

Certification Handbook

Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry
and Service



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Preface

History of the Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service

In 1982, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA) was established under a mandate by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In 1983, it was incorporated as a programmatic accrediting agency to accredit clinical pastoral education and ministry formation programs and approve certification standards and procedures. In the beginning, the USCCB/CCA accredited clinical pastoral education programs. Beginning in 1993, the commission started reviewing the certification standards and procedures of specialized ecclesial ministers submitted by national organizations and diocesan¹ offices. In 1995, it began to accredit ministry formation programs. In 2004, the commission approved the first statewide certification standards and procedures, which were submitted by the Minnesota Catholic Education Association for the certification of catechetical and youth ministry leaders in six dioceses in the State of Minnesota.

In 2008, the president of the USCCB, appointed Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond to chair a special task force to inquire into the nature, purpose, functions, and relationships of the USCCB/CCA and to make recommendations to the USCCB Committee on Priorities and Plans with the intent of aligning the it more closely with the implementation of the USCCB strategic planning and reorganization process. In 2010 the final report noted, among other recommendations^[1], that the USCCB/CCA:

- Be aligned more closely with the mission of the USCCB and more closely related to its strategic plan and the work of the USCCB committees.
- National office be relocated to Washington D.C. (USCCB headquarters)
- Twofold mandate concerning accreditation and certification be revised and refocused to emphasize approving specialized ministry certification standards to be used by national ministry associations and by dioceses in certifying individuals.

In December 2011, the USCCB/CCA voted to dissolve. The current Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (USCCB Subcommittee) was then established with an office to be located at the USCCB Headquarters in Washington. The USCCB Subcommittee would have representation from five committees of the Conference and was mandated to focus on

¹ In this document, the term 'diocese' and all other versions of the term will refer to both dioceses and (arch) dioceses.

^[1] A full copy of this *Report of the Special Task Force on the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation* is included in this Handbook as Appendix #4 to provide background information for consultants and advisors.

the role of approving the standards and procedures for the certification of ecclesial ministers in both institutional (for example, chaplains and campus ministers) and parish (for example, directors of religious education [DREs] and youth ministers) settings.

Mission Statement of the USCCB Subcommittee

The Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service assists the bishops in establishing, reviewing, and approving certification standards and procedures to be used on a voluntary basis by dioceses and national organizations in the certification of specialized ecclesial ministers. It also offers consultative services aimed at improving the quality of lay ministry formation programs that are sponsored by dioceses and academic institutions.

Revised September 2013
Washington, D.C.

Introduction

About this Handbook:

This handbook outlines the steps involved in the application process, the certification standards, policies and procedures for which compliance by those applying for approval by the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service need to be described, and enumerates the other documentation in the standards that need to be submitted for initial and periodic reviews.

This handbook also includes information about annual reports that directors will need to prepare for the USCCB Subcommittee after initial and periodic approval of certification.

There is no copyright on this or other publications of the USCCB Subcommittee. Therefore, executive and diocesan directors may copy materials in this handbook as needed.

Audience for Whom this Handbook is Intended:

The material in the *Certification Handbook* is intended for executive directors of national organizations, directors of diocesan offices, certification committees, assessment committees, and subcommittees of directors. National organizations include both national Catholic organizations of ecclesial ministers for a specialized ministry and Catholic state organizations developing and overseeing certification standards and procedures for the archdioceses within a given state.

National organizations and diocesan offices who wish to certify ecclesial ministers for a specific ministry submit their certification standards and procedures for approval according to the policies in this *Certification Handbook*. A more formal evaluation process occurs every five years and the USCCB Subcommittee revises the *Certification Handbook* accordingly.

Review and Revision of This Handbook

The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portions of the handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. A regular formal evaluation process by the USCCB Subcommittee will ordinarily occur every four years.

Scope of Approval of Certification Standards and Procedures

The USCCB Subcommittee only approves diocesan certification standards and procedures for diocesan offices, national organizations of specialized ministers listed in *The Official Catholic Directory*, and national organizations sponsored by state Catholic conferences. Diocesan offices, national organizations of ecclesial ministers, and state Catholic conferences with approved certification standards and procedures are listed in the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory* available on the website.

Staff for the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service

The assistant director and administrative secretary serve on behalf of the USCCB Subcommittee and support its mission. Upon invitation, the assistant director provides consultation and workshops on the process for the approval of diocesan and national organization certification standards and procedures.

Clarifying USCCB Subcommittee Approval of Certification and Standards

The USCCB Subcommittee approves certification standards and procedures voluntarily submitted by the diocese or national organizations. The organization or diocese certifies. Lay ecclesial ministers who have proven that they have the competencies required by specialized certification standards are granted a professional certification by their national organizations or diocese. Their certificate states that they are granted certification under the USCCB-approved certification standards and procedures.

Clarifying USCCB Subcommittee Approval of Certification Standards for Specialized Ministers

The USCCB Subcommittee does not approve certification standards and procedures for a generic category often termed “lay ecclesial ministers or ministries.” The USCCB Subcommittee approves certification standards and procedures for lay ecclesial ministers who serve in ministry specializations such as campus ministers, catechetical leaders, coordinators of parish life, directors of music ministries, family life ministers, music ministers, pastoral associates, pastoral ministers, and youth ministry leaders. National organizations certify their members according to specialized certification standards and procedures approved by the USCCB Subcommittee under the title of the members’ area of ministry specialization.

Focus of This Handbook

These guidelines are intended for national organizations and dioceses that voluntarily choose to submit standards and procedures for approval by the USCCB Subcommittee. The focus of this handbook is to provide dioceses and national organizations with a list of the steps and documentation needed to submit a complete request for approval to the USCCB Subcommittee.

Resources

The USCCB Office of Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (USCCB Office) has provided steps and checklists for the processes of opening a file with the USCCB Subcommittee and gaining initial approval. The USCCB Office also provides downloadable templates of all sections of the required documentation that can be accessed on the certification membership website. It is hoped that these will help each diocese or organization in preparation. The Associate Director and his assistant are also available to assist dioceses and national organizations in their preparation by answering any questions. Current contact information is available on the website: (www.usccb.org/certification) and on page 33 of this handbook

1.0 Benefits of Certification

1.1 Benefits to the Church in the United States

Certified lay ecclesial ministers contribute to the continued growth and definition of the rightful position of the lay ecclesial ministry in the Church. This responds to a need identified in *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Lay Ministry*² (National Pastoral Life Center, 1999), reiterated in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions*³ (NCCB/USCC, 1999), and reemphasized in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*⁴ (USCCB, 2005; hereafter cited as *Co-Workers*). Certified lay ecclesial ministers also help Catholic Church entities to be in compliance with norms and guidelines for formation as stated in *The Code of Canon Law*⁵ and *Co-Workers*. “Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly and to carry it out conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (*Code of Canon Law*, c. 231, §1; *Co-Workers*, 33).

1.2 Benefits to Provinces, Regions, and State Catholic Conferences

When provinces, regions, and state Catholic conferences work together toward certification, all can benefit from and promote the following values as stated in *Co-Workers*: “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” (57).

Certification promotes collaboration and cooperation among dioceses within provinces and regions and statewide Catholic conferences through utilization of the common certification standards and specialized competencies published by the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM, hereafter referred to as the Alliance). This information can be found on the following website: www.lencertification.org.

In fall 2011, the Alliance received approval from the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation for its revised standards for lay ecclesial ministers for the new national certification process. The standards were written collaboratively by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), the National Association of Pastoral Musicians

² Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Lay Ministry* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1999)

³ A Report of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1999)

⁴ USCCB, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005)

⁵ *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, New English Translation* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1999)

(NPM), the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). These common certification standards and specialized competencies are intended to bring value by giving direction to the future of lay ecclesial ministry in the church, recognizing and affirming those already in ministry, and promoting faithful and competent lay ecclesial ministers who are accountable to standards and to the diocese or organization that certifies them.

USCCB Subcommittee standards require diocesan offices and national organizations to provide verification that the assessment of specialized ministers seeking certification is based on the competencies outlined by the Alliance. The website is the primary tool for making the national certification process accessible to lay ministers across the country. All materials pertaining to the standards and certification process are available on the site.

1.3 Benefits to the Local Church

Certification is a process that enables diocesan officials to formally identify and authorize lay people for key positions and major leadership roles for specialized ecclesial ministries. Diocesan directors offer vital support to parishes by assisting them in the identification of the need for and availability of certified lay ecclesial ministers with specialized competencies. As stated in *Co-Workers*, “A diocese must first identify those roles that, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop, are so essential to collaborating in the pastoral care of people that diocesan policies are needed to ensure that those who are given these roles have the appropriate education, formation, experience, and ecclesial recognition to meet the needs of the community.” (56)

The USCCB Subcommittee provides diocesan and organization’s directors resources to develop their own certification standards to assess the competency of candidates for levels of academic formation and skill training required of certified ministers. Diocesan office directors, as agents of their bishops, are enabled to provide clear standards for formation that fit the needs and special circumstances of the local church as stated in *Co-Workers*:

The publication *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving as Parish Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, and Parish Life Coordinators*⁶ addresses these and related qualities as they are developed through ministry formation programs. The standards are a resource that can be helpful in identifying prospective lay ecclesial ministers as well as in setting goals for the formation and certification of those who are completing programs.

⁶ The most recent version of this text: *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers serving as Director of Worship; Parish Life Coordinator; Pastoral Associate; Director of Music Ministries; Parish Catechetical Leader; Youth Ministry Leader, incl. Pastoral Juvenil Hispana; and Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader, incl. Pastoral Juvenil Hispana* (2011) can be accessed at http://lemcertification.org/docs/ACLEM_Final_Standards_20111115.pdf

The diocese can establish a program that candidates must complete prior to consideration for service within the diocese. (30, 56-57)

Certification testifies that lay ecclesial ministers have received the appropriate formation required to enable them to be competent ministers in the area of specialization for which they are prepared. The certification of lay ecclesial ministers may also provide legal safeguards for both new and existing individual lay ecclesial ministers and diocesan parish communities. *Co-Workers* points out the importance of formation in this manner:

Ensuring the quality of pastoral care provided by lay ecclesial ministers requires a process for deciding that a given candidate has the education, formation, and professional skills necessary to serve in a particular role. This involves establishing the requirements for education, formation, and experience for specific ministerial roles and evaluating the extent to which individuals meet these requirements. This may vary from diocese to diocese, but the competence of those who serve needs to be verified in some way.

The diocesan bishop has several options for setting certification requirements. Some examples for specific ministry roles can be found in the certification standards established by national associations serving lay ministers in general or role-specific sub-groups and approved by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation. (56)

Update: This approval is now done by the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service.

