Lay Pastoral Comments

Small and Rural Church Taskforce Summer 2022

**Mary Anderson, Prince of Peace – Sterling (High Plains Region) No Priest**

Some information about Prince of Peace: Mary informed me that Steve Hagerman retired August 2021. Currently as of tomorrow, July 26th, 2022, there is a meeting between the Diocese of Colorado, Prince of Peace, and retired priest Jeff Krantz to discuss the possibility of Jeff becoming the vicar (partnership?). For the last year, Prince of Peace has had a supply priest once a month, who would bless the sacraments to enable their LPL, Mary Anderson, to conduct the Administering Reserved Sacrament by LPL service. Prince of Peace and St. Charles Fort Morgan might have had a partnership years ago.

Regarding what kind of support from the Diocese would be helpful; Mary indicated that it would be refreshing, renewing, and spiritual to have some access to continued learning. For example, in the last year or so the Diocese offered a training in writing sermons. More of this, and suggested reading would be helpful.

Another idea, is to post the highlights of the LPL meetings online or via email, so the LPL’s that can’t attend the meetings are in the loop with the discussion.

Regarding the Bi-monthly meetings, Mary stated that she would attend a monthly meeting easily because she is retired, but Mary is sympathetic to the LPLs that are working a full-time job. She thinks this would be hard for them, so Bi-monthly is fine. Mary realizes that not everyone can make the meetings but did like the idea that if there were alternate meeting times in order to accommodate those that work, that would be the best solution for inclusiveness.

As far as relicensing and the LPL program, Canon Alex was good at assuring them that the LPL program was supported, but at the same time there is a feeling that “they don’t count”. For instance, in getting questions answered or a follow through for relicensing.

**Nancy Abbot Trinity - Kremmling (Northwest Region) Clergy: Matthew Frey**

Some information about Trinity: They are a small church of retired professionals, and since the pandemic occurred, they are down to six to eight faithful people.

Nancy (78) admits she is computer illiterate and does not do well with Zoom, so the bimonthly meetings are a challenge, and overall feel they aren’t effective and are restrictive. She prefers the in-person training and follow up retreats.

Regarding what the Diocese can do for the LPL program, Nancy would like to see Training and Relicensing programs to begin again.

Nancy’s training was mainly with Lou Blanchard and the retreats to Cathedral Ridge with Bishop Rob O’Neil. She stated that the retreats were meaningful and the best experience of her life. She was surrounded by like-minded individuals wanting to serve God and their churches by becoming a Lay Pastoral Leader.

**Rich Rosene, Trinity - Kremmling (Northwest Region) Clergy: Matthew Frey**

More information about Trinity: Rich reiterated that their ASA is eight people. Right now, there is no one interested in training to become an LPL, so Nancy Abbott and Rich Rosene continue to offer LPL services. Every fourth Sunday, Fr. Matthew Frey, St. John the Baptist, Granby will offer a 4:00pm service for the Trinity congregation. Granby is thirty miles away. Rich has no idea if official papers were signed making them a partnership with St. John’s Granby. They have tried over the years, in the 80’s and 90’s to make an official partnership, but something seemed to always happen before it got signed, like the priest leaving. The last six to eight years, Trinity has been helped by St. John’s making a ‘loose’ partnership where the priest will come to Trinity. They pay St. John’s $5,000/year, a quarter of their yearly income for this arrangement. This is how the LPL’s get their consecrated sacraments. Rich has been an LPL for about ten years.

Regarding support from the Diocese, Rich feels that the Diocese is doing a good job. Admittingly, Rich has missed meetings because he does not check his email often or can’t locate the email with the meeting information but thinks it would help him and people like him to get a reminder email with the meeting link embedded. Rich would like to see online classes offered for continuing education purposes, so he could study or view them when it is convenient for him. However, Rich enjoys the in-person retreats, and would attend if possible. (Rich is supposed to be retired, but isn’t in a sense, and his wife works, so their time is precious when they can get away.)

