

Explorations in MPJP Lay Ecclesial Leadership in Australia: Tensions, Questions and Hopes

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Jamie Calder SJ MAPS¹

"What God does first and best and most is to trust us with our moment in history. God trusts us to do what must be done for the sake of God's whole community."

Walter Bruggeman

Our Easter Story of Encounter:

"The moment of truth comes to all the disciples around the table of the last supper, as it comes to Peter. All will fail. And through the mercy of Jesus all will come to be reconciled and to grow in faith and self-understanding."

Brief Introduction

A public juridic person (PJP) is not a new phenomenon in the Catholic Church. This form of governance has a long and venerable past in the canonical and ministerial history of Catholicism. Catholic Church entities such as dioceses and religious institutes have been defined as public juridic persons in Canon Law (117) as 'aggregates of persons'.² What is both promising and renewing in the more contemporary public juridic persons in this research and beyond it, however, is that they are composed of groups of lay people, acting together collegially in communion (aggregates of persons), as a Church authority of governance over Church ministries given into their care. This is something new. It might well be a seismic shift for our Church still in many ways awaiting the recovered theologies of church (ecclesiologies) proposed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Maeve touched on this in her presentation: "That Council introduced a vision of Church that places Baptism and the image of the People of God as the foundational reality of the Church and how it is called to operate". Enticingly, synodality might be seen as a renewed or empowering expression of such a vision of church. Certainly, it is already possible to see the multiple and natural connections between these contemporary MPJP's and the movement towards recovering a theology of Holy Spirit in understanding our Church through the lens of synodality.

Presentation Focus:

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² Mary Wright (2018) 'The Development of the Ministerial Public Juridic Persons: Questions and Challenges', *Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand Proceedings*, 14-23.

This paper explores the tensions, questions and hopes emerging from the transfer of power that can be seen as a key facet of these newer MPJP's. The model might have longevity but lay or even religious, ordained and lay working together in governance settings and responsibilities for Church ministries is new to the Catholic Church.

I will focus on some necessarily brief further reflections on the theological and social-psychological implications and connections between contemporary MPJP's in the English-speaking world (some of which are research partners), theologies of Church and the notion of synodality suggested above. I want to do so, however, through what I hope will be the grounding lens of a descriptive analysis of discussion themes provided from the Australian Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP), the association's most recent 'wisdom circles'.

To do this, I will use a second methodology taken from Grounded Theory to further the larger "Appreciative Enquiry" methodology, thus far deployed for the research enquiry at the heart of our symposium.³ This Grounded Theory methodology is termed Sensitised Analytic Induction, developed from Analytic Induction.⁴ These are technical terms that otherwise describe a very simple idea: the development through an appreciative lens of meaning themes from data. Such an approach enables a more tentative yet still rigorous formulation of thematic ideas and tropes in any given set of data. To do so, I will also be drawing my own experience in working in mission formation across the Catholic sectors of health and aged care, social services and education, which I do in the Ministry Leadership Program and other formation programs developed in the Xavier Centre for Theological Formation.

From this thematic analysis and other general observations, I will then attempt to formulate an informed suggestion of the ongoing mission and Catholic identity formation needs in ministries of the Australian Catholic Church, in the immediate and longer term. Related to this last focus point, I will then review briefly some of the tensions in relation to Catholic identity and lay Catholic ecclesial leadership related to the formation needs already mentioned.

Finally, I will touch on the natural connection between notions of synodality and MPJP ecclesial leadership. Here I want to suggest that the flat, almost non-hierarchical mission-governance possibilities of communities of canonical trustees or sponsors could be a model

³ Cf. Neil M. Boyd, "Appreciative Inquiry," in *Handbook of Methodological Approaches to Community-Based Research: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*, ed. Leonard Jason and David Glenwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); William F. Foster, "Appreciative inquiry: Change at the Speed of the Imagination," *Quality progress* 34, no. 9 (2001); Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations : Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Dana M. Griggs and Mindy Crain-Dorough, "Appreciative Inquiry's Potential in Program Evaluation and Research," *Qualitative research journal* 21, no. 4 (2021).