Diocesan directors can benefit from the assessment process of candidates. This process will assist them in responding to the continuing education and formation needs of the lay ecclesial ministers. This ongoing process will ultimately establish clearer standards of ministry competence and accountability for specialized ministries. *Co-Workers* provides the following criteria to help guide this process: “Among the criteria the diocese might use in deciding how flexible these requirements can be are the availability of existing formation programs within the diocese or region, the financial and personnel resources of the diocese, the size and location of the diocese, and changing pastoral needs. In all cases, the requirements should be clearly stated and readily accessible to those interested in preparing for lay ecclesial ministry and to those who lead existing programs.” (56)

1.4 Benefits to Academic Institutions

The process of certifying lay ecclesial ministers will enhance collaborative efforts between programs of formation. Academic institutions can benefit from the national certification standards for lay ecclesial ministers because these standards provide a framework to demonstrate how their programs of study assist candidates in the process of certification. Certification also provides a common language for dialogue and collaboration between diocesan office personnel and faculty members, who are responsible for providing programs

for the formation of lay ecclesial ministers and national organizations that certify their members.

1.5 Benefits to Mentors of Candidates for Certification

Certification includes the opportunity for mentors to guide candidates as apprentices through the process of certification. Mentors nurture and foster discipleship with those lay ecclesial ministers who are candidates for certification. Mentors benefit from the process of guiding certification candidates. Both mentors and candidates benefit from the experiences of reciprocity and mutual support. As stated in *Co-Worker*:

Mentoring, formal or informal, can be especially helpful. An experienced Church minister introduces the prospective lay minister into the ministerial workplace. A mentor passes on more than skills. He or she presents an understanding of the particular culture in which the ministry will take place, including the challenges and the opportunities. The mentor helps the prospective minister to develop realistic expectations about ministry, including the limits of what can be accomplished. This can prevent the burnout that results when actual experience fails to meet expectations. By sharing their own stories of progress and accomplishments, sacrifices and frustrations, mentors prepare new ministers to make an informed commitment to ministry. (29-30)

1.6 Benefits to Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Certification recognizes lay ecclesial ministers as professional and competent in their respective areas of specialization. Certification also provides the individual with one of the primary elements that he or she needs to function and that is necessary for the authorization by local church authority as a co-worker in the diocese. According to *Co-Workers*, “Most importantly, the authorization process can provide occasions for the bishop to demonstrate his support for the lay ecclesial ministers of his diocese and to model collaboration with them as his lay co-workers.” (60)

The specific vocation of lay ecclesial ministers and their authorization by the diocesan bishop is emphasized in *Co-Workers*:

While all members of the lay Christian faithful work to further the Church’s mission, some are entrusted with certain offices and roles connected to the ministry of the ordained pastors. The lay women and men who are given these responsibilities are not only distinguished by particular gifts and a willingness to serve the Church—these qualities could apply to all the laity—but are also responding to a call to work in greater collaboration with ordained ministers.

They are authorized by ecclesial authorities to carry out certain ministerial responsibilities in public service of the local church.

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 a 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. (54)

The process of becoming certified at the initial or renewal levels challenges lay ecclesial ministers to greater authenticity and integrity. Certification documents credibility and becomes part of the resume of the lay ecclesial minister. The process of certification also provides candidates with the opportunity to reflect on their specialized ministries, engage in self-analysis, and benefit from assessment by their peers whether they are just beginning or are experienced in their ministry. As noted in *Co-Workers*, “Throughout the discernment process a person needs to ask: What talents, virtues, and limits do I possess that indicate my ability to serve God’s people through a commitment to lay ecclesial ministry? Lay persons with a call to lay ecclesial ministry possess certain dispositions, which are further developed during the formal preparation process.” (30)

This process also provides candidates with a backdrop for ongoing assessment and formation. It emphasizes the need for lifelong intellectual learning and spiritual formation as an essential component during the process both for initial certification and renewal of certification.

1.7 Benefits to Agencies, Institutions, and Church Communities

Certification of lay ecclesial ministers benefits agencies, institutions, and church communities by ensuring a higher quality of ministry for the people they serve. Both lay ecclesial ministers and those to whom they minister benefit from ongoing effective ministry, and those served value those certified as a vital part of their communities. As the number of certified lay ecclesial ministers increases, both ministers and those to whom they minister benefit from the additional spiritual resources available to them. Certification reinforces higher expectations on the part of all. Certified ecclesial ministers are challenged to deliver quality service and sustained excellence as they fulfill their responsibilities. Agencies, institutions, and church communities have confidence that certified lay ecclesial ministers are responsible agents of the church and are qualified to serve in the specialized ministry for which they have been certified.

2.0 Section Two

Submitting Certification Standards and Procedures

2.1 Establishing a Relationship with the USCCB Office of Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (USCCB Office)

2.1.1 *Requirements for Seeking Approval*

Diocesan offices shall seek a letter of approval from their local ordinary to open a certification file for a specialized ministry with the USCCB Subcommittee.

National organizations shall meet the following requirements before opening a file with the USCCB Subcommittee:

2.1.1.1 The organization shall be listed in *The Official Catholic Directory* (P.J. Kenedy & Sons).

2.1.1.2 The organization shall be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization.

2.1.1.3 The Executive Director shall seek approval from the organization's board of directors.

2.1.2 *Opening a Certification File*

After authorization is received, directors or executive directors shall contact the USCCB Office staff stating that the diocesan office or national organization is seeking approval for its certification standards and procedures from the USCCB Subcommittee. After receiving the statement from the director, the USCCB Office staff will send the director or executive director a username, password and link to the certification membership website; a *User's Guide to the Certification Membership Website* with instructions on registration, online forms, submission of documentation, etc; and a fee schedule. After receiving these resources, the organization or diocese takes the following actions:

2.1.2.1 The director/ executive director and all individuals who will be involved in the certification process review the *Certification Handbook* and *User's Guide to the Certification Membership Website*.

2.1.2.2 The director/executive director creates a profile with information about the diocesan office or organization and the director or executive director.

2.1.2.3 The director/ executive director completes the online application form on the membership website. The form will ask for a PDF version of a letter of approval from either the local ordinary or Board of Directors. The director/executive director shall also send a hard copy of this letter to the USCCB Office. (Instructions on accessing and completing the application from can be found in the *User's Guide*.)

2.1.2.4 The director or executive will receive an invoice from the USCCB Office for the fee to open a file with the USCCB Subcommittee (Filing Fee). A check for the fee must be received in the USCCB Office no more than 60 days after the invoice date. (More information on fees and fee schedules can be found in Section Five of this handbook on page 28 and on the membership website.)

- Certification files remain open until written notification is received in the USCCB Office from directors to close the file, or the USCCB Subcommittee determines to do so based on its policies.
- Diocesan offices or national organizations who have opened a file and are preparing to submit certification documentation for approval are listed on the USCCB Subcommittee website (www.usccb.org/certification) and in the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory*.

2.1.3 Forming a Certification Commission/Committee

The mandate of the diocese or national organization certification commission/committee shall be to oversee the self-study process involving the examination, review, formulation and ongoing revision of certification standards and procedures in an effort to base the standards and procedures on the USCCB Subcommittee certification standards found in in Section Four of this handbook on page 23.

2.2 Gathering Initial Documentation

2.2.1 Required Documentation⁷

2.2.1.1 Part One shall contain information about the diocese and the diocesan office or the national organization mission, staff, certification commission, committees, interview teams, etc. that assess the competencies of specialized ministers, diocesan or organization requirements established for applying for initial and renewal of certification, ongoing formation events sponsored by the office or organization, and other pertinent information.

Evidence that the diocese or eparchy is in compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*⁸ including such items as:

- Copy of the diocesan policies and procedures in accord with ARTICLE 2⁹ of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

⁷ A full explanation of each of these Parts of the Documentation can be found in Section 3 on page 16.

⁸ Approved by the full body of bishops at its June 2005 General Meeting, that received its *recognitio* of the Holy See on January 1, 2006, and was promulgated May 5, 2006. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

⁹ See Booklet version of *Charter for Protection of Children* [USCCB Publication No. 7-232, Washington, DC, ISBN 978-1-60137-232-1] p, 10.

- Evidence that the diocese or eparchy is in compliance with Article 12¹⁰ of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and maintains “safe environment” programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles.
- Evidence that the organization requires its members seeking to be certified to be in compliance with of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. This can be as simple as a clear statement within the Code of Ethics that is signed by each candidate.¹¹

2.2.1.2 Part Two shall provide the certification standards by which candidates for certification and renewal of certification will perform a self-assessment and be assessed in four major competency categories that candidates demonstrate: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Certification standards shall incorporate diocesan or organization standards, the USCCB Subcommittee approved *Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* (found at the Alliance website), and directives of church documents. (More information on the Alliance can be found in the Benefits to Provinces, Regions and State Catholic Conferences section of this Handbook on page 1 and at www.lmcertification.org.)

2.2.1.3 Part Three shall be the certification handbook provided to candidates for certification and renewal of certification that contains the requirements for applying for certification and renewal of certification, the diocesan or organization certification standards and procedures, assessment instruments, information about the certification process, forms, and other information that candidates would need to know.

In accord with the pledge of U.S. Catholic Bishops in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* to do their best to ordain to the priesthood and put into positions of trust only those who share their commitment to protecting children and youth:

- *Handbooks should clearly state that all candidate for certification are in compliance with Article 12 and Article 13¹² of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.*
 - Being adequately screened and evaluated to decide if they are fit candidates for certification.
 - Having background checks utilizing the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. (background checks)
 - Being aware that the code of ethics for each role certified clearly states that candidates for certification both know of and comply

¹⁰ Ibid, p.16.

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for Sample Code of Ethics Statements from Members of the Alliance for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM) with approved Codes of Ethics.

¹² See Booklet version of *Charter for Protection of Children*[USCCB Publication No. 7-232, Washington, DC, ISBN 978-1-60137-232-1] p.16:

with all applicable parish, organizational, and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safe environment, risk management, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

- 2.2.1.4** Part Four shall be appropriate appendices of resources helpful for the certification process including sample forms, letters, rosters, job description(s) of position(s) being certified and publications used to promote the certification process.

2.2.2 Number of Copies and Submittal Deadlines for USCCB Office Review

The certification documentation outlined in this handbook for USCCB Office review can be submitted on the certification membership website six weeks before a schedule spring or fall meeting of the USCCB Subcommittee. While it is recommended and preferred that documentation be submitted electronically at the USCCB Subcommittee certification membership website, if printed, twelve copies of documentation are to be sent to the USCCB Office six weeks before a scheduled spring or fall meeting of the USCCB Subcommittee.

- 2.2.2.1** The *User's Guide* explains how to submit documentation on the website.

