

NOTES

1. See, for example, Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), in which the framework for theological and ethical decision making is followed by a discussion of two issues, sexuality (a consideration of boundaries) and confidentiality. Prof. Gula has since written a new work on ministry focusing on questions of justice. See *Just Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010).
2. For essays exploring virtue approaches to pastoral ministry, see James F. Keenan and Joseph Kotva Jr., ed., *Practice What You Preach: Virtues, Ethics and Power in the Lives of Pastoral Ministers and Their Congregations* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1999). For a more in-depth introduction to virtue ethics as a method for Christian ethical reflection, see Joseph Kotva Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1997).
3. The importance of role models in education is well known. See, e.g., Plato's Republic. For contemporary analysis, see A. A. Bucher, *The Influence of Models in Forming Moral Identity*, *International Journal of Educational Research* 27, no. 7 (1997). For a summary, see Daniel Rose, "The Potential of Role-Model Education," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* Web site, (2004), http://www.infed.org/biblio/role_model_education.htm (accessed 18 March 2010).
4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1999), 1103a.
5. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire, Dragonflies Draw Flame," *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918; New York: Bartleby.com, 1999), line 9.
6. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095b.
7. All other things are not always equal—virtuous people can experience random misfortune just like the vicious can of course. However, according to Aristotle, virtues assist us in dealing with misfortune when it strikes, allowing us to cope with as much dignity and good-heartedness as the circumstances allow. To be, for example, impoverished and virtuous is better than to be impoverished and vicious—the virtuous impoverished person will be happier. Poverty is bad, but virtue always helps.
8. See William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2000).
9. James F. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–729.
10. Barbara J. Blodgett, "Trustworthy or Accountable: Which is Better?," *Reflective Practice* 30 (2010): 34–45.
11. Gordon J. Hilsman, "Tandem Roles of Written Standards and Personal Virtue in Appraising Professional Practice," *Reflective Practice* 30 (2010): 54–57.
12. See, e.g., H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (Westminster, MD: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).
13. U2, *Walk On*, Universal Import, 2001.

Accountability Issues in the Supervision of Lay Pastoral Ministry

Ron Sunderland and Ted Smith

The notion of accountability is deeply embedded in human understanding of the relationship with the deity. It appears in the first words and images of Torah and, thereafter, is never absent. Adam and the woman are set in the Garden with freedom to use its bounty with one exception: when they abuse their privileges, they are held accountable and must live with the consequences. A similar result occurs in the days of Noah (Gen. 6–7) and is repeated endlessly (for example, Ps. 95). Everett Fox, in his definitive exposition of the Torah, notes that in Deuteronomy, "Moshe's voice functions fairly indistinguishably from God's own—and then closes off the text by stipulating that nothing in the future is to be added to or subtracted from it. So we are dealing with a text of directly authoritative character...Hence, Deuteronomy introduces into the Bible for the first time the concept of canon—a bounded, accepted body of authoritative literature."¹ The text is instructive, demanding of Jews, then and now, what is expected of God's people: "Thou shalt" is the repeated command (Lev. 1:1, Num. 5:5, and Deut. 5).

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Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL WARRANTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Fox indicates that the inclusion of Deuteronomy as the fifth book of the Torah signaled the task of “explaining” or instructing Israel regarding the terms of the covenant relationship of God with Israel—a covenant in which the nation’s accountability is firmly declared. Fox cites G. Earnest Wright with approval: “The central purpose of Deuteronomy is to furnish Israel with a complete order of faith and life which is the prerequisite for a prosperous and secure existence on the God-given land. The historian [of the preceding books] shows how Israel failed to keep it and what the consequences were.”² Fox states that Deuteronomy focuses mainly on the relationship between God and Israel: “Every act Israel performs as a community, and every one done by individuals, is to be seen in that light. As elsewhere in the Bible, breaking one of God’s rules means not merely a violation of a statute but an affront to...the sovereign Lord, and thus a grave risk to society’s well-being and even to its very existence.”³ Israel’s failure to maintain its covenant agreement and its accountability for that failure is a constant theme throughout its history.

The covenant relationship is spelled out in terms of obligations and expectations, and mutuality and vulnerability. When a sacred scroll was read before King Josiah, the king acknowledged God’s wrath against Judah because, he declared, “Our ancestors did not obey the words [of Torah]” (II Kings 22:13). When the king had read from the scroll, acknowledging the people’s accountability to God, he reaffirmed the covenant with God: committing the nation to keep [the Lord’s] commandments, decrees, and statutes by performing the words of the covenant which he and all the people made (23:3).

