From an ecclesial understanding the term pastor designates a particular office originating in the first generation of the Church. Pastors are gifts to the church. The pastoral office derives its purpose and significance from God. Its revealing source. The historical ecclesiastical model of pastoral practice requires that a pastor be ordained. In order to guide and govern the Christian community, the church. There are no pastors without a flock. Contemporary developments in ecclesial understanding and governance create the opportunity for lay individuals to assist the clergy in pastoral practice. This ecclesial development has implications for the office of pastor and the ministry of the laity. To be faithful to its revealed tradition the ecclesial community must retain the distinction between the ordained and laity in pastoral practice.

**An Ecclesial Context**

In light of National Pastoral Care Week 1990, Strunk [1] writes in an editorial: “The event once again draws attention to the notion of 'pastoral care' as a generic term. What does it really mean? How wide are its parameters: Who are its participants?” Pastoral practice begins with the early church. [2] In Acts and Mark, we read of Jesus going about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of evil. [3] Further, the apostle James notes the influence of the power of grace through the healing gifts of the community on the ill person. [4] Ecclesiastically, this understanding was stressed and expressed in sacramental form by the Council of Trent that introduced the Sacrament of the Sick and reserved it to presbyters (Bishops and priests). Contemporary Christians understand the Sacrament of the Sick to strengthen the ill person, to arouse confidence in divine mercy, and to help bear trials in this life more easily. If bodily health is restored it is expedient for the health of the person, body and soul. Ashley and O'Rourke add ‘reconciliation’ as an aspect of restored health. [5]

Pangrazzi notes that an increasing number of non-ordained lay people are entering health-care institutions. “In countries like Holland and Sweden,
they are chaplains and receive a regular salary. In others, like France and Italy, they are part of chaplaincy teams, have more limited training, and offer volunteer service." [6] In the modern marketplace context, Clifford observes that “unfortunately the non-theological image of the business enterprise has come to dominate much of the thinking and practice of many churchman, especially on the North American continent.” [7] Therefore, there is a need to articulate an ecclesiastically-embedded pastoral practice that speaks to human existence, not commercial interests. Human relationships require a re-assessment of theological understanding of pastoral practice the Christian community by the minister, ordained or lay. In the context of human relationships, “pastoral counselling, as it has evolved over the past twenty-five years, has become a highly-specialized part of the pastoral care ministry of the church and synagogue,” notes North. [8] From a Christian perspective one could ask: Is the shift to embrace the synagogue, as North suggests is happening, in keeping with the ecclesial concept of pastoral care? Byrd and Jessen note that Christian and non-Christian religious bodies have presented themselves as engaging in specialized pastoral care — a ministry traditionally reserved to the Christian community. They write: “Likewise, clergy from Roman Catholic traditions, as well as Jewish traditions, have become members of the College. These developments clearly point us in the direction of a concern for ministry in specialized settings.” [9] One may also ask: Can there be an understanding of non-Christian pastoral care? One could argue that spiritual care ought to be identified with the synagogue and pastoral care identified with the church.

Changes in ecclesial thinking beg the question: How are we to understand pastoral practice vis à vis the synagogue, the mosque and Hindu temple? This is a pressing question as western culture continues to adjust to an increasing presence of non-Christians in health care facilities. Pastors need to take seriously the effort to develop a separate understanding for the non-Christian “cure of souls.” In a critical analysis of this notion Johanson reviews Augsburger’s book, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures*, and writes: "Augsburger's book would do better to emphasize much more clearly the value of referral and finding ways to support indigenous healers. It is grandiose to suggest that a counsellor should have facility at working in a nondirective way with an American couple, switch smoothly to a more authoritarian role when working with an Oriental couple, know how to make
good contact with a Native American in the next hour, and move on to working with a woman who grew up with voodoo in Haiti." [10]

The premise is that Christians and non-Christians require spiritual care. All religious traditions engage in spiritual care. However, only the Christian tradition of spiritual care has been gifted with pastors who provide pastoral care. Paul lists pastors as among Christ’s gift to the Church. [11] Is there a distinction to be made in pastoral practice between the ordained holding office in the ecclesial community and the laity who minister in the name of the ecclesial community? Because Clifford [12] tells us that “there is no universal agreement among its advocates as to the precise relation between the Church and the episcopally ordained ministry [pastors],” clergy and laity must continue their pastoral practice in light of “the meaning and significance of being a pastor in both historic and contemporary forms of the Christian Church.” [13] Wise appeals to a pre-ecclesiastical understanding of pastoral practice based on the activity of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. Jesus’ activity fits no Levitical nor ecclesiastical model of priesthood or ordination. Wise says: “The direction of the pastoral ministry of Jesus is clear as its source. It was directed to the needs of people. The full meaning of this requires much reflection and elaboration.” [14]