- 2.2.2.2** The schedule of yearly USCCB Subcommittee meetings is available on the certification membership website.

- 2.2.2.3** If documentation is not submitted electronically, it should be on white 8.5 x 11 inch paper in three ring binders. To decrease the weight of the documentation, pages shall be copied back to back whenever possible.

2.2.3 USCCB Office Review

The USCCB Office staff and, as needed or if requested, the informal advisory group members or consultants shall review submitted documentation, give recommendations and determine when revised documentation is ready for review by the peer review committee.

2.3 Peer Review

The peer review committee is an essential part of the approval process. The members are named by the chair of the subcommittee and include at least a bishop, an office staff person, a consultant, and/or advisor of the office from a similar organization or diocese if possible.

2.3.1 Liaison Visit

The director or executive director shall contact the USCCB Office staff to schedule a liaison visit to take place before the peer review of documentation. Every effort is made to ensure that a person from the same region of the country, or a region as

close as possible, would be chosen for the liaison visit to help keep expenses to a minimum. The site liaison will be a member of the peer review committee who is appointed by the USCCB Subcommittee.

Review of a program by a site liaison includes a summary of interviews and both an oral report and a written report of his or her findings, which contribute to the overall peer review committee's report. During a liaison visit, travel, room and board, and any other related expenses during the visit are to be covered by the diocese or organization involved.

2.3.2 Presentation by Diocese or Organization to Peer Review Committee

After the site review, the diocesan director or appropriate national organization representative shall also make a formal presentation to the peer review committee using available online meeting technology. Appropriate representatives include the executive director or chair of the certification committee.

The presentation shall include a description of the following:

- 2.3.2.1** The demographics of the diocese or organization, including a brief profile of the social, cultural, and economic realities.
- 2.3.2.2** The consultation process that occurred throughout the development of the certification standards and procedures.
- 2.3.2.3** The formation and ongoing education of those involved in the certification process and the candidates for certification.
- 2.3.2.4** The process of the formulation and review of the certification standards and procedures.
- 2.3.2.5** The process that will be undertaken for the ongoing review and revision of the certification standards and procedures.

2.3.3 Peer Review Committee Makes Recommendation

After the presentation, the peer review committee discusses whether the standards and/or procedures should be approved, whether minor changes are needed, and develops a recommendation to be brought to the next subcommittee meeting and reviewed with the whole subcommittee.

2.4 USCCB Subcommittee Review and Decision

2.4.1 USCCB Subcommittee Review Process

The report of the liaison visit, presentation, and the recommendation of the appointed peer review committee are reviewed by the subcommittee at the next available fall or spring meeting.

2.4.2.1 The USCCB Subcommittee grants initial approval of certification standards and procedures for the certification of specialized ecclesial ministers after the USCCB Subcommittee’s review of the documentation submitted indicates that the diocesan office or national organization certification standards and procedures are in compliance with the requirements outlined in this handbook.

2.4.2.2 Often during their review, the USCCB Subcommittee makes recommendations for improving certification standards and procedures.

2.4.2 Initial Approval

2.4.2.1 *If initial approval has been granted*, normally with recommendations to assist with the further development of certification standards and procedures, the USCCB Subcommittee shall grant initial approval of certification standards and procedures for a period of up to seven years.

Diocesan offices or national organizations with initial approval are listed in the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory*. The diocesan office or national organization will be billed a fee for review of certification documentation by the USCCB Subcommittee. (More information on fees can be found in Section Five of this handbook on page 28.)

2.4.2.2 *If initial approval has been denied* the diocese or organization ought to make an effort to correct the reasons listed for refusal and resubmit within the time frame given within the letter of refusal.

2.4.3 Notification of Decision

The USCCB Subcommittee shall communicate its decision in writing to the local ordinary and diocesan director or the national organization executive director within sixty workdays after the meeting.

Included in this letter may be recommendations by the USCCB Subcommittee with a request that a plan of action for addressing these recommendations be reported to the USCCB Subcommittee by its next meeting if major, or in the first annual report after approval if minor.

2.5 Diocesan or National Organization Response

After consultation with the diocesan or national organization certification committee, the director of the diocesan office or national organization shall respond in writing to the recommendations given by the USCCB Subcommittee with a plan for addressing recommendations.

2.5.1 Addressing Recommendations

In annual reports thereafter, diocesan or national organization directors continue to describe progress in achieving recommendations of the USCCB Subcommittee.

2.5.2 Statement of Approval

After approval, diocesan or national organization directors include a statement of USCCB Subcommittee approval of certification standards and procedures with the USCCB logo, the name of the USCCB Subcommittee with the USCCB Office address, phone number and website.

Only office publications that pertain directly to certification bears the USCCB logo and statement of approval by the USCCB Subcommittee. Such publications are, but are not limited to, the following:

- 2.5.2.1** A certification brochure;
- 2.5.2.2** Notification of workshops pertaining to certification;
- 2.5.2.3** A certification handbook;
- 2.5.2.4** A certification newsletter; and
- 2.5.2.5** An easily found website page for the office with documentation pertaining to the USCCB Subcommittee-approved certification standards and procedures.

The statement of approval and logo can be accessed on the USCCB Subcommittee membership website after initial approval is granted.

2.6 Annual Reports

2.6.1 Submitting an Annual Report

After consultation with the diocesan or national organization certification commission/committee, the director of the diocese or national organization shall complete an annual report form each year following the USCCB Subcommittee initial approval.

- 2.6.1.1** The USCCB Office staff sends diocesan or national organization directors a reminder to complete the online annual report form in the fall of each year with a due date by which the report is to be uploaded to the membership website or received by the USCCB Office. If uploaded, notify the USCCB office to ensure receipt.
- 2.6.1.2** Annual reports describe the progress made in achieving the recommendations from the initial review and additional recommendations made from subsequent reviews of annual reports during the years between periodic reviews.
- 2.6.1.3** When a diocese or organization is granted full approval for seven years, annual reports completed on the fourth year (midway) of approval will be a more detailed report describing the continued development of the certification standards and procedures, changes since approval, and also the progress made in achieving the recommendations. This fourth year report will be the only detailed report; all other years the director will complete the annual report focusing on recommendations.

- 2.6.1.4** When approval is granted during spring USCCB Subcommittee meetings, directors do not need to submit an annual report at the end of the calendar year.
- 2.6.1.5** Diocesan offices and national organizations are billed a late fee when annual reports are not received by the due date without notification to the USCCB Office. Normally the due date allows for a one (1) month grace period.
- If diocesan or national organization directors communicate in writing with the staff of the USCCB Office regarding the reason for a delay in submitting their annual report, the late fee may be waived. Diocesan directors shall also notify the staff of the date by which their late report will be received in the USCCB Office.

2.6.2 Revision of Annual Report Forms

The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service reserves the right to revise, supplement, change, or rescind any portion of the Annual Report Form from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Appropriate changes and additions are made as necessary.

2.6.3 Number of Copies of Annual Reports

The diocesan or national organization director or executive director completes the online annual report form found on the membership website. Instructions on accessing and completing the annual report form can be found in the *User's Guide*.

2.7 Periodic Review Process

2.7.1 Notification

The USCCB Office staff shall notify diocesan or national organization directors in writing twelve months before documentation for renewal of approval is due.

The diocesan or national organization director must acknowledge in writing that notification has been received.

2.7.2 Re-Approval

During the last year of the initial approval period, the diocesan or national organization director shall prepare updated certification standards and procedures for review and re-approval by the USCCB Subcommittee.

2.7.3 Preparing Documentation for Re-Approval

Diocesan and national organization directors and certification committees shall prepare the following documentation for periodic approval by the USCCB Subcommittee.

- 2.7.3.1** The required documentation found in this handbook in Section Three for either dioceses or national organizations.

- 2.7.3.2** A description of how USCCB Subcommittee recommendations for the continued development of diocesan or national organization certification standards and procedures from initial approval and annual reports have been addressed (**Note:** If recommendations have not been implemented, a plan and timeline for implementation shall be included.)
- 2.7.3.3** A description of how evaluations received from those certified, those involved in the certification process (such as mentors and interviewers), and others have changed and/or improved diocesan or national organization certification standards and procedures

The director of the diocese or national organization shall submit the documentation to the USCCB Office by the date specified by staff. Documentation shall be submitted following the same guidelines listed in section 2.2.2, “Number of Copies and Submittal Deadlines for USCCB Office Review.”

After initial approval, the USCCB Subcommittee grants re-approval every seven years thereafter, pending continued compliance with certification standards and procedures.

2.7.4 USCCB Subcommittee Review

During a regularly scheduled meeting of bishops, the USCCB Subcommittee shall review the documentation submitted by the diocese or organization for a vote of re-approval along with recommendations for continued development. Special attention is paid to how responsive the diocese or organization has been to the recommendations made and what improvements have been made to reflect the learning during implementation.

2.7.5 Notification of Decision

The chair of the USCCB Subcommittee communicates the decision of the USCCB Subcommittee to the diocesan bishop or director or the national organization director within thirty workdays after the meeting of the bishops.

2.7.6 Response to Recommendations

After consultation with the diocesan or national organization certification committee, the diocesan or national organization director shall respond in writing to the recommendations given by the USCCB Subcommittee with a plan and timeline for addressing recommendations by the USCCB Subcommittee.

2.7.7 Extensions

The USCCB Subcommittee grants one-year extensions, renewable once, for serious cause. Letters from the executive directors of national organizations or dioceses requesting extensions are sent to the USCCB Subcommittee in care of the USCCB Office.

2.8 Withdrawal of Approval

2.8.1 Circumstances of USCCB Subcommittee Withdrawal of Approval

- 2.8.1.1** Not submitting documentation for the review of certification standards and procedures when scheduled for review without a request for extension;
- 2.8.1.2** Not submitting documentation for the review of certification standards and procedures after two (2) years from the scheduled review have elapsed;
- 2.8.1.3** Not paying the annual certification fee; or
- 2.8.1.4** Non-adherence to USCCB Subcommittee-approved certification standards and procedures.

2.8.2 Notification of Withdrawal of Approval

The chair of the USCCB Subcommittee notifies diocesan or national organization directors of the results of reviewing the complaint. Diocesan or national organization directors have thirty (30) workdays to respond to the USCCB Subcommittee's decision should the review result in the withdrawal of USCCB Subcommittee approval. For dioceses, the local ordinary is also notified in writing when approval is withdrawn. The diocesan office or national organization is also removed from the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory*.

