

Put the U into MUC for 2025 (Commissioning Service with Communion)

Ministers! What Are They Good For? Nothing!?!

Ephesians 4:7,11-16

⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

1 Peter 2:1-3, 9-10

¹ Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

Ministers! What Are They Good For? Some say Nothing!?!

As you can imagine this has been contentious issue in the history of the church.

Priesthood of All Believers: Equipping the Saints.

What does it mean to be a priesthood of all believers?

Some say it means that each of us is a priest and each of us of a minister.

I do not think that is right – I think it means something a little more nuanced.

It is more that we are all on the team and each of us has a role on the team

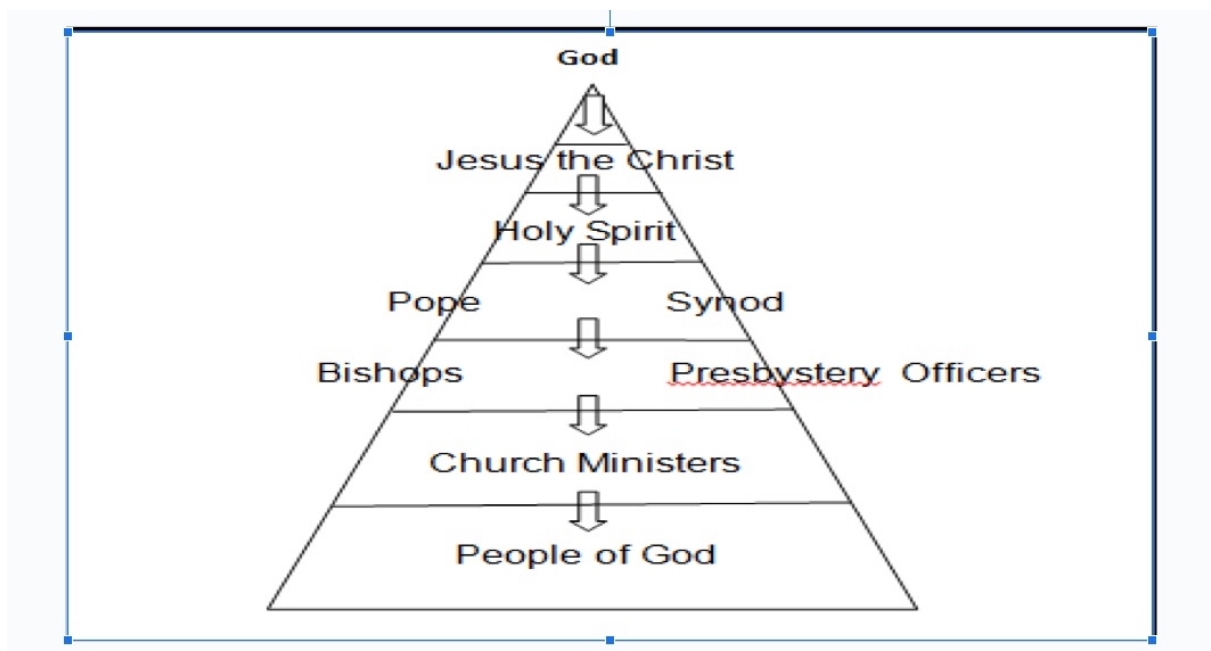
the people of God are to worship and serve but as a collective.

What then are ministers?

Some traditions suggest that ministers are the boss of the people of **God**.

Where the arrows of power start with God and go down.

Illustration #01 – Hierarchy



Those higher in the triangle rule and can substitute for what is below making what is below dependant on what is above.

I do not think that is right – in the words of Paul the idea is that people are set aside to look after the team – equip the saints.