As far as whether or not the bimonthly meeting are enough, Rich thinks they work for him, as stated, it is more his fault when he does not make a meeting.

**Betsy Leonard, All Saints - Battlement Mesa (Northwest Region) Clergy: Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about All Saints. All Saints partners with two other churches, St. Barnabas Glenwood Springs, and St. John’s New Castle. Together they are the Episcopal Church in Garfield County. All Saints has two LPLs, Betsy Leonard and Doug Saxton. They alternate Sundays with the priest, Rev. Kimberlee Law, so there are two LPL led services per month and two Holy Eucharist services.

The support Betsy would like to see from the Diocese is regular retreats at Cathedral Ridge with other LPLs. At these retreats she would like to see ‘Sermon Training’ and ‘Pastoral Care Training’ offered as part of the workshops. She personally enjoys getting together in person to exchange feedback from her peers, and would like to get feedback on “Are we reaching out to the parish (enough)?” Betsy would also like the priest to sit in on an LPL led service, better yet, on each LPL that works with their priest.

The Bimonthly meetings were enough and accessible for Betsy, but not everyone attends, and it seems to be the same people. Betsy is concerned for the partnership vicar and would like to know how she is doing. She feels that this is the arena to find out, but has never had the chance during one of these meetings.

The concern of relicensing comes in the form of wondering “why is it necessary” to begin with? Also, if the LPL program is reviewed or updated in the future, she would like to know why the LPLs are not supposed to read the Gospel, and why they can’t go behind the altar while performing the service.

Betsy’s discernment for becoming an LPL was when Fr. E.J. Rivet approached her and told her she would be a good candidate. Betsy felt she didn’t have enough knowledge of the Bible. Still, she engaged in a yearlong training with Fr. E.J., mentored weekly, and read eight books in that year. As it turns out, Betsy found she did have the calling to become an LPL, and now says that if the church could afford a full-time priest, she would be sad not to be a Lay Pastoral Leader.

**Doug Saxton, All Saints - Battlement Mesa (Northwest Region) Clergy: Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Doug says he’s content doing what he’s doing but thought that he could have used more preparation and help dealing with grief and dying. He spent four years going through EFM (Education for Ministry) at Sewanee. He felt that that was superfluous. His parish vicar supervised the education. While his whole heart is in this ministry, he finds that the monthly meetings haven’t been very worthwhile. Ann Fleming came to St. Barnabas Glenwood Springs and presided over his licensing. He has been an Episcopalian for 40 years so has had some good background before becoming an LPL. The congregation embraced the LPL service because there would have been no Communion without it. St. Barnabas can’t afford to pay a full-time priest, so they want to be able to keep the LPL program. They are in partnership with two other churches, St. John’s Newcastle and All Saints Battlement Mesa. He feels that the LPL shouldn’t have to deal with outreach, just preside at services and preach. As it is now, he only has to do one service per month.

**Pam Strohmeyer, St. Barnabas - Glenwood Springs (Northwest Region) Clergy: Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about St. Barnabas. St. Barnabas is one of three partnership churches in the Episcopal Church in Garfield County. They share a priest with All Saints Battlement Mesa and St. John’s New Castle. St. Barnabas has the priest three times a month, relying on the LPL for the fourth week. This is to enable the shared priest, Rev. Kimberlee Law to have fellowship with the St. John’s congregation.

The support Pam would like to currently see from the Diocese regarding the LPL program is clarification for the relicensing. Also, Pam would like to meet with other LPLs regionally. She thinks it would be a helpful addition to the Cathedral Ridge retreats, and hopes they are reinstated. Pam doesn’t feel that the Diocese is positive about the LPL program and feels sure that there are other churches and Priest that would benefit from the flexibility of having an LPL.

Pam’s training was done with their priest, Rev. Wendy Huber, along with Michelle Allford There were online classes, Pam and Michelle met to study and discuss material, and they met with Rev. Wendy in her office for training. There was no direct training with the Diocese, but Ann Fleming did offer some direction, and toward the end of their training a zoom meeting was held with a seminarian student giving tips about preparing and presenting sermons. Pam feels that her career as a counselor gave her added confidence and ability in Pastoral Care, and insightfully thinks other LPLs have strengths in their LPL duties from their past or present jobs. Pam’s final process of becoming licensed was completing the Safeguarding God’s Children and Eucharistic Minister Training.