2.8.3 Compliance

Since seeking approval of standards and procedures by dioceses and organizations is a voluntary process, the USCCB Subcommittee is not involved in enforcement of the approved standards and procedures. It is up to the local ordinary of a diocese, the executive director of a national organization or their designee to enforce the approved standards and procedures. If a candidate for certification has complaints about the application of the approved standards and procedures for certification, the principal of subsidiarity applies. Complaints are handled within the local diocese or organization involved using the approved process for handling complaints in the diocese's or organization's certification handbook, if any.

3.0 Section Three

Required Documentation

3.1 Table of Contents

The pages for each of the Parts described in Section 2.2.1, under *Required Documentation* (found on page 7 of this Handbook), subsections and appendices shall be listed in a table of contents. A template of required documentation that should accompany the four parts of submitted documentation, including the table of contents, is provided on the certification membership website.

3.2 For Diocesan Offices

3.2.1 Documentation for Part One: The Diocese

Requirements

Part One shall contain information about the diocese and the office. This part includes, but is not limited to, information about the mission, staff, certification commission, committees, interview teams, etc. that assess the competencies of specialized ministers, diocesan requirements established for certification, ongoing formation events sponsored by the office, etc.

Each diocese and office is unique and not every office will have the same components for the certification of specialized ministers as another. Resources and regions of the country differ drastically in terms of size, Catholic population, ethnic and cultural diversity and resources.

Dioceses differ in size and population. Therefore, the number of committees and the number of committee members, mentors, consultants and interviewers involved in the certification process will vary according to local need. Those involved in the certification process may serve in more than one capacity or function. The diocesan director states in documentation submitted what is not applicable for their local situation.

A diocesan template for required documentation of Part One is provided on the certification membership website.

3.2.2 Documentation for Part Two: Standards

Requirements

Part Two shall provide the certification standards by which candidates for certification and renewal of certification will perform a self-assessment and be assessed in four major competency categories: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Certification standards in the four areas shall incorporate the following:

- 3.2.2.1** Diocesan certification standards (normally derived from directives or guidelines to the office);

- 3.2.2.2** The directives and vision of Church documents (especially the 2005 USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*); and
- 3.2.2.3** The current edition of the USCCB Subcommittee-approved *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* appropriate for the specialized minister and the local church.

Clarification Regarding Requirements for Certification and Diocesan Certification Standards

There is a distinction between the diocesan requirements for applying for certification or renewal of certification and the diocesan certification standards by which candidates are assessed as competent. For the purposes of this handbook, requirements are the conditions which candidates must comply with in order to enter into the certification process. Requirements are the eligibility criteria. Requirements for applying for certification are determined by the diocese.

Requirements may include, but are not limited to, full Christian Initiation in the Roman Catholic Church, formal academic education such as a college or post graduate degree in designated areas of theology or ministry, number of years as a specialized minister in full or part-time (salaried or volunteer) ministry, and successful completion of an diocesan ministry formation or certificate program.

Diocesan Certification Standards by Which Candidates are Assessed

The diocesan director involves appropriate committees and consultants in the formulation of diocesan certification standards under the four major categories for the formation of lay ministers outlined in the USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

It is important to distinguish formation standards from certification standards. The document *Co-Workers* describes formation standards in four areas. Formation includes all of life's experiences including family background, formal education, occupation, vocational choices, religious experiences, etc. These standards refer to four major and minor standards for ministry formation programs. Diocesan certification standards articulate the competencies that candidates should have gained from formation in these four areas. Candidates for certification shall be able to demonstrate or be assessed, in a measureable way, the certification standards.

Certification standards are not vision statements of religious belief or values. Certification standards establish measurable skills, knowledge, and abilities in which specialized ministers must be able to demonstrate that their competence. Diocesan directors and appropriate consultants determine the degree or level to which candidates for certification or renewal of certification attain competency.

Major Resource for the Formulation of Diocesan Certification Standards

The publication entitled *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving as parish Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, Parish Life Coordinators, and Directors of Music Ministries* (2006 Expanded Edition¹³) contains the USCCB Subcommittee-approved certification standards submitted by the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministry (The Alliance) .

The standards in this publication will assist diocesan directors in determining the language for the certification standards under which the specialized ministers in their diocese will be assessed as competent. Consideration needs to be given in writing these standards to the special needs, economic realities, accessibility to academic institutions, and the circumstances of their local church as ministers in leadership roles serve the ever growing groups of African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and various migrant groups and refugees. Diocesan certification standards are written so that candidates for certification renewal of certification are able to demonstrate that they are competent with the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral skills needed for their specialized ministry.

It is the hope of the USCCB Subcommittee that diocesan certification standards are particularized to the local church within which the diocesan office serves.

A diocesan template for required documentation of Part Two is provided on the certification membership website.

3.2.3 Documentation for Part Three: Handbook

Requirements

Part Three of the required documentation submitted to the USCCB Subcommittee is a copy of the certification handbook provided to candidates for certification and renewal of certification in a specialized ministry. The handbook shall contain all the information for candidates to understand and follow in seeking certification or renewal of certification. If a diocesan office certifies more than one specialized minister, then standards and self-assessment forms are included for each of the specialized ministers.

While formats of certification handbooks are unique to each diocesan office, a template of required information for the certification handbook (part three of documentation) is provided on the membership website. This template will be

¹³ Developed by NALM, NCCL, NFCYM, and NPM and approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation, the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving as Parish Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, and Parish Life Coordinators* (2006 expanded edition) provides a common vision for lay ministry formation. This resource brings clarity and definition to these pastoral roles and identifies five core standards, the common and specialized competencies and codes of ethics for lay ecclesial ministry. It is also a bilingual English/Spanish flip book. This resource is available for purchase from the NALM website (www.nalm.org) for \$14.95 (\$13.95 for members).

revised and modified as the experience of the USCCB Subcommittee grows with future documentation and certification standards and procedures submitted for approval.

3.2.4 Documentation for Part Four: Appendices

Requirements

Part Four consists of Resources to be used throughout the process, including forms, letters, rosters of the members of the commission or committees, job descriptions for the ministries for which the diocese is seeking approval and publications and/or websites used to support the diocese's certification efforts. Be sure to include all of the essential information that candidates will need to know as part of the handbook (Part Three of documentation).

A diocesan template for required documentation of Part Four can be found on the certification membership website. The templates will be revised and modified as the experience of the USCCB Subcommittee grows with future documentation and certification standards and procedures submitted for approval.

3.3 For National Organizations

3.3.1 Documentation for Part One: Information about the Organization

Requirements

Part One shall contain information about the national organization and national office. This part includes, but is not limited to, information about the mission, staff, certification commission, committees, interview teams, etc. that assess the competencies of specialized ministers, organization requirements established for certification, ongoing formation events sponsored by the organization, etc.

Each organization is unique and not every organization will have the same components for the certification of specialized ministers as another. Resources and regions of the country differ drastically in terms of size, Catholic population, ethnic and cultural diversity and resources.

National organizations also differ in size and population. Therefore, the number of committees and the number of committee members, mentors, consultants and interviewers involved in the certification process will vary. Those involved in the certification process may serve in more than one capacity or function. The executive director states in documentation submitted what is not applicable for their organization.

A national organization template for required documentation of Part One can be found on the certification membership website.

3.3.2 Documentation for Part Two: National Organization Certification Standards

Requirements

Part Two shall provide the certification standards by which candidates for certification and renewal of certification will perform a self-assessment and be assessed in four major competency categories: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Certification standards in the four areas shall incorporate the following:

- National organization certification standards (normally developed, adapted or adopted by a standing committee of the organization and approved by the USCCB Subcommittee);
- The directives and vision of Church documents (especially the 2005 USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*); and
- The current edition of the USCCB Subcommittee-approved *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* appropriate for the specialized minister and the local church.

Clarification Regarding Requirements for Certification and National Organization Certification Standards

There is a distinction between the national organization requirements for applying for certification or renewal of certification and the national organization certification standards by which candidates are assessed as competent. For the purposes of this handbook, requirements are the conditions which candidates must comply with in order to enter into the certification process. Requirements are the eligibility criteria. Requirements for applying for certification are determined by the national organization

Requirements may include, but are not limited to, full Christian Initiation in the Roman Catholic Church, formal academic education such as a college or post graduate degree in designated areas of theology or ministry, number of years as a specialized minister in full or part-time (salaried or volunteer) ministry, successful completion of a national or diocesan ministry formation or certificate program and membership in the organization

National Organization Certification Standards by Which Candidates are Assessed

The executive director involves appropriate committees and consultants in the formulation of national organization certification standards under the four major categories for the formation of lay ministers outlined in the USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

It is important to distinguish formation standards from certification standards. The document *Co-Workers* describes formation standards in four areas. Formation includes all of life's experiences including family background, formal education,

occupation, vocational choices, religious experiences, etc. These standards refer to four major and minor standards for ministry formation programs. National organization certification standards articulate the competencies that candidates should have gained from formation in these four areas. Candidates for certification shall be able to demonstrate or be assessed, in a measurable way, the certification standards.

Certification standards are not vision statements of religious belief or values. Certification standards establish measurable skills, knowledge, and abilities in which specialized ministers must be able to demonstrate that their competence. Executive directors and appropriate consultants determine the degree or level to which candidates for certification or renewal of certification attain competency.

Major Resource for the Formulation of National Organization Certification Standards

The publication entitled *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving as parish Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, Parish Life Coordinators, and Directors of Music Ministries* (2006 Expanded Edition)¹⁴ contains the USCCB Subcommittee-approved certification standards submitted by the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministry.

The standards in this publication will assist executive directors in determining the language for the certification standards under which the specialized ministers in their organization will be assessed as competent. Consideration needs to be given in writing these standards to the special needs, economic realities, accessibility to academic institutions, and the circumstances of their local church as ministers in leadership roles serve the ever growing groups of African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, Hispanics a, and various migrant groups and refugees. National organization certification standards are written so that candidates for certification renewal of certification are able to demonstrate that they are competent with the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral skills needed for their specialized ministry.

It is the hope of the USCCB Subcommittee that national organization certification standards are particularized to the national organization within which the national office serves.

A national organization template for required documentation of Part Two can be found on the certification membership website.

¹⁴ Developed by NALM, NCCL, NFCYM, and NPM and approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation, the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving as Parish Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Leaders, Pastoral Associates, and Parish Life Coordinators* (2006 expanded edition) provides a common vision for lay ministry formation. This resource brings clarity and definition to these pastoral roles and identifies five core standards, the common and specialized competencies and codes of ethics for lay ecclesial ministry. It is also a bilingual English/Spanish flip book. This resource is available for purchase from the NALM website for \$14.95 (\$13.95 for members).