Theologically, Jesus cannot be conceived as a pastor. He was not ordained. However, he is the one after whom pastoral practice is modelled. Jernigan writes, “The basis task of every Christian...is to try to translate Jesus’ concern for loving relationships into the practical realities of everyday life.” [15] Theology, the translation of Jesus’s concerns for loving relationships, ought to direct pastoral practice of everyday Christian life. Non-Christians do not have an understanding of theology similar to that of Christian understanding. Abelard’s (1079–1142) understanding that theology is an ordered body of knowledge about God has become to be the dominant characteristic of Christian theology. In contrast, pagan antiquity and the early Greek Fathers understood theology to be about questions of mythology, spirituality and philosophical disciplines referring to meaning in the universe. [16] Theology, as a Christian discipline, has taken on various forms throughout history as believers attempted to understand revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Today, theology concerns itself with revealed principles and reasoned conclusions, not necessarily scholastically interpreted, but worked out in an ecclesial context. [17]
That a theology of pastoral practice ought to direct the practice of pastoral care has long been recognized by the Churches. This understanding has been reaffirmed by the Church of Rome in the Second Vatican Council’s decree on the training of priests. The pastoral education of candidates characterizes the priestly formation programme. [18] The traditional pastoral relationship between the pastor and parishioner is expressed in persona Christi. This expression needs to be reviewed in light of contemporary experience and the understanding of the ecclesial office of the ordained and the ministry of the laity. In pastoral practice the focus is, of necessity, on the relationship of Christians among themselves. The fact that they are Christians, i.e. baptised, characterizes a spiritually distinct community. This character is lacking in communities formed on natural (humane) understanding or fellowship. Pastoral practice is rooted in James’s letter about sending for the presbyters at a time of illness. [19] In a crisis, the ecclesial prayer of faith will afford salvation to the sick person James says. Pastoral practice, (ministry) among the baptised, involves being present to one another “in the Lord,” which differs from natural presence or fellowship which may be a matter of spiritual care appropriate within any human community, religious or secular.

For many in specialized settings of pastoral care, (hospital, school, prison), “doing” is recognized as secondary to “being.” Throughout history, many philosophers have attempted to answer the “who to be” question. In the pastor/patient relationship the pastor’s office is characterized primarily as “who to be” and secondarily as “what to do.” A Christian pastoral understanding, which is rooted in the activity of Jesus of Nazareth, helps focus attention on “who to be.” In our day, many psychologists, Christian and non-Christian, have undertaken this inquiry. Among them, one of particular usefulness to pastoral practice because of his friendly attitude to religious belief is Alfred Adler. Adler’s humanistic psychology is “person oriented” and examines the question of “who to be.” Adler’s Individual Psychology helm in answering Strunk’s questions noted in the introduction, about parameters and participants in pastoral practice. Support of Adler’s contribution to religious understanding and usefulness for pastoral practice may be found in other places. [20] From a professional psychological understanding, Alfred Adler, offers a way to appreciate relationships which touch upon issues of the psyche and spirituality. This is evidenced in his discussion with
Ernst Jahn, a Lutheran pastor. Aspects of Adler’s understanding can be adapted theologically to pastoral practice within an ecclesial context.

**The Pastor’s Office; The Minister’s Role**

In 1988, Eades could write: “NIBIC chaplains live out the uniqueness of their ministry and represent a broader view of the clergy role than tradition defines for parish-bound pastors. The workplace of these chaplains is the same workplace inhabited by people who both go and don’t go to church.” In the mind of the National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains pastoral practice is not to be reserved to the Christian community. Nor is it likely that in the mind of the NIBIC that the office of ordination is understood as it is in the church. Traditionally, hierarchical churches required ordination as a pre-requisite for pastoral practice. That ordination is not a pre-requisite for pastoral practice is a developing notion which invites a review of the office of the ordained and the role of the laity both within the ecclesial community and outside the church in contemporary society.