**Tamaira Terry, St. John’s - New Castle (Northwest Region) Clergy: Rev. Kimberlee Law**

Some information about St. John’s. St. John’s belongs to the Episcopal Church in Garfield County along with St. Barnabas and All Saints. They have never had a full-time priest since their founding in 1909, and in the last 50 years have utilized Morning Prayer for worship services regularly. Naturally, St. John’s was eager to start the LPL program.

Tamaira would like to see support from the Diocese in adding another online meeting time with Canon Alex, accommodating those people that can’t attend the current meeting time because of work. She makes herself attend some of the meetings, even though she should be sleeping and getting ready for her night shift. Partly because of this, Tamaira does not feel that the Diocese values their time as LPLs. They are volunteers, but not as valuable as the priests, yet they are often treated like a paid employee of the Diocese in what the Diocese expects of them. Tamaira noted that the Diocese brought back the retreat this year, but it is being held on a Tuesday (?), Wednesday, and Thursday, not conducive to a full-time employee at City Market. In addition, she would like to see the Diocese offer training to those that might be interested. Tamaira is anxious about the LPL program being in jeopardy from comments that Canon Alex has made. She would like to see relicensing take place or suspend it all together.

Tamaira loves God and loves bringing people to God, so her discernment process was straight forward when given the chance to become an LPL. Tamaira met with Rev. Wendy Huber after Bible Study once a month for a year. There was also reading material, and some online commitments. She attended the retreat at Cathedral Ridge and thought it was helpful but received the most help and encouragement from Michelle Allford (St. Barnabas) and Betsy Leonard (All Saints). In the end, Ann Fleming came over from the Diocese to officiate Tamaira into the role of Lay Pastoral Leader.

**Leslie Daniels, St. Paul’s - Lamar (Sangre de Cristo Region) No Priest**

Some information about St. Pauls: Leslie (71) informed me that their parish has plenty of money and could afford a full-time priest, but their numbers are small, eleven to eighteen people on a Sunday. They used to share a priest with La Junta. Leslie has held these positions at St. Paul’s: Treasurer, Senior Warden, and now Lay Pastoral Leader.

Regarding support from the Diocese, she and others feel like ‘they’ (the Office of the Bishop) don’t know them at all. It seemed that Canon Alex was discouraging, and not much is gained from attending the bimonthly meetings. Leslie enjoyed the Cathedral Ridge LPL gatherings, the speakers, and the workshops, such as those given to help them with their sermons/homilies.

Leslie’s training consisted of Lou Blanchard assigning quite a bit of reading, and some mentoring by a priest, at first online. She also attended two years training at Cathedral Ridge. (I am assuming this was LPL workshops).

**Carrie Brown, St. Andrew’s – Cripple Creek (Sangre de Christo Region) No Priest**

Some information about St. Andrews: ASA amounts to fourteen faithful people. They cannot afford a full-time priest, and in the past have partnered with St. Paul’s Lamar. St. Andrews has a parsonage, and during that partnership there was some concern the priest spent more time in La Junta than Lamar, creating hard feelings. The churches shared Jennifer Shadle who retired and is now serving parttime at St. Peter the Apostle, Pueblo. Carrie’s son A.J. Brown was becoming an LPL at St. Andrew’s and then went to college, ending his LPL position. St. Andrews’s has shared services with the Lutheran’s.

Some information about Carrie Brown: Carrie is a music teacher in the community working full time. Besides teaching, she has the responsibility of care taking two houses in La Junta. These facts make it hard for Carrie to attend the LPL meetings. Carrie started her LPL training under Mary Hendricks, who is now retired, so the LPL position is held only by her. They have not been able to have an LPL service on any regular basis because they can’t get consecrated elements, thus she St. Andrews has had only one LPL led service this last year. The Lutheran pastor informed Carrie that the Blessed sacraments by a Lutheran pastor only can be used through Thursday of the same week that they were blessed on Sunday, so this thwarts the LPL’s use of them.