Christian Scriptures

The theme of accountability is carried forward into the New Testament. Explicit references in each of the Gospels indicate the sternness Jesus expressed toward those whose hardness of heart and unrepentant spirit left them vulnerable to God’s wrath: failure to forgive one’s brother or sister *from the heart* or to open one’s heart to a neighbor’s need will lead to eternal punishment (Matt. 18:23–35; 25:41–46); causing harm to a child or stumbling into wrong behavior can lead to a similar end (Mark 9:42–48); failure of a servant to treat his fellow servants well or to use his master’s assets prudently will lead to punishment (Luke 12:41–46; 19:11–27; 20:11–19). Throughout his Gospel account, John declares that the religious elders stood condemned by their intransigence and their failure to believe (John 9:13ff). The writers of the

Epistles warn of the danger of failure to believe the Gospel and to conform one’s life to the spirit that was in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 2:6–8; 1 Cor. 10:1ff; Gal. 6:7–8). The authors of the Gospels and Epistles wrote about our accountability for our actions and the intent that lies behind them. Yet there is another imperative that is more fundamental, for it determines both intent and the behaviors that ensue: accountability for the baptismal vows through which believers are instated within the gospel story.

It is said of Martin Luther that, in his darkest moments, he took refuge in the reality of his baptism, uttering, “Thank God, I have been baptized.” Christians who declare their confirmation of those baptismal vows in their Confirmation services reiterate them in each Eucharistic celebration. Every Christian, having received the Holy Spirit and thereby a particular gift of the Spirit, is charged to exercise that gift in acts of loving service (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4) to the buildup of the body of Christ, the Church. The Gospel record indicates that we are accountable for our employment of the gifts we have received; according to Matthew 25, our fealty to the spirit of Christ will be judged. Among those Spirit-endowed gifts is that of our care of one another—and of those who despitefully use us, let us remember—which today we call the pastoral ministry of the Church. As with every gift of the Spirit, each person’s sense of call to a specific ministry must be confirmed by the calling congregation, and each member so gifted is to be held accountable for his or her ministry

The Social Contract

Before turning to examine our accountability for fulfilling our baptismal vows, it is noteworthy that the notion of accountability not only has biblical warrant, but it is also part of the social contract, written into the fabric of every society. Most if not all cultures operate on the basis of moral conduct, truth-telling, and relationships between their members that expresses the ethos of the respective culture and expects accountability of individuals for maintaining the norms each society has established. In the United States, this social contract is enshrined in the nation’s Constitution and its Preamble. In many cultures, such codes, if not written, are understood by their respective members, as are the consequences of breaching the culture’s norms. Codes of professional ethics are written for each professional community. Employee job descriptions require accountability of every individual on a company’s payroll. In the authors’ hospital, accountability is one of the five core values that all employees are expected to abide by.

The Church as a Covenantal Community

What is held by society at large is true for religious communities, their congregations, and for individual members, vividly expressed, for example, in the theme of the 1963 Congress of the Anglican Communion *Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ*. The Toronto congress was called to address the disparity between “sending” and “receiving” churches that constituted the Anglican Communion. It called for a “peer-ship” in place of the dominant-submissive relationship that had lasted from colonial times, noting that *mutual* and *responsibility* are relational terms, and required of national churches that they accept and respect each other as peers. The notion of *mutual accountability* emphasized that their relationships were those of partnerships in mission. The stresses plainly visible among Anglicans world-wide since the mid-1980s illustrate graphically the level of accountability expected of each other by the various parties to the discussion and the consequences when individuals and their communities cannot reconcile their understandings of “mutual accountability.” Accountability of the Church for its obedience to God’s call is applied to every aspect of the Church’s life. We turn to pastoral ministry as a particular ministry of the Church.

Clinical Pastoral Education Centers as Covenantal Communities

The notion of accountability has been a fundamental characteristic of the clinical pastoral education (CPE) movement and its centers and members throughout its existence. CPE supervisors and students alike are held accountable for their behaviors in regard to their educational processes as well as for the character of their services extended to clients or patients and colleagues in their respective clinical settings. The androgyny basic to the CPE enterprise expects students to commit themselves to the learning process, expressed in the form of a *learning contract*, often termed a *learning covenant*. It is a relational system that depends on the mutual accountability that student and supervisor expect of each other. In this paper, we extend this general statement to the Lay Ministry program as an outgrowth of our CPE experience at The Methodist Hospital in Houston’s Texas Medical Center.