3.3.3 Documentation for Part Three: A Certification Handbook

Requirements

Part Three of the required documentation submitted to the USCCB Subcommittee is a copy of the certification handbook provided to candidates for certification and renewal of certification in a specialized ministry. The handbook shall contain all the information for candidates to understand and follow in seeking certification or renewal of certification. If a national office certifies more than one specialized minister, then standards and self-assessment forms are included for each of the specialized ministers.

While formats of certification handbooks are unique to each national organization, a national organization template for required documentation of Part Three, the Certification Handbook, can be found on the certification membership website. Included in the template is some of the essential information that candidates will need to know. This template will be revised and modified as the experience of the USCCB Subcommittee grows with future documentation and certification standards and procedures submitted for approval.

3.3.4 Documentation for Part Four: Appendices

Requirements

Part Four consists of Resources to be used throughout the process including forms, letters, rosters of the members of the commission or committees, job descriptions for the ministries for which the national organization or alliance of national organizations is seeking approval and publications and/or websites used to the support the organization or alliance of organization's certification efforts. Be sure to include all of the essential information that candidates will need to know as part of the handbook, Part Three of the documentation.

A national organization template for required documentation of Part Four can be found on the certification membership website. The samples will be revised and modified as the experience of the USCCB Subcommittee grows with future documentation and certification standards and procedures submitted for approval.

4.0 Section Four

USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service Certification Standards for Specialized Ecclesial Ministers

4.1 Mission

Certification standards for specialized ecclesial ministers shall reflect the mission and identity of the diocese or organization.

4.1.2 The mission of the diocese or organization shall be stated.

4.1.3 The relationship between the mission and bylaws, constitutions, and structure shall be identified.

4.1.4 The responsibilities of officers, subcommittees, committees, and their responsibilities in relation to mission, shall be described.

4.1.5 The ministerial positions for candidates seeking certification shall be defined.

4.1.6 The expectations for the ministry shall be articulated.

4.1.7 The Code of Ethics shall reflect the responsibilities for the ministry of those certified.

4.2 Standard One: Human

Ecclesial ministry builds upon the evangelical mission to which all the baptized are called to, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel" (Mark 16:15). This proclamation of the Good News requires a witness not only in words but also in actions. It is through the authentic witness of the Catholic Christian in their manner of life and fidelity to the Church's teachings and traditions that the gospel is best preached. Therefore, all who feel the call to specialized ecclesial ministry must first show themselves to be well-formed and healthy human beings who are living good and moral life according to the Church's teaching. To invite men and women to serve the Church in this important work and witness who are not living a life in keeping with the Church's clear teaching in these matters is to create contradiction in our work and to sow scandal within the community.

Ecclesial ministers ought to demonstrate the qualities of human maturity needed for fruitful ministry with the people of God. This is true both for the ordained and for the laity. In his apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, "Pastores dabo vobis," Blessed John Paul II wrote that men who are candidates for Holy Orders are to develop their human character and relational abilities so that they can be "a bridge and not an obstacle" for people in their encounter with Jesus Christ. Laity in their distinct but complementary role should do likewise. This development entails the twofold dynamic of strengthening positive traits that foster ministerial effectiveness and lessening negative traits that hinder it. Accordingly, they ought to strive to deepen their knowledge of self and others, grow from experiences of suffering and challenge, maintain a balanced lifestyle and positive relationships appreciate

and value diversity, and demonstrate basic human virtues. Cultivating such traits and skills within a Christ-centered community contributes to the development of “a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service” (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).

While the priesthood of the ordained differs from the common priesthood of the faithful "essentially and not only in degree," they are "nonetheless ordered one to another, each in its own way sharing in the one priesthood of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 10 and *Pius XII, Mediator Dei*, no. 43). As such the same human qualities and competencies that the Church would seek to be evidenced in candidates for Holy Orders would be ones that should be found in the lives of those who are seeking certification for specialized ecclesial ministries

These competencies shall include:

- 4.2.1 Ongoing psychological and ministerial growth;
- 4.2.2 A capacity to be self-reflective;
- 4.2.3 An ability to articulate knowledge of personal and ministerial strengths and limitations;
- 4.2.4 A commitment to professional development; and
- 4.2.5 An ability to articulate feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions that affect ministry.

4.3 Standard Two: Spiritual

Sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized, a lay ecclesial minister demonstrates Christian spirituality as foundational to ministry, integrated in service with the people of God, and possessing a sacramental view of the world that recognizes the world can be a vessel of God’s presence and God’s transforming grace.

Having encountered the person and message of Jesus Christ, the hunger of the ecclesial minister for union with the Triune God is constant. The result of this hunger is the call to holiness, built on the Word of God, experienced in the liturgy and sacraments, formed through suffering, nurtured in joy, and sustained in community with all the baptized and through the Church as Mystical Body. The minister gives witness to a well-formed spirituality through a rich and diversified prayer life, theological reflection, and action rooted in Catholic social teaching. Spiritual formation is grounded in the understanding that “if ministry does not flow from a personal encounter and ongoing relationship with the Lord, then no matter how ‘accomplished’ it may be in its methods and activities, that ministry will lack the vital soul and source needed to bear lasting fruit” (*Co-Workers*, p. Standards Page 6 38). Therefore, open to the mystery of God’s love and in touch with the world’s realities, all actions of the lay ecclesial minister flow from “that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one’s life” (*Co-Workers*, p. 38).

These competencies shall include:

- 4.3.1 Ongoing faith development and spiritual growth;
- 4.3.2 An understanding of personal gifts and abilities brought to ministry;
- 4.3.3 A commitment to spiritual growth;
- 4.3.4 An ability to reflect theologically;
- 4.3.5 An understanding of their baptismal call and the ecclesial elements of ministry; and
- 4.3.6 An understanding of their role as a public minister.

4.4 Standard Three: Intellectual

An ecclesial minister demonstrates understanding of the breadth of Catholic theological and pastoral studies as well as the intellectual skill to use that knowledge in ministry with God's people from diverse populations and cultures.

"Formation for lay ecclesial ministry is a journey beyond catechesis into theological study" (*Co-Workers*, p. 43). An ecclesial minister's faith and ministry is formed by the study of the Catholic theological tradition. Based upon this study, a theologically competent minister can articulate and interpret this Catholic theological tradition with disciples from diverse communities. A key dynamic of effective ecclesial ministry is the integration into ministry practices of the key documents and principal theories of pastoral ministry.

Theological competencies shall be demonstrated in the following subject areas:

- 4.4.1 Vatican II and Post-Vatican II documents of the Church;
- 4.4.2 Systematic/foundational theology;
- 4.4.3 Scripture;
- 4.4.4 Theology of the Trinity;
- 4.4.5 Christology;
- 4.4.6 Ecclesiology;
- 4.4.7 Sacramental theology;
- 4.4.8 Liturgy;
- 4.4.9 Spirituality;
- 4.4.10 Ethics/moral theology;
- 4.4.11 Social and ecological justice;

4.4.12 Pastoral theology;

4.4.13 Canon law;

4.4.14 Familiarity with ecumenical and interreligious practice; and

4.4.15 Familiarity with the theological issues that emerge in the specialized ministry.

4.5 **Standard Four: Pastoral**

An ecclesial minister demonstrates a range of leadership and pastoral skills needed for functioning effectively in ministry. As a response to their baptismal call, ecclesial ministers accept the grace of leadership and manifest a range of skills and pastoral gifts which allow them to function effectively in ministry. In their role as evangelizers, they operate in a parochial setting which has various dimensions—faith formation, worship, cultural diversity, community life, social justice, and apostolic service. They are effective listeners who foster respect and offer compassionate care within varied family, community, and cultural settings. In the spirit of the Gospel, they serve others as companions on the journey of faith. These ministers demonstrate good stewardship, work collaboratively with other lay and ordained ministers, and exhibit human resource and management skills. They have an ability to discern and nurture the gifts of all the baptized in order to build the Kingdom of God. Lastly, these ministers embrace a professional code of ethics worthy of Catholic ministry and abide by civil and Church law. “Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry” (*Co-Workers*, page 47).

Certification standards shall include professional and ministerial competencies utilized for service within a particular faith community. These competencies shall include:

4.5.1 An understanding of the stages of human and faith development and how these stages are applicable to the specialized ministry;

4.5.2 An understanding of the ways culture and ethnicity affect ministerial practices;

4.5.3 Assessment, intervention, and referral skills;

4.5.4 Listening and communication skills pertinent to cultural diversity;

4.5.5 Conflict management skills;

4.5.6 Time management skills;

4.5.7 Balanced life style skills;

4.5.8 Collaboration skills;

4.5.9 Skills of group process and dynamics;

4.5.10 Skills in the organizing and supervising of volunteers;

4.5.11 Skills in initiating, sustaining, and bringing to closure ministerial relationships; and

4.5.12 Pastoral skills relevant to the specialized ministry.

5.0 Section Five

Fees

5.1 Fees for a Diocesan Office with Approved Certification Standards and Procedures

The fees quoted are for the 2017 year.

Directors may request reduced fees for cause in writing to the USCCB Office.

All checks are sent to the USCCB Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017

5.1.1 *Filing Fee*

For Diocesan Offices: The filing fee is a nonrefundable \$250 for a diocesan office that seeks to have certification standards and procedures approved by the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (USCCB Subcommittee). The director of the diocesan office must send the filing fee to the USCCB Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service office (USCCB Office) after completing the online application form, submitting a letter of approval from the local ordinary, and printing out an invoice for the filing fee.

For State Catholic Conferences: The filing fee is a nonrefundable \$250 for a state Catholic Conference that oversees the submission of certification standards and procedures for the certification of specialized ecclesial ministers. The lead agent who is facilitating the collaborative project for a Catholic Conference sends the filing fee to the USCCB Office after completing the online application form, submitting a letter of approval from the individual bishop members of the Conference, and printing out an invoice for the filing fee.

5.1.2 *Subcommittee Review Fees*

- The fee is \$250 for the initial USCCB Subcommittee review of certification standards and procedures.
- The Fee is \$250 for the seven-year review and approval of certification standards and procedures.
- After the decision of the USCCB Subcommittee has been communicated to the local ordinary, an invoice will be sent to the diocesan office for the subcommittee review fee. Payment is due in the USCCB Office no later than 60 days after the invoice is received.

5.1.3 *Annual Fees*

- The annual fee is \$250 for each diocesan office certifying specialized ministers.

- Fees are waived on the re-approval year.
- In early December, the diocesan office will receive a reminder to complete and submit the online annual report form and an invoice for the annual fee is sent to the director of the diocesan office or lead agent. Payment is due in the USCCB Office by March 1 and the annual report is due by January 31. The office is assessed one-half the annual fee when initial approval is granted during a spring meeting of the Subcommittee. Fees are assessed even if in a given year the diocese has not certified specialized ministers.