Regarding support from the Diocese, Carrie would like to see more online classes that offer tips to sermon writing, preaching, etc, but not necessarily a list of books to read. She would like the ‘Safe Church’ classes to remain online instead of in person, so she can just do them as needed, and when she has the time. The in-person retreats are the best for Carrie, and she finds spiritual time in attending them. The only hard part is when they are held and whether or not she can attend because of her work/life schedule.

**Eleanor Foley, Carla Howard, Susan Cotterman St. Peters - Pueblo (Sangre de Christo Region)**

Some information about St. Peter’s. St. Peter’s has shared and welcomed services with the Lutheran congregation. The Episcopalians like their hymns. There apparently was an LTGBQ partners with the church that lost people and no longer use the church. The Average Sunday Attendance is less than twenty-five now.

**Eleanor Foley** (86) has been a faithful servant to St. Peter’s and easily took up the call to become a Lay Pastoral Leader. She has trained other LPL’s, possibly Carla Howard, a full-time Nurse Practitioner, and Susan Cotterman, a retired Social Worker and now full-time childcare giver to her three-year-old grandson. The three LPLs at St. Peters have a close and respectful relationship with each other.

Of the three LPLs, Eleanor is available to log into the LPL meeting held every other month. She admits that she gets very little from them and does not understand why Canon Alex designates 30 minutes with the Vicar’s, 30 minutes with the Vicar’s and LPL’s, finishing with and 30 minutes with the LPL’s. Eleanor feels that being together as a whole group would build more trust and understanding. Also, Eleanor feels a bit challenged by the computer, and would like the other 2 LPLs at St. Peter’s to be able to attend, but the time the meetings are held keep both full-time workers, Carla and Susan, from attending. Currently the meetings are, Thursday’s 3:30 – 5:00 every other month. When Eleanor pointed out the time difficulties for St. Peter’s LPLs to attend, she found Canon Alex’s response unsympathetic, and more like this was part of her/their job.

This sentiment leads to the feeling that they are a bit forgotten by the Diocese. That feeling is supported by the fact that all three LPL’s have tried to renew their licenses, and nothing has been confirmed or denied, simply the Diocese has not communicated what is going on about the program. Meanwhile, through the pandemic they just kept doing what they had been, using the LPLs as always. All three LPLs would like more communication from the Diocese.

Eleanor’s training was with Lou Blanchard, mostly, but heavily encouraged by Bishop Rob O’Neil. Eleanor states that the positivity they received from Bishop O’Neil was uplifting and encouraging to the calling they as LPLs had committed to. Eleanor misses this from the Diocese, as do Carla and Susan.

The Cathedral Ridge retreats, and the workshops they attended were also a part of Eleanor’s early training. She fondly remembers benefitting greatly from the Priest who gave direction in ‘sermon writing’.

Eleanor pointed out that the Lay Pastoral Leaders program needs new LPL’s. Her sage advice is this: *All potential Lay Pastoral Leaders should have Eucharistic Ministry training.* The stagnant atmosphere and non-communication from the Diocese on the matter is worrisome. All three want to renew their licenses. If that is not necessary anymore, they would like to be told they are fine to continue as LPLs at St. Peter’s if they are continued to be called in that direction.

**Carla Howard, St. Peters - Pueblo (Sangre de Christo Region)**

Carla and Susan agree with the comments that Eleanor shared with me. In addition, I was able to get a few other comments from both Carla and Susan.