LAY PASTORAL EDUCATION AND MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Brief Description

Laypeople have filled a role in the ministry to patients at The Methodist Hospital for over fifty years. A lay minister and former patient known famil-

iarly throughout the hospital as “Uncle Charlie,” began his daily ministry in 1960 as he served patients under the oversight of the Department of Pastoral Care and Education. The formal introduction of a corps of trained laypeople was launched in 2001 as lay ministers were recruited to augment the services of the permanent staff chaplains. The training program was up-dated in 2006 with the introduction of two new programs—the Lay Ministry Institute and the Lay Ministry College.

The Lay Ministry Institute provides a brief introduction to basic pastoral skills based on the action-reflection model of clinical pastoral education. Following a weekend orientation session to ministry in a hospital setting, participants meet every two weeks on Saturday mornings over three months with a curriculum that focuses primarily upon basic tools of pastoral listening and grief theory and ministry. Participants present their verbatim reports of patient visits for peer review and discussion. Completion of the Lay Ministry Institute is a pre-requisite for participation in the hospital’s lay ministry program and for some participants it is an entrée to the College.

The Lay Ministry College is an advanced, one year program designed for laypeople who experience a call to pastoral ministry and seek a forum to become more skilled and to discern where their call might lead them. Their future may take one of three directions: (1) continue as a layperson in the general ministry of the church or an institution (hospital, nursing home); (2) continue as a layperson and become a paid staff person (full- or part-time) in a congregation’s pastoral ministry; or (3) seek ordination and serve in the representative ministry of the church. The intent to live out this call and to discern a future direction is central to each participant’s application, screening interview, participation in the course of training, and in the ensuing assignment in pastoral ministry in the hospital or in the lay ministry of a congregation. (During the discussion that follows, references to the College curriculum and program are applied equally to the Institute, although adapted to the less intensive structure of the latter.)

The 100-hour Lay Ministry College curriculum includes the basic pastoral skills of the Lay Institute, augmented by segments on theology and ministry, advanced grief ministry, and cultural issues in pastoral ministry. The curriculum emphasizes the reporting of pastoral visits for discussion in weekly group sessions. The pedagogy of both the Institute and College programs, in common with all clinically-based education, presumes that students accept responsibility for identifying and meeting their learning goals. Supervisors

accept their responsibility to provide students with a creative and challenging learning environment.

The first and second College classes were structured on a four-semester, two-year curriculum model. The first class began in February 2006 with fourteen participants and concluded in December 2008 with twelve graduates. The second class started in February 2007 with ten students and finished in December 2009 with eight completing the program. Given its two-year length and voluntary nature, the attrition rate for the Lay Ministry College of fifteen and twenty percent respectively was remarkably low. Graduates received certificates indicating completion of the program issued jointly by the hospital and the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. With the beginning of the third class of College participants in September 2009, the structure and marketing of the program was revised to be a one-year program incorporating the same total of 100 hours of didactic and verbatim sessions and fulfillment of the pastoral assignments within the hospital on which the program is based.

Most lay ministers in the Methodist Hospital program commit to serve for two to three hours per week (others visit bi-weekly). The program enables the Spiritual Care department to move closer to the goal of visiting each patient at least once during their hospital stay and as soon after admission as possible. The disadvantage lies in the fact that, with today's rapid discharge of patients, many lay ministers have minimal opportunity to engage in long-term ministry. This is remedied for lay ministers who apply their hospital-based learning within their local congregations—visits that Lay Ministry College participants report for supervision by their hospital supervisors.

Because as lay people, few Lay Ministry Institute and College participants have explored their self-identification as a caregiver (compared with the rigor expected of ordained pastors and seminarians), this process is one of the principal emphases of both Institute and College programs; awareness of each participant's sense of pastoral identity is a constant theme of the course. Our experience with the first and second classes of College graduates and interviews with the third class enrolled in September 2009 indicates that most participants who opt for a role as lay ministers within a hospital also anticipate applying their experience within their respective congregations. With thirty-one College participants to date, hospitals within our system have been the primary focus of their ministry. As will be noted below, sadly, most of their own pastors have been reticent to authorize their ministry in congregational care.