Priesthood of All Believers: Coach

For instance in Australian Cricket the coach both for men and women is not the boss but there to help them all be better cricketers – the captain runs the show

our captain is Jesus – or in the words of Peter there is only one true Priest Jesus – the one who connects God and humanity

There is a vast difference between everyone doing their bit and everyone being the coach and captain of the team

In some Christian traditions the captain and coach is the one role

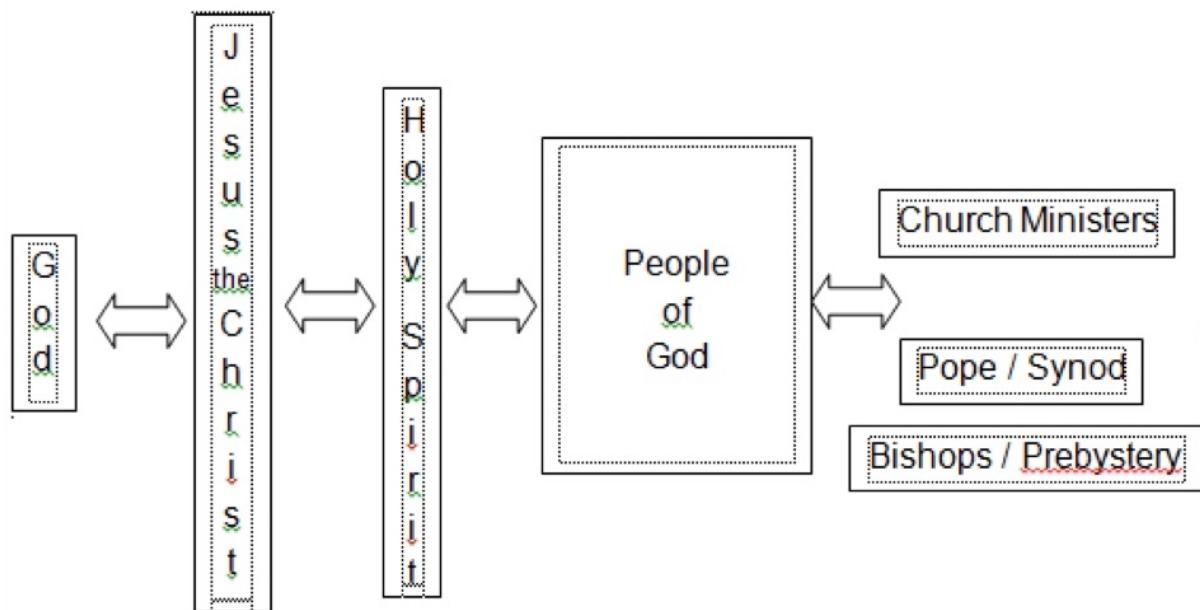
which can be okay as long as you understand what the primary role of the minister is – to help the team be the best team it can be – equip the saints

Their primary role of the minister is not boss but to coach the team to be better

That means ministers are best understood as part of the team looking after the team rather than being either the boss of the team or taking the place of the team

It is a picture of mutual service of each other and those around us

Illustration #02



God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit is along-side not over us.

We are all alongside each other not over anyone – with each of us having a role to play in the team.

Priesthood of All Believers: Representative not Substitute

The minister represents the people of God – the minister is not a substitute or to replace the people of God.

Only Jesus as our captain can be a substitute for the people of God.

We are the body of Christ – ministers are not the body of Christ – despite some other Christian traditions which claim ministers can stand in for the people of God.

What is the primary pastoral responsibility of the minister? – to equip so that we are the best caring community we can be.

What is the primary missional responsibility of the minister? – to equip so that we are the best serving community we can be.

What is the primary worshipping responsibility of the minister? – to equip so that we are the best at sharing our love of God with others when we gather.

Priesthood of All Believers: Conclusion

Of course that involves ministers in some of the caring, serving and sharing, but it is unhelpful if you think the minister is the carer, servant and sharer instead of the people of God.

So, as we commission each other in our contribution on Jesus team – there are two polarities to avoid – too much focus on the ministers.

Too often we make it sound like the team just does the menial stuff and the captain does all the important stuff. That is why today we are able to commission each and everyone of us as team members of the priesthood of all believers. The only criteria is to be a baptised follower of the God of Jesus through the Spirit.