5.1.4 Site Review Fees

- The fee is travel + expenses for a diocesan office if a site review is requested.
- When the site review is completed and expense reports are received from the site visitor, an invoice is sent for any travel and expenses not already covered by the site while the visit was in process.

5.1.5 Consultation and Workshop Fees

- No fee is charged for consultation or workshops provided by the USCCB Subcommittee. Transportation, meals, and lodging are assumed by the office extending the invitation.

5.1.6 Late Fees

- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the diocesan office when the annual fee is not received by the due date, and \$50 for every month thereafter until the fee is paid in full. A grace period of 30 days is allowed for processing and mailing the check.
- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the diocesan office if an annual report is not received by the due date or within a 30 day grace period allowed for mailing. If certification standards and procedures are approved for a state Catholic Conference, each diocesan office submits its own fee and annual report.
- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the program when a check for a certification site review has not been received in the USCCB Office within 60 days of sending the invoice to the program director.

5.2 Fees for an Organization of Specialized Ministers with Certification Standards and Procedures Approved by the USCCB Subcommittee

The fees quoted are for the 2017 year.

Directors may request reduced fees for cause in writing to the USCCB Office.

All checks are sent to the USCCB Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017

5.2.1 *Filing Fee*

The filing fee is a nonrefundable \$250 for organizations of specialized ministers that seeks to have certification standards and procedures approved by the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (USCCB Subcommittee) to open a file. After completing the online application form, submitting a letter of approval and printing out the invoice, the executive director or chair of the board of directors of the organization sends the filing fee to the USCCB Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service Office (USCCB Office).

5.2.2 *Subcommittee Review Fees*

- The fee is \$250 for the initial review of certification standards or certification standards and procedures.
- The Fee is \$250 for the seven-year review and approval of certification standards, or certification standards and procedures.
- After the decision of the USCCB Subcommittee has been communicated to the executive director, an invoice will be sent to the national office for the subcommittee review fee. Payment is due in the USCCB Office no later than 60 days after the invoice is received.

5.2.3 *Annual Fees*

The annual fee for organizations with at-large memberships is based on the number of members in the organization during a calendar year. An annual fee is assessed organizations that have archdiocesan or other membership structures when the USCCB Subcommittee grants initial approval for their certification standards, or certification standards and procedures. Fees are assessed even if in a given year organizations have not certified specialized ministers. Organizations are assessed one-half the annual fee when initial approval is granted during a spring meeting of the USCCB Subcommittee.

- The annual fee is \$125 for organizations with 100 members or fewer.

- The annual fee is \$250 for organizations with 101 to 149 members.
- The annual fee is \$450 for organizations with 151 to 200 members.
- For organizations with more than 500 members, the annual fee is \$250 for the first 500 members and \$1.25 for each additional member unless other arrangements have been agreed upon with approval of the subcommittee.

In early December, the USCCB Office sends a reminder to complete and submit the online annual report form and an invoice for the annual fee to the executive director. Payment is due by March 1 and the annual report form is due by January 31.

5.2.4 Consultation and Workshop Fees

- No fee is charged for consultation or workshops provided by the USCCB Subcommittee. Transportation, meals, and lodging are assumed by the office extending the invitation for visits and workshops/consultations.

5.2.5 Late Fees

- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the organization when the annual fee is not received by the due date, and \$50 for every month thereafter until the fee is paid in full. A grace period of 30 days is allowed for processing and mailing the check.
- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the organization if an annual report is not received by the due date or within a 30 day grace period allowed for mailing.
- A late fee of \$50 is charged to the organization when a check for review of certification standards, or certification standards and procedures, has not been received in the USCCB office within 60 days of sending the invoice to the executive director.

5.3 Reduced or Nonpayment of Fees

5.3.1 Requests for Reduced or Nonpayment of Fees

The USCCB Subcommittee shall maintain an internal policy of receiving written requests for a reduction or nonpayment of fees. Written requests shall be received in time for consideration during regularly scheduled USCCB Subcommittee meetings. Such fees would include fees for opening a certification file, fees for certification site reviews, fees for the reviews for approval of certification standards and/or procedures, annual certification fees, and late fees. The USCCB Subcommittee's determination for a reduction or nonpayment of established fees shall be based on established criteria and a vote by the members of the Subcommittee

5.3.2 Criteria for Reduced or Nonpayment of Fees

The USCCB Subcommittee shall establish criteria subject to a vote of approval by the members of the Subcommittee. Criteria shall include such considerations as the following: proven financial need; the number of members in membership structures of an organization; Catholic population and size of a diocese; the reduction of an organization's or diocesan office's budget and/or staff; the number of ecclesial ministers certified by an organization or diocesan office; the time and effort of the USCCB Subcommittee and staff for reviewing documentation for the approval of certification standards and procedures, and other criteria established by the USCCB Subcommittee, such as a sliding fee scale based on the per capita assessment of the Catholic population of dioceses.

5.4 Extensions

5.4.1 Requests for Extension of Payment of Fees or Submission of Annual Report

If diocesan or national organization directors communicate in writing with the staff of the USCCB Office regarding the reason for a delay in submitting their annual report or submitting payment for any of the fees listed in the fee schedules, the late fee may be waived. Directors shall also notify the staff of the date by which their late report or payment will be received in the USCCB Office.

6.0 Section Six

Policies and Procedures of the USCCB Subcommittee

The USCCB Subcommittee determines the policies and procedures for the approval of diocesan and organization certification standards and procedures and reserves the right to make revisions following the directives of the USCCB publications and the development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the Church.

6.1 Certification Standards and Procedures for a Specialized Ministry

The USCCB Subcommittee grants approval of certification standards and procedures only for those who exercise a specialized ministry in a diocese or national organization, such as a catechetical leader or youth ministry leader, etc. The USCCB Subcommittee does not grant approval for the certification standards and procedures for an ecclesial minister. Local ordinaries or national organizations determine which of the specialized ministers in their diocese or national organization are designated as ecclesial ministers.

6.2 Revision of this Certification Handbook

The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service reserves the right to revise, supplement, change, or rescind any policies or portion of the Handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. A regular formal evaluation process by the USCCB Subcommittee will ordinarily occur every four years.

6.3 Listing in the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory*

National Organizations and diocesan offices with USCCB Subcommittee-approved certification standards or certification standards and procedures are listed in the annual publication of the *USCCB Subcommittee Directory*.

6.4 Location of the USCCB Office of Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service

The USCCB Subcommittee office is located in Washington, D.C. All correspondence and shipments are to be sent to:

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Department of Catholic Education
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20017-1194

The telephone number for the office is: (202) 541-3154. The fax number is: (202) 541-3390. The e-mail address is: rgranados@usccb.org. More information can be found on the USCCB Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service website at www.usccb.org/certification.

Appendix 1 Glossary

This glossary contains working definitions used in USCCB publications. It is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

accreditation: The public status granted an institution or program by an authorized national or regional accrediting agency that assures the public the institution or program is in compliance with accreditation standards. Accreditation encourages the development of high-quality institutions and programs by reviewing an examination of mission, goals and objectives, curriculum, administration, faculty, resources, and achievements. Accreditation grants recognition to an institution or a program, thereby warranting public and professional confidence. (Note: The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service does not grant accreditation to formation programs, including both clinical pastoral education and ministry formation. However, it does offer consultation, upon request, to lay ministry formation programs and academic institutions for the purpose of improving the quality and effectiveness of these programs in accord with the guidance offered by *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* and by other relevant pastoral documents of the USCCB and the universal Magisterium.)

accreditation body: A recognized and voluntary nongovernmental agency that administers evaluation procedures and grants accreditation. (The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service is not an accreditation body.)

advisory committee: A committee composed of members both internal and external to a program that consults regularly with the program director regarding all aspects of the program and assists in the development of the program according to agreed upon standards. Professional consultation committees function in the same manner.

Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM): The organization seeks to affirm and promote lay ecclesial ministry in parishes and dioceses throughout the United States. The Alliance is comprised of five national Catholic ministry organizations working collaboratively to produce common standards for lay ecclesial ministry and to implement and promote the certification of lay ecclesial ministers. The Alliance partners include the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Subcommittees (FDLC), National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM), National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) and National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). The USCCB Subcommittee first approved its certification standards in 2011. (See the ACLEM website at www.lemcertification.org.)

annual fee: Each organization or diocese pays an annual fee. (See the link to the fee structure, which is based on the size of the organization, on the membership website.¹⁵)

annual report: Each organization or diocese whose standards and procedures have been approved prepares an annual report for the subcommittee. This report highlights and provides reasons for any changes in structure, procedures, process, or persons involved in certification as well as challenges faced and lessons learned. Of particular importance is information on how the process has been

¹⁵ <http://usccb.site-ym.com/>

enhanced to reflect the four pillars described in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* and how resources created by the USCCB to assist them in formation of candidates have been used.

application: This on-line form is part of the process of establishing a relationship with the Subcommittee. Upon contacting the USCCB Office staff stating that the arch/diocesan office or national organization is seeking approval for its certification standards and procedures from the USCCB Subcommittee, the USCCB Office staff will send the director or executive director the following information:

- A user name, password and link to the certification membership website;
- A User's Guide to the Certification Membership Website with instructions on how to register, access online forms, submit documentation, communicate and join groups; and
- A fee schedule.

Instructions on accessing and completing the application form can be found in the User's Guide. After reviewing this Certification Handbook, reviewing the User's Guide to the Certification Membership Website and creating a profile with information about the arch/diocesan office or organization and the director or executive director, the director or executive director shall complete the online application form on the membership website. The form asks for a PDF version of a letter or memo of approval from either the local ordinary or Board of Directors. The director or executive director shall also send the original copy of this letter to the USCCB Office. For more details see section 2.0 in the Certification Handbook.

Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE): The ACPE is a national organization of ecumenical educators and ministers who elect accreditation subcommittee members from their regions to accredit clinical pastoral education programs. Its mission is to foster experience-based theological education that combines the practice of pastoral care with qualified supervision and peer-group reflection and that is grounded in a person-centered approach to religious ministry. The ACPE Accreditation Subcommittee accredits ACPE centers, and the ACPE Certification Subcommittee certifies CPE supervisors.

authorization: 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 a 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.¹⁶

Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA): A professional organization whose mission is to foster the professional and theological growth of Catholic campus ministers and to promote the mission of the Church in higher education. The USCCB Subcommittee first approved its certification standards and procedures in 1992.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Co-workers*, 54

¹⁷ See the CCMA website at www.ccmanet.org

certificate: A written statement that a participant has completed a program or course of studies through attendance, participation, and successful completion of program requirements.

certification: A formal process whereby a candidate's competency in a specialized ministry is evaluated and acknowledged by an authorized committee in a diocese or organization. The candidate is judged to have adequately demonstrated that he or she has met the certification standards of the diocese or organization, and the candidate is granted formal recognition for achieving certification for a stipulated period of time before renewal of certification is due.

chaplains: Canon Law (Canons 564-572) restricts the title "chaplain" to ordained priests. In 1997, several Congregations of the Holy See issued an Instruction, "On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests." This Instruction was given approval by Pope John Paul II and further specified that it is unlawful for non-ordained faithful to assume the title of "chaplain." However, in the United States, hiring institutions (health care, prison, and other specialized institutions) will only employ "chaplains" who are board certified and hold this professional credential for spiritual care services. Catholic women religious and lay faithful, who have met standards approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops through its Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service and who have been endorsed by their own local bishop, are also essential representatives of the Church in most institutions today for maintaining a Catholic presence, for assuring adherence to the "Ethical and Religious Guidelines," ensuring the availability of the sacraments to Catholics, and for providing direction and comfort to physicians, staff, and family members of the sick and dying.

To retain this very important ministry and to be faithful to the letter and spirit of Canon Law and the 1997 Instruction, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) separates out "endorsement for ministry" from the "certification by the profession." The NACC, in the name of the USCCB, previously did both.¹⁸ The NACC issues a certificate for "the profession" as a legally separate 501(C) 3 no longer with the reading "and by the authority of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops." As is theologically and canonically appropriate, the bishop of the local Church may choose to commission as "lay ecclesial health care ministers" those who have obtained the professional certification to do those things which the hiring institutions entrust to certified chaplains regardless of religion or ecclesiastical standing within a given faith. This distinction enables NACC to be faithful to Canon Law and the same time meet the requirements of institutions that employ and provide compensation only for those certified as "chaplains."

clinical pastoral education (CPE) program: A program of ministry formation for chaplains administered in a clinical setting under the supervision of a certified CPE supervisor. It offers students a structured system of components, including a unified curriculum, a student learning contract, participation in peer groups, and the practice of ministry in a supervised context with formal reporting of this ministry, theological reflection on ministry, a multidisciplinary approach, and an evaluation of the achievement of learning contract goals. The CPE program occurs within a specified time frame, called a CPE unit, during which participants strive for personal growth and

¹⁸ For a more detailed explanation see Appendix ____, for a copy of the May 7, 2004 letter of Bishop Melczek. (then Episcopal Liaison to the NACC) to the U.S. Bishops and reprinted with permission of NACC.

professional competence as chaplains and ministers of pastoral care. The USCCB Subcommittee no longer accredits CPE programs; however, the USCCB continues to honor the approved CPE programs using Standards of the USCCB/CCA over which the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) is offering guidance.

commendation: Acknowledgment that an individual, group, or program deserves special recognition.

competence: The demonstrated and proven ability of candidates for certification to meet certification standards approved by the USCCB Subcommittee.

competencies (core or specialized): Knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, values, and/or traits required to be eligible for certification in four major areas: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. Core competencies are foundational and common to all specialized ministries. Specialized competencies are unique to a particular specialized ministry.

competency: The requisite attainment of a level of proficiency associated with specific knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, values, and/or traits for a specialized ministry.

consultation: A review of standards and procedures used for certification by a diocese or national organization or of programs of formation offered by dioceses or academic institutions. The purpose of such a discussion is to improve the quality and effectiveness by sharing best practices and guidance in accord with *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* or other relevant pastoral documents, concerns and priorities of the USCCB and the universal magisterium. A request for a consultation may be made to the USCCB Office as an informal discussion, conference call, or meeting. The more formal review is a review of standards and procedures and includes a peer review and liaison visit

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord (Co-Workers): A resource for diocesan bishops and for all others who are responsible for guiding the development of lay ecclesial ministry in the United States. Developed by the Committee on the Laity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, this document was approved by the full body of bishops at its November 2005 General Meeting. It provides a common frame of reference for ensuring that the development of lay ecclesial ministry continues in ways that are faithful to the Church's theological and doctrinal tradition and that respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations. 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.

cultural diversity: The Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service affirms diversity and seeks information through an annual report each year from dioceses and organizations whose standards and procedures have been approved regarding the gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of diocesan staff, committee or board members, and the general population or membership served. This information can be best collected from certified leaders or members on a voluntary basis as part of a general survey of leadership or a separate annual anonymous survey. It is important that leaders understand that they are being asked these questions with a goal of tracking efforts to better reflect the actual diversity of the Church being served.

detailed review : see '*review*'.

endorsement: The formal recognition by the bishop or by the bishop’s delegate in the diocese of a candidate’s residence and/or place of ministry or by a candidate’s major religious superior if the candidate is a member of a religious congregation. Only Catholics who are in good standing in the Church can be endorsed.¹⁹

equivalency: The documented and demonstrated ability to meet the diocesan requirements to be eligible for certification.

evaluation: A formal and planned process after an assessment for determining whether accreditation standards have been met by all components of the program, as well as recognition of the strengths and limitations of the program.

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC): A national organization composed primarily of members of diocesan liturgical subcommittees, worship offices, and/or the equivalent diocesan liturgical structures. These diocesan liturgical personnel, appointed by their bishops, have responsibility for the promotion of the liturgical life of their dioceses. The organization is a partner of ACLEM. The USCCB Subcommittee first approved its certification standards and procedures in 2011. (See the FDLC website at www.fdlc.org.)

four pillars of formation: The four areas of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—that provide a framework for the formation of deacons and priests and for lay ecclesial ministers²⁰.

guidelines: Suggestions for contents, procedures, and policies in developing, maintaining, or evaluating programs.

human formation: One of the four pillars or areas of formation. Human formation seeks to develop the lay ecclesial minister’s human qualities and character by fostering a healthy and well-balanced personality for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service. These qualities are critical to form wholesome relationships and necessary for the ministers to become apt instruments of God’s love and compassion (*Co-workers*, 36; 34).

¹⁹ For several decades and in growing numbers, laypeople have undertaken a wide variety of roles in Church ministries. Many of these roles presume a significant degree of preparation, formation, and professional competence. They require authorization of the hierarchy in order for the person to serve publicly in the local church. They entrust to laity responsibilities for leadership in particular areas of ministry and thereby draw certain laypersons into a close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.

²⁰ See *Co-Workers* [34]; John Paul II, *On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day* [*Pastores Dabo Vobis*], www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html; *Program of Priestly Formation*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/upload/ProgramforPriestlyFormation.pdf>; *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons*, <http://old.usccb.org/Deacon/DeaconDirectory.pdf>; and *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, http://lemcertification.org/docs/ACLEM_Final_Standards_20111115.pdf.

indicator: Something that constitutes an “effective” demonstration of a particular skill. Each skill within the core skills section has a set of competency indicators. To be competent, one should demonstrate many but not necessarily all of the indicators for each competency. Indicators not demonstrated represent areas for growth.

intellectual formation: One of the four pillars or areas of formation. Intellectual formation seeks to develop the lay ecclesial minister’s adequate knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the Catholic faith, which is rooted in God’s revelation and embodied in the living tradition of the Church. It consists chiefly of study of the sacred sciences but draws also on a wider range of other disciplines: philosophy, literature and the arts, psychology, sociology, counseling, medical ethics, culture and language studies, business administration, leadership and organizational development, law, and so on. Although the sacred sciences are the main focus here, study of the other disciplines can be valuable and relevant to effective ministry in certain situations (*Co-workers*, 47).

intercultural competency: The goal of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church for ministry leaders to increase their capacity to welcome, receive, and encourage all emerging cultural groups to assume their leadership role in the Church. The five learning modules of the guidelines on *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* include formation in the following areas²¹:

1. Frame issues of diversity in terms of the Church’s identity and mission to evangelize.
2. Seek an understanding of culture and how it works.
3. Develop intercultural communication skills in pastoral settings.
4. Expand one’s knowledge of the obstacles that impede effective intercultural relations.
5. Foster ecclesial integration rather than assimilation in Church settings, with a spirituality of reconciliation and mission.

justice issues: A comprehensive concept that encompasses all aspects of justice; for example, cultural, economic, ecological, gender, political, and racial.

lay ecclesial minister: As described in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Lay Ministry Subcommittee report entitled “Lay Ecclesial Ministry: State of the Question,” a lay ecclesial minister is a fully initiated lay member of the Christian faithful, including vowed religious, who responds to the empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism and Confirmation to participate in ministry; who has prepared himself or herself through a process of prayer discernment; who has received the necessary formation, education, and training to function competently within a given area of ministry; who intentionally brings personal competencies and gifts to serve in the Church’s mission through a specific ministry of ecclesial leadership, and who does so with community recognition and support; who has been entrusted with a formal and public role in ministry, or upon whom an office has been conferred by competent ecclesiastical authority; who has been installed in a ministry through the authority of the bishop or his representative, perhaps using a public ritual; who commits to performing the duties of a ministry in a stable manner; and/or who is

²¹ The Catholic Church’s concern with diversity is not just a practical matter but something integral to the Church’s very identity and mission. Proficiency in matters of culture and intercultural relations is an essential feature of the ongoing process of conversion by which the Gospel becomes life for people. For more about the guidelines for intercultural competency, the content of the training, and resources, go to www.usccb.org and search for “intercultural competency training.”

a paid staff person (full-time or part-time) or a volunteer with responsibility and the necessary authority for institutional leadership in a particular area of ministry. (See also *Co-Workers*, 10)

leadership institute: The Diocesan Educational/Catechetical Leadership Institute, which was begun in 1997 as a five-day orientation program for new or nearly new diocesan leaders.²²

liaison visit: An in-person evaluation and coaching of an organization or diocesan office that takes place after the USCCB Office review of documentation and before submission of the self-study report and initial documentation for review by the peer review committee. The liaison visit includes a liaison’s evaluation of interviews, oral report of findings, and assistance to directors with compiling reports and documentation, suggestions for improvement, and written report, which will contribute to the overall peer review committee report to the USCCB Subcommittee in the initial approval review process.

limitation: A statement in a self-study or a report of a site liaison that indicates that an organization or diocesan office needs to address a standard, criterion, guideline, process, policy, or procedure to improve the program.

ministerial priesthood: The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, “each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ.” While being “ordered one to another,” they differ in essence.²³ While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. It is a mission of service in the likeness of Jesus who came to serve and not be served. The ministerial priesthood is a privileged means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church in prolonging his mission throughout time. For this reason, it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the Sacrament of Holy Orders.²⁴

The characteristics that differentiate the ministerial priesthood of bishops and priests from the common priesthood of the faithful may be summarized in the following fashion: (1) the ministerial priesthood is rooted in the apostolic succession and vested with the faculty and the responsibility of

²² Although originally meant for catechetical and Catholic school leadership, these institutes were made available online for free to the general public in 2010. Many of the topics covered would be helpful for anyone in a leadership role. For more on what is in each track, go to www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/leadership-institute/. The USCCB Subcommittee asks each organization or diocesan office whose standards and procedures for certification are approved to report on how the leadership institute has been used to assist with initial or ongoing formation.