Supervisory Issues Unique to Lay Ministry

The program requires lay ministers to submit their pastoral visits for supervision by the department's CPE supervisors, as one means of ensuring participant accountability. Since neither Institute nor College qualifies for ACPE credit, what kind of leverage is available to the supervisors when faced with resistance? Thus far, student commitment to learning, including presentation of patient visit reports, has been remarkably high among thirty-two College and eighty-four Institute participants. External verification of this claim was voluntarily offered by a high-ranking leader of a United Methodist agency who visited a typical evening session. "Everyone leaned forward in their seats during the verbatim presentation and I was moved to match their investment." His comment was especially meaningful since "it came after a long day."

The programs' faculty place a high degree of importance on the support that staff chaplains provide to lay ministers assigned to the hospital's clinical areas and on the caliber of the oversight by which their accountability for their respective ministries is maintained. With respect to students' comfort with writing and submitting verbatim reports of their patient visits, we have determined that the written verbatim is not the only format for supervision. Some of our lay ministers are more comfortable making oral reports, either in peer group settings or in one-on-one meetings with their supervisors.

The supervisory covenant so central to the CPE process is no less important to both Institute and College programs. It begins with an understanding of the character of the Supervisor-Student relationship that underlies that covenant. We perceive the central issue in the relationship as one of authority rather than of power. The terms *teacher* and *student* too easily imply that power is wielded by those who teach trainee lay ministers who are neophytes or blank slates—in St. Paul's words, those on a milk diet not ready for "solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2; see also 1 Pet. 2:2). While seminary students presumably have begun to explore their pastoral identity, lay ministers are unfamiliar with this concept and its language, yet they quickly grasp its meaning and embrace it. They are entering a sphere which in the recent past was regarded as the province of the ordained clergy. Some may be confronted by people (clergy and laity) who still have not accepted a theology of ministry defined in terms of baptism, charisms (Rom. 12:1–18; 1 Cor. 12:1–13ff, and Eph. 4:1–16), and call to ministry and who expect pastoral care from the (senior) pastor.

Most lay people understandably are anxious as they complete the orientation process and are introduced to their ministry areas (whether a hospital

or parish setting). It has long been understood that a degree of anxiety enhances a student's learning, yet it is not the case that lay people bring a blank slate to the learning process. With appropriate screening that recognizes and affirms their gifts of ministry, lay students bring their life-time experiences to their new role. Often they are "wounded healers" who have resolved their own concerns sufficiently so as to be ready to function as pastoral care providers. Sunderland's experience over forty years of training and supervising laypeople in their roles as lay ministers indicates that they are capable of serving as competently as many ordained ministers and, in some contexts, may offer more effective pastoral care. Nevertheless, it is important to note that neophyte lay ministers face the task of developing a sense of pastoral identity that is a new experience to most. The task of the teacher-supervisor therefore begins with reinforcing the student's integration of this new identity.

Authority versus Power Issues

Underlying the concern to safeguard and strengthen the autonomy and dignity of the layperson as student is the issue of where power is perceived to reside in the relationship. If students experience a sense of loss of control, the relationship may detract from, rather than strengthen, their freedom to learn and thus maintain dignity and self-esteem. As noted above, the alternative is to ensure, as far as possible, that power issues are dealt with as authority issues.

The supervisor's style of leadership role is one starting point. The leadership construct is properly viewed in terms of a "servant-leader" image that is manifested in the teaching role of Jesus. The servant theme addresses the image of the kingship of Christ. Jesus defined his "kingship" in terms of his authority but rejected the trappings of power (Matt. 20:20–28). Applying this notion to the learning process, students authorize the relationship by entering into a learning covenant with the teacher, holding themselves accountable for addressing their learning issues, and recognizing the supervisor's authority as one who has knowledge the student wishes to acquire. While the student is not yet a *peer* of the teacher, both accept that status as the goal of the learning process. Both authorize the relationship and enter the relationship on an equal footing, a transaction that affirms the dignity of each as full participants in the relationship. When this is established at the outset in the minds of both student and teacher, the focus shifts to the mutuality of the relationship and emphasizes that each brings gifts that are offered to the other. Assumption of a servant role does not diminish the supervisor's authority, but invites stu-

dents into a partnership of learning that evokes a strong, positive response. The relationship is one of mutuality—both teacher and student feel they bless and are blessed.

