

HISTORY AND CODE OF ETHICS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LAY MINISTRY

History of the National Association for Lay Ministry

In 1977 a group of about 20 lay ministry formation directors (the original core membership of the organization) met in Philadelphia at the invitation of Br. Loughlan Sofield. The meeting was a success, and the group decided to reconvene the next year in Dallas. Once again, the second gathering was productive and a 3rd National Conference of Lay Ministry Coordinators was planned for Chicago in 1979. It was during the Chicago conference that the question was formally raised as to whether there was enough in common among this loosely affiliated group of formation leaders to form an association. A task group was charged to study the question.

The 4th National Conference was held in Washington D.C., at Trinity College in 1980, and the task force recommended that a national association be formed. The recommendation was accepted, and the planning committee for the 1981 conference in Cleveland was also asked to complete preparation for the new association. The NCCB document “Called and Gifted” on the American Catholic laity was released in November 1980 and provided a strong foundation for the new association. One of the gifts the new organization offered was that of inclusion. All who supported the growth and development of lay ministry – lay and ordained ministers, single and married, vowed religious, priests and deacons – were welcome to join.

In June 1981, the National Association of Lay Ministry Coordinators (NALMC) was formally established during the 5th conference, and a nine-person board was elected from the membership. The new board developed an organizational plan with priority focus on meeting the needs of two groups of members: volunteer and career lay ministers, and ministry formation coordinators.

At the 1984 conference in Boston, the organization completed a significant process of examining its identity and mission. This process resulted in a new name: The National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM). The main reasons for this change were as follows:

- to clarify the focus on lay ministry rather than on lay ministry coordinators;
- to emphasize the lay advocacy role through the phrase “for lay ministry”; and
- to welcome more paid and unpaid lay people as members.

NALM co-sponsored the “Synod Conference on Lay Ministry” in Rome in 1987, and a large contingent of members participated in representing the voice of lay people at that 300-plus person meeting. In the 1990s the membership chose “Vision, Voice & Vitality” as the foci for the organization.

In 1996 NALM appointed its first executive director, and the organization continued its growth and development. A three-year organizational plan was crafted for the 1997-2000 period, and the mission was stated as follows:

NALM supports, educates and advocates for lay ministers while promoting the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church.

In 2002 NALM was awarded a \$2,000,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. from their “Sustaining Pastoral Excellence” program. In this project, *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership*, NALM is working with five other national organizations: the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, the National Association of Diaconate Directors, the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, the National Conference of Pastoral Planners and Council Development, and the National Federation of Priests’ Councils.

In 2003 the board approved moving the NALM national office from Chicago to Washington D.C., to enhance the association’s effectiveness and increase opportunities for collaboration with other national Catholic organizations and with the offices of the Bishop’s conference. In the years ahead, NALM is committed and eager to reach new levels in realizing its mission on behalf of lay ministers and lay ministry in the Catholic Church in our country.

Citation: *National Association of Lay Ministry Records (NALM)*, University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46566