²³ See Pius XII, On the Sacred Liturgy [Mediator Dei], no.43, www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei_en.html; and Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium], no. 10, in Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery [Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996].

²⁴ See Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. [Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000], nos. 1542, 1547.

acting in the person of Christ, the Head and the Shepherd²⁵ and (2) it is a priesthood that renders its sacred ministers servants of Christ and of the Church by means of authoritative proclamation of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and the pastoral direction of the faithful. In other words, the ministerial priesthood continues the mission received by the Apostles from Christ. For these reasons, the path of formation for seminarians is categorically distinct from that of candidates for lay ecclesial ministry. In the same way, the lay ecclesial minister necessitates a program of formation proper to his or her form of ministry or service in the Church.

ministry formation program: A program to assist the participants with understanding their gifts, call, role, and mission in the Church and in the world, and with developing skills to respond to the call. Components of a program include a mission, goals, and objectives based on the perspectives of the Vatican II and post-conciliar documents, and the needs of the local Church; a curriculum based on the program's mission and its goals and objectives that integrate the four pillars of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—formation; a program director who administers the program; instructional faculty who assist in the formation process; and sufficient resources for the program to operate according to its mission.

National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC): The NACC, as a national association of certified Catholic chaplains and CPE supervisors, aspires to be the forum for dialogue between the Catholic Church and chaplaincy in responding to new realities and the initiation of continual renewal and transformation of the practice of chaplaincy. (See the NACC website at www.nacc.org.)

National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM): A professional organization that supports, educates, and advocates for lay ministers and promotes the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church. The organization is a partner of ACLEM. The USCCB Subcommittee approved its certification standards in 2011. (See the NALM website at www.nalm.org.)

National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL): A professional organization for catechetical leaders that provides networking, resources, and training opportunities for its members and those engaged in catechetical ministry. The organization is a partner of ACLEM. The USCCB Subcommittee approved its certification standards in 2011. (See the NCCL website at www.nccl.org.)

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM): An organization of diocesan, regional, and national structures encompassing the United States and its territories that strives to raise awareness of and foster the ongoing development of ministry to, with, by, and for youth. The organization is a partner of ACLEM. The USCCB Subcommittee first approved its certification standards in 2011. (See the NFCYM website at www.nfcym.org.)

National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM): A membership organization composed primarily of musicians, musician-liturgists, clergy, and other leaders of prayer. NPM is devoted to serving the life and mission of the Church by fostering the art of musical liturgy in Catholic worshipping communities. The organization is a partner of ACLEM. The USCCB Subcommittee approved standards and procedures in 2011. (See the NPM website at www.npm.org.)

²⁵ Pope John Paul II, On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day [Pastores Dabo Vobis], no. 4, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html

ongoing formation: The ongoing program of academic studies, days of reflection or retreat, lectures, readings, workshops, and other activities that enhances the competencies of specialized ministers. Ongoing formation is often understood as continuing education. This formation should integrate a candidate's self-evaluation and growth plan for each of the four pillars of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

organization: A national professional organization of specialized ecclesial ministers or an organizational structure in a region or state Catholic conference that submits certification standards or certification standards and procedures to the USCCB Subcommittee for approval.

pastoral formation: One of the four pillars or areas of formation. Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry (*Co-workers*, 47).

peer review committee: An essential part of the approval process. The members are named by the chair of the USCCB Subcommittee and include at least one bishop member, office staff person, consultant, and/or advisor of the office from a similar organization or diocese. For more details, see *peer review process*.

peer review process: A process guided by the peer review committee that involves a liaison visit by one member of the peer review committee followed by a detailed review of the self-study report and documentation submitted to the peer review committee by the diocese or organization seeking approval for its standards and procedures. After documentation is reviewed, an online presentation/meeting is arranged for a representative of the organization or diocese to answer any questions from the peer review committee. Upon completion of that presentation, the peer review committee members vote to recommend approval or not. At the next meeting of the USCCB Subcommittee, the peer review committee's recommendation would be discussed and a final decision made. The decision would then be communicated to the organization or diocese after the meeting with any recommendations or additional requests.

periodic review cycle: A period of seven years during which an organization or diocesan office strives to fulfill the recommendations of the last periodic review and to respond to changing needs of the local Church and participants.

policy: A set of rules and/or directions in a designated area congruent with standards, procedures, and guidelines by which decisions are made.

procedure: A set of mandatory steps to be followed in a regular and defined order for the accomplishment of a designated purpose.

follow up report: A report sent to the USCCB Subcommittee that is written by a director and certification commission/committee after receiving notification of the USCCB Subcommittee decision and recommendations.. It states when and how recommendations in the site review report will be integrated into the program based on a detailed multi-year plan with clear goals, objectives and timeline.

recommendation: An advisory course of action for improvement included in a peer review committee report and/or USCCB Subcommittee notification of decision letter.

renewal of certification: A process through which candidates certified by the diocese or organization demonstrates their commitment to maintain and enhance the competencies called for by certification standards and requirements. Renewal of certification takes place after a period of time designated by the organization or diocesan office.

report of a site liaison: The written report of a site liaison to the director and peer review committee that states the site liaison's findings regarding the program's process of self-study review, compliance with standards, affirmation of strengths, recognition of limitations, and recommendations to improve the program, which will contribute to the overall report of the peer review committee.

review: The formal process of assessment or examination of all components of an organization or diocesan office to recognize strengths and limitation and to evaluate whether the organization or office is in compliance with USCCB Subcommittee recommendations. Also referred to as a '*detailed review*'.

role of bishop: Entrusted with the pastoral care of all within his diocese, the diocesan bishop oversees all catechetical (CIC, c. 386), liturgical (c. 387), and apostolic works (c. 394) carried out in the diocese, and he enjoys the authority necessary to meet these responsibilities (c. 381). (See also *Co-Workers*, 55.) Those certified for ecclesial ministry and service seek the endorsement or authorization by the bishop in the diocese they serve because they as individuals and their professional organizations acknowledge the relationship of all ministries to the bishop and therefore seek to be known by him or his delegate and to be acknowledged to be in full communion with him and approved to serve in their role. Certification procedures assess the competence of ecclesial ministers and should not be confused with any form of authorization for ministry, which is the province of the local bishop.

self-study process: A period of time within which an organization or diocesan office director and a certification commission/committee carefully examine all the components of the office for compliance with USCCB Subcommittee standards, recommendations, policies, and procedures; identify the strengths and limitations; and make recommendations for improving quality.

self-study report: A report written by an organization or diocesan office director and certification commission/committee stating the results of the self-study process and the office's compliance with USCCB Subcommittee recommendations. The report also includes a description of the strengths, limitations, noncompliance with standards, and recommendations to improve or change the office.

site liaison: A reviewer appointed by the USCCB Subcommittee who meets established criteria and travels to the site of an organization or diocesan office to interview and coach those involved in the certification process and with developing the report to the peer review committee in order to make recommendations to improve any discrepancies between what is found in the report submitted to the USCCB Office and what is observed in the review of the site.

spiritual formation: One of the four pillars or areas of formation. Spiritual formation aims to arouse and animate the hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in life and ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions. It promotes and strengthens that fundamental

conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one's life. Openness to this ongoing conversion is a prerequisite for fruitful spiritual formation. (See *Co-workers*, 38.)

sponsor: The authority that partially or totally finances a ministry formation program so that it can operate.

standards: Criteria established by which the competence of ministers is assessed and evaluated for certification. Each of the four pillars of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—is to be addressed in development of these criteria. (See *Co-Workers*, 34.)

statement of approval: A statement given to dioceses and organizations whose standards and procedures for certification have been approved. The statement lists their name, the name of the role or roles approved the year they were approved, and the year their approval ends.

USCCB Subcommittee: The term used for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service. The USCCB Subcommittee has a mandate from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to establish, review, and approve standards and procedures to be used on a voluntary basis by dioceses and national organizations for the certification of ecclesial ministers. It also offers consultative services aimed at improving the quality of lay ministry formation programs that are sponsored by dioceses and academic institutions.

USCCB Subcommittee-approved: A phrase that refers to the approval of certification standards or approval of the certification standards and procedures for certifying specialized ecclesial ministers by dioceses and organizations. This indicates that the subcommittee has been asked on a voluntary basis to review the materials submitted and has discerned that they embody the concerns and priorities of the bishops of the United States, and if followed, they will help to ensure that those certified, according to his or her status in the Church, are humanly and spiritually mature, well-prepared through education and formation, possess professional competence and pastoral skills, and adhere to the authentic teaching of the Church. (The subcommittee's approval is guided by each of the four pillars of formation outlined in current national and universal church documents such as *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*.)

Appendix 2

Sample Code of Ethics Statements from Members of the Alliance for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM)

- *From National Conference for Catechetical Leadership - Code of Ethics for Parish Catechetical Leaders*
 - A Parish Catechetical Leader maintains right relationships by respecting appropriate boundaries with colleagues and parishioners of all ages.

- *From National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) - Code of Ethics for Directors of Music Ministries*
 - Members shall be aware and abide by the Safe Environment Guidelines of their respective (arch)diocese, including passing successful background checks.

- *Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions -Code of Ethics for Directors of Worship/Liturgy*
 - Members maintain appropriate relationships with colleagues and parishioners of all ages as specified in diocesan guidelines.

- *National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry - Code of Ethics for Youth Ministry Leaders Revised February 2008*
 - Note: this organization has the most detailed policies including respect of all, conduct guidelines and importance of recognizing the signs and reporting any abuse.
Parish/Diocesan Policies
 - 7. Youth ministry leaders know of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational, and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safe environment, risk management, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

- *National Association for Lay Ministry - Code of Ethics*

The following code of ethics was approved by the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) Board of Directors in 2003 and was included in the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers which was published in 2006.

 - Pastoral ministers report inappropriate conduct by a colleague in ministry to appropriate church/civil authorities in order to protect others from harm.
 - Pastoral ministers distinguish clearly between statements and actions they make as individuals, as representatives of the community of faith, and as pastoral professionals.
 - Pastoral ministers are aware that they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, pastoral ministers are particularly aware of the need for clear, appropriate and healthy physical, sexual, intellectual, emotional and spiritual boundaries. Pastoral ministers fully comply and act in accord with the USCCB statement Charter for Protection of Children and Young People (revised edition, November 2002).