Issues of authority and accountability shape the manner in which pastoral carers minister to those under their care. John Patton notes the meanings of *authority* and *accountability* are intertwined. Pastoral carers, both clergy and lay ministers, are persons under authority, and cannot offer care apart from the religious body that endorses that ministry and authorizes that it take place in a particular hospital or parish setting. "There is no such thing as the private practice of pastoral care." He continues, "In addition to being accountable to structures beyond themselves for what they are and do, pastoral carers *are themselves* authorities," who have been "educated in the theory and practice of the faith, whether ordained or not, (and thereby) possess an authority themselves."⁴ Patton argues that the terms *pastor* and *pastoral* mean that both ordained and lay pastors are subject to or accountable to their authorizing communities and for the exercise of the authority they possess. It is equally important to note, as does Patton, that in offering pastoral care, they *convey* authority to others: "Being under authority, being an authority, and conveying authority are all related to the pastoral carer's inner sense of pastoral identity. Moreover, the (carer's) acceptance of a pastoral role is essential to functioning adequately in that role and in interpreting (that) role to others."⁵ Ordained pastors are accountable to their ecclesial communities; both clergy and lay ministers are accountable to their peers in ministry in order to maintain standards of good practice; and each pastoral minister is "accountable to himself or herself to advance in the practice of ministry—to become competent in caring and in understanding the faith tradition he or she represents."⁶

Ordination to the clergy office, Patton suggests, means that ordained pastors assume an "in-between" role with respect to lay ministers. They receive authority, exercise it, and convey it to lay ministers. They are accountable for the competence with which they undertake each function, as lay ministers are accountable for the manner in which they carry out their ministries. That is, with respect to their oversight of lay ministers, ordained pastors fulfill a "gate-keeper" role.

THE SUPERVISOR AS "GATE-KEEPER"

It is important that pastoral ministry students recognize that whereas they are accountable to the supervisor for the integrity of their learning role and the

competence of their ministry, supervisors are accountable to their institutional administrators for students' pastoral activities. (Similarly, ordained pastors who accept lay ministers as colleagues are accountable to their congregations for the quality and competence of the pastoral ministry offered by these lay ministers or lay pastoral associates.) The supervisor thus serves as gate-keeper to the student's access to the clinical setting as the locus of the student's learning. In most clinical learning settings, while supervisors may not be able to guarantee that their respective students can do any good, they are at least expected to ensure that their students do not do any harm. Lines of accountability are unambiguous and firm. The supervisor's vulnerability and readiness to risk "failure" on the part of students is integral to the learning process.

Administrative discipline can be swift. A supervisor and his student learned this lesson when the lay ministry student conducted a chapel service that expounded on the image of a person "turning the other cheek" when insulted. The student asked a patient to join him, whereupon the student tapped the patient lightly on one cheek, and said, "After I slapped him, he should invite me to slap his other cheek." The man was a psychiatric patient who complained to an administrator, and the student was summarily dismissed on the orders of the hospital administrator, while the supervisor was warned to keep stricter oversight of his students. The effort to create a viable learning setting that gives students space in which to learn can become a balancing act between accountability to students while being accountable to the institution—administrators *and* patients—in which the emphasis is on the supervisor's own practice and student oversight.

The fundamental importance of accountability for the quality and effectiveness of the pastoral care that lay ministers provide resulted in the emphasis on *supervised* ministry incorporated in the College curriculum. Initial orientation to hospital ministry is followed by assignment of each student to a clinical area which becomes the "parish" in which the student offers ministry. The College faculty use a "shadowing" process during which supervisors and students make patient visits; students observe the supervisor's ministry and are, in turn, observed by the supervisor, followed by discussion of these ministry events. As lay ministers begin to make solo visits, oversight is maintained by both the supervisors and the lay ministers' respective staff chaplains assigned to the clinical area. Lay ministers are urged to bring specific patient needs to the staff chaplain's attention, and to that of their supervisors. The program is further strengthened by the provision of continuing education sessions for the lay ministers.

Accountability to the Hospital as Institution

As this paper is being written, the accountability of the Lay Ministry program to the administration of the hospital which, until now, had seemed informal and non-threatening, is forcing us to adapt to a new factor. The previously informal process involving lay ministers (the Administration knew what we were doing!) is now required to meet the stringent reporting and evaluation recently required of all volunteer-based programs, despite our theological stance that lay ministers are not *volunteers*, but are *conscripted* to ministry by their baptismal vows. That is, the administration as a "secular" authority expects certain basic levels of accountability; we have to meet and surpass these requirements, for we remain accountable to another authority—that of him who calls us to be fellow servants with Christ.

Supervision of Lay Pastoral Ministers in the Local Congregation

The Methodist Hospital Lay Ministry program was created to meet three goals: to enable lay people who experienced a call to pastoral ministry to acquire and practice pastoral skills; to augment the ministries of the Spiritual Care department's permanent staff; and to produce a corps of lay pastoral ministers eligible for appointment to full- or part-time positions as lay pastoral associates on congregational staffs. The third objective raised the issue of the readiness of ordained pastors to provide competent oversight of lay ministers they recruited for congregational care.