⁴Cf. M Arribas-Ayllon, & V. Walkerdine, "Foucauldian Discourse Analysis". In C. Willig, and W. Stainton-Rogers, (eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage, 2008); D. Hewson, L. Germanos, and R. Faine. *Episodic Stress Response Model and the Experience of Living with Multiple Sclerosis and their Carers: A Qualitative Research Project*. Report of the MS Society of NSW Research Committee, 2003.

of Church life and discipleship that actually attends to catholicity of the Church and enacts the Church proposed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The Source of the Data: AMPJP Wisdom Circles

The Australian Association of the Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP) has been well described in Gabrielle McMullen’s paper *Perspectives on and Hopes for Lay Governance in a Missionary Synodal Church: An Australian Perspective*. Once a year, the Association through its Formation Committee, organises a series of gatherings in several state capitals. These gatherings are referred to as ‘wisdom circles’ and are open to canonical stewards/sponsors from the AMPJP’s member organisations who wish to join in an informal evening forum in which related MPJP themes and issues are discussed, followed by a shared meal. A member of the Formation Committee representing each state is designated as facilitator and stimulus input is provided to focus discussion.

In 2024, four such wisdom circle forums were held in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, with one provided online for those who wished to participate but were unable to attend in person. The data for this present discussion is derived from a thematic analysis of these discussions. Each of the discussions were recorded for transcription purposes, with the recordings being destroyed after transcription. The transcripts were then analysed using the thematic analysis methodology outline above. These themes were then reviewed for comment before being presented at the 2024 National Forum of the AMPJP, again for comment and review. They provide an important, if fleeting descriptive snapshot of self-referring groups of canonical stewards responding to stimulus materials on AMPJP self-perception and identity.

The following stimulus questions provided following the presentation of the theological paper outline provided in Appendix A were:

- 1. How do you understand your role as canonical stewards in the Church today?
- 2. Why is the role important in the Church today?
- 3. How do you experience your role as a canonical steward?
- 4. What connections can you make from the presentation to the movement towards a synodal Church?

Wisdom Circle Themes

The themes that were generated from the discussions are summarised in the Table 1 below. Note that many of these themes are coextensive and are not discrete.

Table 1 Summary of Wisdom Circle Themes for 2024

1	Catholicity and Catholic identity questions – what is it and how is it expressed?
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2	Ecclesiology – In what ways/how do canonical stewards understand their governance role as part of the Catholic Church and leadership of such? (models of Church/theology of church)
3	The Holy Spirit – What role does regular integrated discernment and prayer have in our decision-making processes? (reflecting on actions, opportunities to pray and discern in common)
4	What is the role and place of people of other faiths and/or no particular faith, in canonical stewardship?
5	The desire for new (renewed language) to further understand and articulate the ecclesial governance of canonical stewards (sponsors)
6	Heritage – In what ways can we continue to honour the founders/instigating religious institutes and their charisms/organisations while stepping into freedom to form, create, reinterpret the cultures and ministries in contemporary canonical stewardship? (The need to develop a lay leadership charisms) Heritage – What of inheritance, patrimony, developing identity politics (charism) roles of founding stories?
7	Call of God and the vocational response of persons to canonical stewardship (terms, understandings to be developed) The particular call of lay-ecclesial leadership – The particular responsibility for Catholicity and Catholic mission.
8	Question of the mission of canonical stewardship - Mission of canonical stewardship as grounded in the outreach (mission) of God for the service of the Church (theology of mission, theology of laity, theology of the Church)
9	Descriptions and reasons for the emergence of the lay-led MPJP governance forms as attuned to the signs of the times – what is Holy Spirit inviting the Church to become?
10	Reserve powers and collegial functioning - Power relationalities – influence of hierarchy (and patriarchy) on the processes and cultures of canonical stewardship – What is the role of authority and leadership in lay-led ecclesial leadership?
11	Formation (of faith-based lay ecclesial leaders/communities) – for mission leadership in general and as canonical stewards specifically.
12	Formation: What is the role of encounter with the person of Jesus Christ in canonical stewardship? How is evangelisation understood in the various levels of governance and operations?
13	Particularities of the ecclesial governance of canonical stewardship – What are the Implications of trans-diocesan governance relationships – civil cross over in Australian law – limitations to effect mission?
14	Authority – Models of Synodality and servant leadership

Observations on the Australian Situation

Before proceeding further with my observations, I take this brief opportunity to be reflexive. This is important as observations are always from a place or position in time and culture. A moment of reflexivity thus provides context for any observations I might make about the Australian Catholic Church and the MPJP's therein.

So, my observations are from the primary identity position of a pastor of the Australian Catholic Church where I exercise my baptismal ministry as an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the Church as a member the Society of Jesus. I am also, therefore, heavily influenced by the spiritual culture of my religious family, making me heavily steeped and trained in Ignatian spirituality and pedagogy. These form my way of viewing the world. Further to this, I am heavily influenced by my years as a practicing forensic clinician focused on men who take up practices of abuse and violence, and teaching and researching as tertiary academic psychologist. Finally, these recent years have seen me in a more than ten-year stint teaching theology and working in mission formation across the breadth of Australia in just about every variety of Catholic organisation possible at nearly every level of governance in the Church.