Carla has strong belief and embraces this scripture as the essence of the Lay Pastoral Leadership program: *Matthew 18:19-20 KJV*

*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* ***For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*** *KJV: King James Version*

Originally, the meetings for the Lay Pastoral Leaders were held on a Saturday that enabled Carla to attend. When Canon Alex changed them to the weekday, she could no longer attend. Again, the feeling of being ignored comes to surface. Also, the ‘mandatory’ classes that the Diocese are now asking LPLs to fulfill, such as Racial Education and Safe Church are redundant for someone like Carla who is a Nurse and is required to take these trainings, along with ‘Continuing Education’ in her field. Carla also does not understand why the Diocese has asked LPLs to be relicensed. Her husband is a retired Episcopal Priest, and using him as an example, she infers that Priests aren’t relicensed again and again, so “Once you do the training (LPL), make it timeless.”

Carla has attended the Cathedral Ridge Retreats and felt that workshops such as ‘hints about preaching and about the liturgy itself were interesting and valuable.

**Susan Cotterman, St. Peters - Pueblo (Sangre de Christo Region)**

Susan believes in the LPL program and wonders how the small churches would have a chance of staying open if they didn’t have the LPL program. She is in hopes this taskforce will show the need and value that LPLs offer to the integrity of the church. Susan became an LPL during Bishop Rob O’Neil’s leadership. She reiterated what others have also said, “Bishop Rob was very encouraging and warm about the LPL program”. Susan also talks highly of the retreats and the hints that were given to them as a group by Bishop Rob on sermon prep and presentation. Also, he guided them to books to read. Susan believes that at that time and now, LPLs help keep the church doors open. In comparison, Canon Alex seemed to have a different opinion about the LPL role and Susan gets the feeling of being ignored by the Diocese.

**Diane Parker, St Augustine - Creed (Southwest Region) J.K.Melton left June 2022**

I believe the Diocese is working diligently to support LPL’s through Zoom chats with Canon Alex, through quick responses to email questions, and this year, through the resurgence of an LPL Retreat. The LPL position is a fluid one that requires tweaking from time to time, and I believe the Diocese is doing what it can on top of all its other duties and issues.

Because I was still a full-time teacher, I thought I had a five-year window of discernment to fully embrace the position. As it turned out, my congregation had other ideas, so for a year, I soul-searched, had conversations with my Priest, and had conversations with three current, at the time, LPL’s from my own church and our partnership churches. I also completed all the online courses and whatever else was required by the Diocese. There was never a time I questioned my decision to become an LPL. Just went on fast-track!

My training was mostly online, but I did have a Priest mentor and I was fortunate to have other LPL’s as mentors. Attending retreats and various regional workshops for church leaders (not necessarily for just LPL’s) also helped my growth.

I was able to meet for lunch with Ann Fleming, our “advisor” at the time when she was in the area. Most of the time, we visited via phone or by email. Both Lou Blanchard and Ann Fleming held periodic LPL Zoom/phone meetings with all LPL’s. (Canon Alex is currently holding periodic Partnership Vicars/LPL meetings via Zoom/phone.) Lou Blanchard was able to officiate.

Our congregation has always embraced having an LPL. There was no resistance to having an LPL. Yes! People considered it fortunate to have the Holy Eucharist administered by an LPL. People not coming to church on purpose because we have an LPL service has never been the case in our congregation. We can only afford a part time Vicar. We are already in a partnership.

**Frank Walter, St. Augustine - Creed (Southwest Region) J.K.Melton left June 2022**

For 15 years My sermon prep consisted of the following step: On Sunday I would read the lessons from two translations and then ask God for guidance. On Tuesday I would read the lessons again and pray again. Then I would read the William Barkclay Commentary and be still again. On Wednesday I read the lessons, the comments from Forward Day By Day and Barclays and be still for a bit. On Thursday I was quiet and let the material percolate. On Friday I sat at the computer, placed my hands on the keyboard and let the message flow out. I read the message several times on Friday afternoon and Saturday and made required changes/corrections.

At the current time I have the sense that God is through with me and gives very little content to share.  Hope this helps. \*Editor’s Note: Frank has been a licensed Lay Reader for many years before becoming a Lay Pastoral Leader. He is very grounded in the Episcopal Church.

**Rob Rose, St. John’s – Quray (Southwest Region)**