Our training of laypeople as lay ministers prepared for deployment in congregations is based on the proposition that pastoral ministry is a task of the *congregation* rather than the exclusive province of ordained pastors and that, within each congregation, there are members gifted by the Holy Spirit for that ministry. It is worth noting that Sunderland's development of the notion of supervised lay pastoral ministry in the mid-1960s and its implementation in local congregations since the early 1970s confronted an entrenched conviction on the part of ordained clergy that congregational pastoral ministry was their exclusive prerogative. It is apparent that the reluctance of many clergy to embrace the role of lay pastoral ministers remains a barrier to their employment by congregations. We return to this factor as well as to the issue of clergy training for their supervisory role.

CLERGY SUPERVISORY TRAINING

The issue of the readiness of clergy to provide informed oversight of lay pastoral associates was brought into sharp focus in the mid-1970s as Per-

kins School of Theology faculty at Southern Methodist University considered ways to make the seminary's field education process a more effective learning opportunity for their masters of divinity students. The field education faculty was aware that the quality of students' experiences in their congregational placements would depend on the effectiveness of the oversight they would receive. It was determined that the first step was to provide supervisory training for participating pastors—completion of which was one of the prerequisites for congregations that wished to participate in the program. Further, continued participation required pastors to attend regular sessions in which they submitted accounts of their student oversight for supervision by seminary faculty and by Ron Sunderland and co-opted CPE supervisors. The resulting supervisory training process constituted a significant continuing education opportunity for both the pastors and the lay oversight committee that was formed in each participating congregation.

The Methodist Hospital Spiritual Care department offers ordained pastors the opportunity to capitalize on the program's facilitation of clergy orientation to supervisory training as a means of enhancing their pastoral as well as their oversight skills. We recognize that we cannot require clergy to engage in supervisory training, and we would be less than honest if we did not acknowledge our disappointment at clergy apathy towards taking advantage of these opportunities. (Patton has drawn attention to the reality that many clergy have difficulty being authorities, that is, being accountable for what they say or being set apart from those over whom that have authority.) Clergy disinterest in employing College graduates has been even more disappointing in light of the fact that congregations could thus acquire lay staff members with demonstrated pastoral competence without assuming the burden of the financial encumbrances that would be entailed by an additional clergy appointment. The program would appear to attract the attention of congregations that need to provide more extensive pastoral ministry but are unable financially to assume responsibility for an additional clergy appointment. Yet, in our experience, clergy continue as gate-keepers to laypeople who experience the call to pastoral ministry, exhibiting indifference or passive resistance to employment of lay pastoral associates. We have done what we can do: bring to the attention of ecclesiastical authorities the need to hold clergy accountable for their failure to empower laypeople to engage in pastoral ministry as a vocation in which they seek to live out their baptismal vows.

IMPACT OF THE COLLEGE PROGRAM ON ITS PARTICIPANTS

With each Lay Ministry College graduation ceremony, the formal relationship of mutual accountability no longer exists between the graduates and the faculty members. Yet, both parties feel a measure of accountability to each other in order to honor the integrity of the College experience symbolized in the graduation certificate. Graduates want to demonstrate their effectiveness in ministry; faculty members want the training they provided to be more than adequate for the pastoral needs the graduates encounter.

Thus far both sets of expectations made been fulfilled. While only a couple of graduates have secured employed ministry positions, virtually all the other graduates are actively engaged in spiritual care ministry in either hospital settings or local congregations. Overall their level of performance has been commendatory.

Representative of the vast majority of her colleagues, this Lay Ministry College graduate offered the following retrospective summary:

The experience of the Lay Ministry College was not only affirming of my call to service but prepared me to respond to that call. The training was a resource to develop skills and knowledge that have equipped me for pastoral care ministry in the hospital and congregational settings. The leadership and commitment of the College provided an environment that valued and encouraged the service that graduates can bring to local church communities working in collaboration with pastors. And finally, it gave to me an identity as a lay minister and what that means in a biblical sense and what it means to me personally.

NOTES

1. Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 842, emphasis ours.
2. *Ibid.*, 842.
3. *Ibid.*, 845.
4. John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 78ff.
5. *Ibid.*, 80, footnote 6.
6. *Ibid.*, 81, footnote 7.
7. *Ibid.*, 79.