A first thematic observation from the Wisdom Circle discussion themes in Table 1 is that they provide evidence of an ongoing search for many canonical sponsors or stewards to understand their identities and roles as ecclesial leaders. There is almost a sense of searching to 'own' that role in their organisations and what that might mean. In many ways this search is right and proper given the relative newness of their roles in Catholic organisations and for the Church. This also begins to raise the formation question.

A second observation is that the discussion themes reveal a reflection on the identity formation tensions inherent in their role of canonical stewardship. This is the question as to what type of body a group of canonical stewards or sponsors might in their organisations. This observation/question is also a feature in some of the case studies of the IGSC Project and so reflected in the Country Papers. There is a sense that some canonical stewards and sponsors have very strong backgrounds in corporate governance at the board level whilst not as strong a background in spirituality and theology, contemporary Church life and practice.

This last observation feeds into and is part of the tensions in the very structures of many MPJP's. This is the danger of a misalignment around the structural position of a group of stewards and what makes one eligible to be steward, and what is then imposed or required by the corporate boards who report to them. Thus, the only connecting thread between canonical stewards/sponsors is mission which then becomes *how* the board delivers mission not *what/who* inspires that mission. This is something of the nature of what might be termed the possible secular corporatisation of MPJP's and their communities of canonical stewards/sponsors. In this frame mission can become reduced to simply a KPI of delivery as a measurable practical outcome for reporting, shifting the focus from what (or Who) inspires that mission (i.e. the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ). This possibility becomes particularly exacerbated in countries such as Australia, where many Catholic ministries rely

on public funds and so must be “cutting edge” to be funded (e.g. bio-ethical questions such as plastic surgery for therapeutic need or medical need?).

Here, language used to describe and name identities becomes important because as much as it reflects identity it also shapes perception and experience. Thus, a group of canonical stewards/sponsors understood as board would surely represent a failure to understand it as a key identity community of the Church of Jesus Christ amongst communities of its ministries. It's a question of the fundamental orientations of a group of canonical stewards/sponsors as much as an identity question, as identity is always an embodiment or performance of values, of oriented action. This is, therefore, a question of what are the priorities? What are the imperatives in canonical stewardship or sponsorship? Management? Finance? Mission? Community witness? Holding all these in tension?

These questions also bridge to a third thematic observation in relation to heritage itself. In many cases, the founding stories of religious congregations and their ministries' foundations and subsequent development, inherited now by MPJP's, had little or nothing to do with any social licence or financial viability. They were more to do with mission expression and a trust in God's absolute providence. Almost a: 'when you respond to the call then the resources will arise so go and do likewise'. (Lk10:37) Equally, when a ministry wasn't sustainable, these religious congregations moved on. How might this varied history and heritage be a resource or mission influence in the contemporary situations in which many Australian communities of canonical stewards find themselves, thus becomes a relevant question.

A penultimate thematic observation is that of formation. This topic dominated all discussions and became an ending point to many other discussion themes. Importantly, this topic is also the Catholic identity question for communities of canonical stewards and sponsors. These discussions were touching upon trying to answer some of the fundamental questions that now confront the Catholic sectors in Australia in terms of mission literacy and so Catholic identity. These sectors were mostly founded from the heart of the confessional Church for the enactment of God's mission of self-communication in Jesus Christ for the care and wellbeing provision for God's people. The Australian scene now faces a serious deficit in most of its ministries such as Catholic education and health care, in knowledge of faith, connection to encounters with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, and so Catholic identity itself.

In this context, and hopefully, this theme indicates an awareness of the need of formation in the identity of lay ecclesial leader. How that translates into the investment of time and money, is not yet as clear. This is also a generational issue. Many canonical stewards in Australia are from a generation termed late “baby boomers”. These are people of immense good will and deep cultural knowledge of being Catholic which is able to be easily drawn on, if still desiring ongoing formation. This taken-for-granted-ness is no longer possible in following generations.

In the formation discussion theme, we find also the key identity questions in need of unfolding answers which in turn need to be tested and further reflected on: what are the theological, ecclesiology and spiritual foundations of canonical stewards/sponsors authority and their

leadership of their ministries and of the Catholic Church? As Catherine Clifford has touched on, this raises the question of jurisdiction and the nature of how power as authority is understood or constructed. What then might be the theological sources of this power and authority?

