partners in Ministry (#32)**

I used to ask at the beginning of my seminars on lay pastoral care, "Do you think of yourselves and your pastors as 'partners in ministry?'"

No one elders, deacons, deaconesses and other laypeople thinks about being partners in ministry. Most see themselves only as helpers who assist their pastors in doing their ministry.

Pastors think the same way church members are their helpers, assisting them in their ministry. This old way of thinking leaves churches, the Korean Church included, with minimal growth and in need of revival and spiritual maturity. Something needs to change.

Some pastors and church members are changing. One large church in downtown Seoul has taken the motto for the New Year, THE CHURCH OF PARTNERS IN MINISTRY. It is already known as a discipleship-making church. James Garlow, pastor of Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego, California wrote the book, Partners in Ministry(1998). The list of churches include the six-thousand-member Hallelujah Church in Seoul, where Dr. David Kim started a Lay Ministry Academy in 1990, and the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, which has over 5,000 members engaged in various ministries.

Many internationally known individuals and parachurch organizations are committed to lay-clergy partnership: Dr. Paul Stevens, professor at Regent University, Vancouver, BC, Canada; Professor Greg Ogden, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California wrote, The New Reformation, in 1990; Dr. Robert Slocum (layman) wrote a book for laypeople, Maximize your Ministry(1990) Dr. Melvin J. Steinbron brought laity and clergy into partnership for congregational care by developing The Lay Pastors Ministry in 1978 in College Hill Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. There are many more.

Dr. David Kim says that God gave the Church an important concept in every era throughout Christian history(PACE Seminar, 2004): Luther/Calvin era (The Reformation) Romans 1:17, The just shall live by faith Wesley era John 3:16, God so loved the world

d... Our era Ephesians 4:11-12, Pastors...are to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The "something" that needs to be changed is the concept of ministry, changing to this God-given concept, that pastors are to equip their members to do ministries reserved exclusively for clergy in other eras. This revolutionary change is saving the Church from its stagnated growth, lack of passion, and arrested maturity. Among the many ministries pastor and people are doing in partnership is the ministry of pastoral care. The organizational structure we know it by is The Lay Pastors Ministry.

Just what does partners in ministry mean? Jim Garlow gives us some understanding at the end of his chapter, The Biblical Basis "Layperson, pastor, you are both ministers. God has called you to serve Him, to share His love with others. As laity and pastors, we are partners in ministry." Partnership does not mean that laity do everything pastors do. The distinction between the two is function, not essence, based on what one does, not on what one is.

Both church members and pastors are ministers. The main scripture for this truth is Ephesians 4:11-12. The ministry of pastors is to equip the people; the ministry of the members is to do what they are called, gifted and equipped to do. This is the meaning of partners in ministry.

I find two themes in this scripture: 1) equip the saints; 2) the work of ministry. The first is the pastors function; the second is the people's function. The equipping act brings the pastor and people into partnership for caring for God's people. The result is in verse 12 the Body of Christ is built up. The building up of God's people by caring for them requires partnership because neither laity nor clergy can do it without the other.

Up to now pastors have been doing ministry, laity have been receiving ministry. As partners in ministry they both give and receive ministry. This is a new discovery!

The Lay Pastors Ministry is the ministry to which God called me in Korea and other places in the world, even the USA. I am a pastor equipping other pastors and lay leaders to equip their members to do the ministry of pastoral care in their individual churches. Also, as director of the Lay Pastors Ministry in Korea, I bring pastors and lay leaders together in for ongoing training and interaction at seminars and conferences.

I have been doing this ministry for four years in Korea and have discovered that it adapts to local churches very well. One of the outstanding churches is Hallelujah Church, one of the most beautiful in Korea, which has over 6,000 members. The senior pastor, Dr. David Kim had the concept of Ephesians 4:11-12 for 10 years, waiting for the practical tool. The Lay Pastors Ministry is it. As partners in ministry, we held our first Lay Pastors Conference ever in Korean church history.

I am finding this ministry to be good for pastors, laity and the congregation. They become partners in ministry, church culture changes, people are mobilized, and, as one pastor told me, my church has become a happy church.

No clergy is omni-competent! One maybe effective in some areas of ministry but not in others. Yet, if congregations are to grow numerically and otherwise, ministry must never be the domain of ordained clergy, but it must be shared with the laity who can bring varied strengths and unique creativity to any task!

Lay involvement is healthy in terms of one's personal growth as well as the corporate development of the congregation. But, before lay ministry can become an ongoing reality in a local church, the ordained clergy have an imperative task to fulfill among the members, namely, to equip the laity for ministry. Such is the mandate of Ephesians 4:11-12 regarding pastor-teachers. No church will fully succeed in its mission unless this prescription is obediently exercised and fulfilled.

God Himself intends that clergy and laity be partners in ministry. Historically there was never any distinction between these two classes of God's People. The laity will positively respond to any appeal with places significant areas of ministry in their charge instead of mere "ecclesiastical trivia" which as often passes as "lay ministry."

In the work of the church, according to Dr. James Kennedy, for too long people have been content in "letting ecclesiastical George do it." After all, pastors are full-time paid professionals, the true functionaries of the church. They have the training, the time, the tools for ministry!(Melvin, Network News, No. 16, p.41)

On the other hand, many ministers have feared their laity and are intimidated by the capabilities of some lay persons which may surpass their own. Therefore, they prefer to do nearly everything in the congregation, instead of delegating to the laity what their gifted-ness from God enables them to fulfill with great effectiveness in and for the Body of Christ.

Anyone who is desirous of seeing growth in the Church, and wants to be obedient to biblical mandate concerning the ministry, must eagerly embrace the concept of a vibrant laity engaged in all facets of christian work.

How, then, do we reactivate God's People? How can we help them vacate "The Comfortable Pew," to quote the title of a book by Canadian Pierre Berton? It's here that pastors must take the initiative in their congregations, in a variety of ways:

(1) Begin with the existing leadership, i.e. members of the Session, Consistory, Church Council or whatever you may call your spiritual overseers. Train them, encourage them, invest yourself in them as Jesus did on His twelve. Spend enough time with them each week. Take them on a variety of functions and disciple them for teaching others also, cf. II Timothy 2:2

(2) Gradually recruit others for a variety of ministries and provide appropriate training. Only when they know they will be equipped for ministry will people be willing and ready to respond affirmatively to our challenges for ministry involvement.

(3) Affirm the work being done by the laity personally to them, and publically before the entire congregation. Both aspects are essential!

(4) Dramatize, continually, the importance of the ministry of the laity, by showing the multiplicity of tasks available, for which training can and will be provided. This can occur through preaching, vocal and printed announcements, and other challenges to the congregation.

(5) Engage, at the earliest possible convenience, the services of lay persons sufficiently trained, whose capabilities have already been tested, in equipping others for ministry. Not only for salvation but also for ministry, spiritual multiplication must remain the goal!

Professor Paul Stevens of Regent University cites three models of lay pastoral care ministry in his book, *The Equippers Guide: Lay Pastors Ministry*, founded by Mel Steinbron; *Stephen Ministry*, founded by Ken Haugk, and *Caring Church*, founded by Howard Stone. These pastoral care ministries and many other types of lay ministry are built on the Biblical teaching about being Partners in Ministry.