

BLOY HOUSE

The Episcopal Theological School at Los Angeles



Bloy House News

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Lay Ministry: the How and the Why

By Linda Allport, Dean of Bloy House

“How Is Never As Important As Why”

~ *Namor*, *Wakanda Forever*

I recently watched *Wakanda Forever*, heard this quote, and, after a year of focusing on lay formation and lay ministry development I wondered: does it apply to our baptismal covenant work in the church and the world? Lay formation often focuses on the “how” much more than the “why”. *How* to be a lay preacher, *how* to lead morning worship, *how* to be a treasurer, an effective warden, an altar guild director, and so on. It is often assumed that we all know *why* we are lay ministers, *why* activating our ministry helps us grow in our faith, and *why* we find ourselves in particular roles in the church.



Namor in *Wakanda Forever*, image from [wallpapers.com](#).

My first year as Dean at Bloy House began with workshops at several congregations,

beginning at the beginning, that is, asking the “why” questions before worrying about the “how”. Together with these amazing lay people, we not only discussed why we are all called to fulfill our baptismal covenant by being active in our church, but why we can become burned out, why lay ministry is not valued as much as it should be, and why well-formed lay ministers are vital to moving our church into the 21st century.

That was the first year. Our second year begins this month, and we are grateful to receive a renewal of our Trinity Church Wall Street grant. They have asked us to focus our lay curriculum more fully on practical skills for leadership, in other words, the *how* of lay ministry. We wouldn’t feel comfortable doing this if we had not spent time in the first year working on the *why*, and if we did not plan to continue discussing the *why* of lay ministry.

Bloy House is developing an ambitious schedule of courses designed to train lay people to become licensed in the specific ministries designated for licensing in the Episcopal Canons. Every Diocese is asked to develop a program of training and licensing and to define exactly what kind of training is required for each ministry. We have been working with the Commission on Ministry and others in the Diocese to define that training and develop a pathway for managing the licensing process. Stay tuned to the Bloy House and Commission on Ministry websites for more specifics in the next few months. We will focus initially on the courses required for licensed Preacher, Worship Leader, and Pastoral Leader. These lay ministries will have the most immediate impact on those congregations that are in transition.



Pilot congregation participants at All Saints, Oxnard.

In addition, Bloy House will develop and offer courses for training church leaders involved in congregational governance: vestry/bishop’s committee members, wardens, and treasurers. Having well-formed leaders in these roles will mean they can help steer their congregations through transition and inspire their congregations to grow in their fellowship and outreach. We hope to offer some of these courses on location with specific deaneries as well as via Zoom.

In developing these practical courses – the *how* of lay ministry – we want to include discussions that address the *why* of ministry. *Why* telling your story as a lay preacher is important, *why* being a treasurer can be an inspiration to you and others. And while we will be bringing these training courses to the diocese this year, we hope to continue to provide traditional faith formation classes which serve to inspire lay ministry as participants learn about and grow in their faith.

We want Bloy House formation programs to address both the why and the how of lay ministry, which will result in raising up truly balanced, inspired, and well-equipped lay leaders.

President's Update



2023 graduates, faculty, trustees, staff, and altar party.

On Saturday, May 13, Bloy House observed its final graduation ceremony for students in the longstanding traditional program preparing women and men for ordained and lay ministries along the lines of a traditional M.Div. program. The four graduates (Miriam Edwards, Karen James, Jonathan Timothy Stoner, and Joshua Wong) leave the school and prepare for ministry in the great tradition of the school which dates back to 1958.

The end of our traditional accredited pre-ordination program is both a loss and a realistic response to the changing nature of theological education. Across the seminary system, applications and enrollments have decreased dramatically. (In fact, Bloy House has not received any applications for its traditional program in over two years.) Priest education is now largely provided by tuition-free schools (both online and in person). As the school's board has reflected on these trends, it has become clear to us that Bloy House's current and future mission will most importantly be centered on education for lay ministry and leadership and education for the diaconate.



Multicultural Ministry workshop participants.

Over the past year we have been fortunate to receive a grant from Trinity Church Wall

Street to fund our lay education program. We are working closely with Bishop John Taylor and Archdeacon Laura Siriani to design the deacon education program. We are confident that these programs represent the school's most visionary and faithful response to the church's current needs. And we are hopeful that these new directions will engage both prospective deacons and those involved in increasingly vital lay congregational ministries.

The Saturday graduation also represented the final ceremonial appearance of Canon Steven Nishibayashi, who for the past 18 years has served ably as the Vice Chair of Bloy House's board. Dr. Nishibayashi is actively involved in other vital ministries for both the larger church and the diocese, and he has promised to continue to work with Bloy House as his expertise is needed.



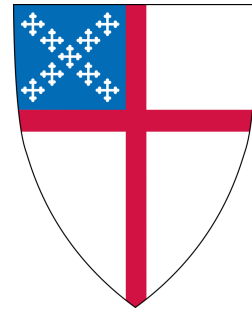
Left to Right: Bishop Taylor, outgoing Board of Trustees Vice-Chair Steve Nishibayashi, and President Gary Hall.

Anyone who has been around Bloy House for the past two decades knows how vital Steve's board leadership has been. From chairing the board in the bishop's absence to working closely with the dean to recruit new trustees and think strategically about the school's future, Steve has been at the center of the school's life and work. He has given of himself tirelessly and generously. It is hard to imagine Bloy House and its work without him. Speaking personally, I am deeply grateful for him as both colleague and friend.

As we begin the 2023-2024 fiscal year, I ask you to consider giving a gift (or an additional gift) to Bloy House. Your gift will support our visionary ministries in lay and diaconal education and will celebrate both our graduates and honor Canon Dr. Steve Nishibayashi's 18-year service to Bloy House and its board.

Gary Hall, President

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