This of course is something we're exploring in this symposium. Yet, another set of questions sit prior to theological explorations of sources of power and authority. Namely, what are the ongoing social, political, religious-political, theological and anthropological understandings that are and will influence in formulating these responses to the formation questions raised? For, as social theorist such as Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt have reminded us, 'the personal is always political'. If that is true, then how much more so the religious. Into the midst of this come the markers of Christian process-identities, namely the question for communities of canonical stewards as to what role discernment and prayer have in all decision making and taking in their ministry of their ministries? Interestingly, this formation point suggests a natural stepping off point to reflect on synodality as a best-practice tool to understanding the role of canonical stewardship.

Before this, however, this last thematic observation has clearly led to a reflection on the nature and role of power, leadership and authority, for the communities of canonical stewards. Indeed, this is a right and proper ending to this section because these particular questions lead this discussion paper quite naturally into the notion of synodality, which I propose is an excellent pathway to responding theologically and so ecclesologically to the questions raised about formation and power, leadership and authority.

Theological Foundations Document for the AMPJP

In 2024 the AMPJP commissioned a paper from its Formation Committee to explore the theological foundations that might be drawn on to further understand the nature and role of communities of canonical stewards/sponsor. It was the outline of this paper, crafted with theologian and Group Chief Mission Officer of St Vincents Health Care Group, Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandergeer, that was taken as the stimulus material for the 2024 wisdom circles. (See Appendix A)

From the draft outline, subsequent consultations, of which this symposium will now be the latest, a preliminary draft theological foundations document has been formulated for further discussion and input. This theological document attempts to respond to wisdom circle discussion and the tensions, questions and hopes with regard to lay ecclesial leadership of MPJP's. I will now briefly offer a summary outline of these theological themes:

- ✓ A theological starting point for understanding all Christian mission is the Doctrine of God and the Incarnation. Here we see that God's Triune life is pure mission. For, what is revealed is absolute self-giving, self-communicating love in Jesus Christ, experienced in the power of the Holy Spirit. All creation is thus on mission, having been called into existence by the same One who is self-giving love. Mission then is the natural outreach

towards the other including the other who is self, the endowment of which in Christian anthropological terms enables the human persons to become that which it is called to be, human.

- ✓ For Christians, this defines the nature of all reality: "What is real is not what is concerned with itself or turned in on itself (this latter is Luther's definition of sin). What is real is going beyond oneself, being in relation, calling others to relation".⁵ In this way, we affirm that God is Mission. Not that God has a mission, although that is also true, but that God is Mission. The key to this is to understand that God is revealed as 'self-diffusive'. Following this, it makes sense that the mission has a Church, augmenting the traditional formulation of the Church having a mission. Thus, the mission also has an MPJP and community of canonical stewards or sponsors who are summoned by Love.⁶
- ✓ This theological understanding of God as Mission enables further unpacking of the human response to the experience of this endless call to union with God, self and others, vocation. Further, we can locate human vocation as a response to the call of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and manifest in its MPJP's. This is a call to the service of canonical stewardship of ministries and locates vocation not only as an individual human response, but also as communal discernment-response to the call of Love.
- ✓ The individual and communal nature of vocational expression then apparent in the context of canonical stewardship can thus be better understood as located within the framework of the collaborative relationships noted as essential to the sacramental ordered communion that is the Catholic Church.⁷
- ✓ Similarly, Christian baptism in the Catholic Church is then also located in this framework since it is a primary witness to God's call to mission. Thus, when canonical stewards or sponsors step into their vocational response to Church leadership in MPJP leadership they can be understood as stepping into their baptismal dignity (vocational dignity) as an expression of their call to ministry in the ordered communion known as the Catholic Church. Again, it is the notion of 'ordered communion' which holds together the foundational nature of baptism, the call and role of ordained ministry, and other forms of identified and ritually enacted installed and commissioned "ministries that help perform and realise the interweaving of the hierarchical and charismatic dimensions of the Church."⁸
- ✓ Following on from these last two points, it is important to recognise the spiritual significance of the call and vocational response, in ecclesial leadership within an ordered communion. The ancient Christian spiritual tradition has long understood God's call as the

⁵ Stephan Bevans, "The Mission has a Church: An Invitation to Dance." *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 14(1), 2009, p. 3.

⁶ Stephan Bevans, "The Mission has a Church", p.8.

⁷ Cf: Richard Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in *Ordering the baptismal priesthood: theologies of lay and ordained ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003); Richard R. Gaillardetz, *A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

⁸ Maeve Heaney, The Theological Underpinning and Undercurrents of Lay Governance. IGSC Symposium. 2025, Footnote 9. Cf: Richard Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in *Ordering the baptismal priesthood: theologies of lay and ordained ministry*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

call to communion or union with One. (Jn17:31) This is yet another way of describing the ultimate theological and spiritual purpose of all ministries within the ordered communion of the Catholic Church: the spiritual Unitive path. The framework of collaborative relationalities then, might characterise ordered communion as the intimacy (another term for closeness or union) of kinship. Such intimacy requires socio-psychological relationships of trust in which non-hierarchical practices such as mutuality and reciprocity might unfold. This point further fleshes out the shape of Christian discipleship expressed now as sacramental in an ordered communion. For, here 'friendship in the Lord' becomes sacramental or at least has the openness to be understood as such. This suggests a theology of friendship with God and the creation at the heart of canonical stewardship as much as the basis of the Catholic Church. Further again, this theological, anthropological and psychological human truth might thus find its locus in a synodal way of engaging and operating amongst communities of Canonical Stewards.

- ✓ There is also a sense in which the notion of catholicity might be another path to further understanding the theological significance of lay ecclesial leadership in the expression of such leadership by communities of canonical stewards in an ordered communion such as the Catholic Church. Daniel Horan, among others, has pointed out the way in which the notion of catholicity is concerned with the wholeness-connection of a plenitude of things, differing from the notion of universal.⁹ So, catholicity is not concerned with abstract essences (as in universal) but existing "realities of intensity, richness and plenitude".¹⁰ Catholicity is concerned, therefore, with relationalities that compose unity, implying a unitive relationship among things that might be seen as diverse. The unifying narrative of any organisation is its sense of purpose, its mission. If a community of canonical stewards might be viewed as a small Christian community responsible particularly for mission engagement, then it has the capacity to become the source of union within the MPJP itself as the connecting community of the multiple communities that make up the MPJP. At the same time, it is then a communion point for the MPJP in the ordered communion of the Catholic Church.
- ✓ This notion of union and catholicity elegantly connects the priority of synodality for communities of canonical stewards. For, in answer to the question of what do all my previous points look like in practice, the answer could well be synodality. It is easily seen that the ecclesial mode of being of an ordered communion on the unitive path to God, is the very definition of synodality. This last point is perhaps best illustrated by Pope Francis own words: "The Church is called to be a place of communion, a place where all can contribute, listen, and discern together."¹¹ Such may very well be the role description of a community of canonical stewards – being a place or forum in which each member might contribute, listen, and discern together. Of particular help here would be Canon 117, which defines the MPJP stewardship community as an 'aggregate of persons'. This 'aggregate of persons' then expresses God's mission through the stewardship/sponsorship of the

⁹ Cf. Daniel Horan, *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology*, Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2019.

¹⁰ D. Horan, *Catholicity*, p. 6.

¹¹ Pope Francis, General Audience, St Peter's Square, November 6, 2013.

ministries of the MPJP. This suggests a group of equals coming to the table of the Spirit to discern the Holy Will and calling of the Trinity of Love, surely a way of describing a synodal approach. Further, in being a Christian community of the ordered communion of the Church, empowered through baptismal call, canonical stewards may be seen as becoming a synod of the Church, in communion with the many other synods of the Church. Again, Pope Francis' words illustrate what such results in his definition of synodality: [Synodality is]... an expression of the Church's nature, form, style and mission... and a place where ... all can feel at home and participate."¹² To be able to facilitate such belonging in their organisation is surely an embrace of catholicity within the ordered communion of the Catholic Church and the unfolding possibility of the ordered communion of their MPJ.

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented some substantive theological propositions unfolding key theological foundations for understanding MPJP communities of canonical stewards as lay ecclesial leaders. These foundations might ultimately be viewed from the perspective of accountabilities. Accountable to Mission as a Christian synodal community engage in the constant prayer of communal discernment, accountable to the Church as ecclesial leaders entrusted with the care and nurturance of her ministries, accountable to their ministries as stewards of the heart or communion of their organisations, accountable to each other as workers for synodal communion of heart and minds, and accountable to the people they serve through the expression of their mission in the ministries, as witnesses to unconditional, self-diffuse love, manifest in excellence of service.

These accountabilities acknowledged, as the contemporary 'signs of the times' (Matt 16:3; Lk 12:56) are reflected upon by the Catholic Church and indeed, in this symposium, the relatively recent rise in the numbers of lay-led MPJP's is something of note.¹³ Indeed, could these newer entities of Catholic lay ecclesial leaders be seen as the unfolding of the Holy Spirit's call to the whole Church for all the baptised to "carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world"?¹⁴ I certainly like to think so. As a movement of the Holy Spirit it offers so much to the Catholic peoples. As implicit possibility of synodality it offers even more.

Certainly, in Australia MPJP's have become, in a very short time, a crucial part of the Catholic Church's ministerial presence, not only to the Catholic communities in which they serve, but importantly, to the wider Australian community. Through their canonically empowered stewarding leadership of large and small Catholic institutions in the diverse sectors in which Catholic Church ministries operate (aged and health care, education and social services),

¹² Pope Francis, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Faithful of the Diocese of Rome*. Paul VI Audience Hall, Saturday, September, 2021.

¹³ *Pacem in Terris* (1963) Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

¹⁴ Vatican II (1964) Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n.31; <https://www.vatican.va/>

MPJP's touch the lives of millions of Australians. Many of these Australians are vulnerable and in need. Thus, their importance to the Catholic Church and her peoples, as well as the broader communities and publics, as a sign of hope cannot be overstated.

Taken together, the different MPJP's of Australia have varied origins, varied forms of reserve powers in relation to their civil boards, varied selection procedures and varied spiritual cultures and understanding of themselves as ecclesial leaders. To date, there are approximately fourteen ministerial public juridic persons across Australia, New Zealand and Singapore who are members of the Australian Association of Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP). Of their own admission, members of their communities of canonical stewards are calling out for mission formation both personal and communal.

So, in light of this relatively new and novel arising of lay leadership in the Catholic Church, as much as their diversities of origin, ministries and governance structures, I suggest that MPJP's represent an important 'sign of the times' for the Church, not only in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, but throughout the Catholic Church around the world. The evidence of this is all through this symposium. Indeed, this lay ecclesial governance form is present in many countries albeit with diversities of history and structure. Certainly, these newer MPJP's may be understood as a significant movement in the Catholic Church towards the fuller participation of the laity, so hoped for in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁵ The opportunities to further and intentionally realise this hope are surely offered in the ongoing collaborative formation in the movement towards deeper synodality. Such formation invites the Church further down a theological pathway towards deeper communion of hearts and minds. Taking this pathway has the capacity to constitute not only small Christian communities of canonical stewards and sponsors but also the wider Church, as catholic and Catholic.

For the measure of our compassion lies not in our service of the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable and voiceless but in our ability to see ourselves in kinship with them, in reciprocity and mutuality. No us and them, only us.

Greg Boyle SJ
(Founder Homeboy and Homegirl Industries)

¹⁵ *Lumen Gentium* no's 10, 30, 31, & 32.

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APPENDIX A

Stimulus Material for the 2024, AMPJP Wisdom Circle Discussions

Possible DRAFT Outline:

1. Starting from an action of prayerful discernment and the moment in which the Catholic Church finds itself (The Church of the Laity is arriving)
 - a. The longings for mattering and relationships in the context of the call to the greater, to be a part of enacting something larger...
 - b. The Spirit of God: Discerning the call of Jesus Christ in the people of God and their voice –
 - c. Revelation is ongoing and in the people – reading the signs of the times
 - d. The Church of the laity foretold and heralded in the VII (revisiting aspects of Verbum Dei)
 - e. Synodality and voice of the Spirit arising (referencing the Synod)
 - f. The ministerial public juridic persons: The laity entrusted with the leadership of Catholic agencies: lay ecclesial leadership
2. Church arising in this moment
 - a. Historical evolution of the Spirit in the call of the Church – nothing is fixed
 - b. From Perfect Society to Communio: A necessary movement away from all hierarchical notions of master and servant – the spiritual undoing the false economy of Church life
 - c. Many gifts in the one body of Christ: Baptismal and Ministerial Priesthood
3. *Laudato si* and the social ecological model now at hand (MPJP distinctiveness in this offering?)
 - a. The life of God as Trinity of relationships
 - b. The relational connection and symmetry of the creation and of the Church –
 - c. No longer and us and them – One in Christ – Because we are Catholic, all are welcome on mission with us
4. The promise of the MPJP's
 - a. Cultures of care and communion
 - b. The Healing ministries of Jesus Christ –
 - c. Lay ecclesial leadership and Catholic identity