Contemporary ecclesial understanding needs to return to the roots of pastoral practice as revealed in the early church. Today, “sometimes people incorrectly think pastoral counsellors are people who counsel pastors. We are, actually, pastors who counsel. That is to say, we are pastors and laypersons with theological educations whose primary ministry is doing counselling and psychotherapy with individuals, couples, families and groups. This is a problematic understanding from an ecclesial perspective. More accurately the preceding description is of *counsellors*, ordained or lay, with “theological educations whose primary ministry is doing counselling and psychotherapy with individuals, couples, families and faith groups.” Pastoral practice deals with those issues of religious and spiritual care cited earlier. Counselling and psychotherapy deal with the psyche and the spirit but not necessarily in a religious context. All issues of the psyche and spirit do. not necessarily involve those of pastoral practice. The lack of distinction between issues of the psyche and spirit and religious and spiritual care comes about since theological education for pastoral practice is no longer reserved to seminaries. This lack of distinction reflects a changing cultural context and causes the question of the relationship between the ordained and the laity to be reviewed both in a general pastoral context and in a specialized chaplaincy context.
Within an ecclesial context, Clifford distinguishes three organizational aspects of the church which influence pastoral practice. First, there is a business outlook which tends to shun theological questions; secondly, there is “Catholic” outlook which looks upon ministry as “the divinely ordained medium for the transmission of the gospel and sacramental life,” and thirdly, the outlook based on “the Reformation doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers” that commits the entire church to ministry. [25] Clearly the first cannot be accepted as a tradition within the church. The church’s minister/pastor is one who derives office, purpose, and message from an authoritative source. The authoritative source for office/ministry, purpose and message in pastoral practice is Jesus of Nazareth, not the corporation in the market place. Clifford’s “divinely ordained medium” and the “Priesthood of all believers” are notions arising out of the ecclesial community gathered in Jesus’s name. It is the risen Christ whom ministers, both lay and ordained, represent. They have the message of the good news of what God has done in Jesus the Christ to share with all who are open to it. Muse warns of the danger that Christian spirituality can become “reduced to a mere symbol of the way to organize the psychic stuff of life on the road to psychological health according to prevailing secular norms.” [26] In pastoral practice one must not psychologize Christianity, nor Christianize psychology since as Ashely and O'Rourke observe: “Some ministers are so secularized that they feel more comfortable in a psychotherapeutic role than in a spiritual one and thus fail their patients by refusal to speak in God's name.” [27] Such misunderstanding occurs with the fusion of pastoral practice and psychology in which goals are set through the insights and objectives of the other’s value system. Pastors and ministers are called to the activity of Jesus of Nazareth in their pastoral practice. This is not necessarily so with psychologists. Clifford reminds us that: “It is simply not true that, in virtue of the priesthood of all believers, all offices are interchangeable.” [28] However, offices are distinguishable. The role of pastor traditionally has been reserved to the ordained. Ministry undertaken in the name of the Lord, is not reserved to the ordained. The laity share in the pastor’s office and it is the Lord who calls them to minister in this manner. [29] Differing gifts (offices/ministries) are distinguished within the church. Paul lists them in I Corinthians 12:4-11. From the perspective of governance and structure, which defines ecclesial
office and ministry, a contemporary Roman Catholic canonist writes of chaplaincy.

The doctrine distinguishes between ‘ecclesiastical chaplains’ and ‘lay chaplains:’ the former is established by the ecclesiastical authority to address the pastoral need of those groups of faithful inadequately assisted by common pastoral organization: the latter is provided in civil institutions by the faithful who give, with ecclesiastical approval and assured economic support, pastoral assistance in certain cases (hospitals, schools, etc.). [30]

From a Reformed perspective, Clifford writes that “the pastor’s perspectives are different, at least from the counsellor who is a humanist. Even the Christian layman who shares the pastor’s perspectives, is commissioned to operate within the framework of his particular calling, and therefore, his orientation to those perspectives is somewhat different.” [31] In the specialized area of health care ethics Ashley and O'Rourke discuss ministry to the hospital staff and write: “A distinction needs to be made here between the chaplain who is most properly an ordained minister...to whom the role of pastor of a community belongs by office, and other pastoral care professionals who are not ordained but who nevertheless have a genuine ministry [authors' italics]." [32]

Within the hierarchical model of church there is a developing understanding that ordination is not a necessary requirement for practical practice. This understanding introduces a distinction between the office of pastor and the role of minister. This development is anticipated in the mind of Hiltner, an early writer on pastoral practice, who writes from a non-hierarchical perspective that pastoral psychology is both psychological and theological religious and secular, and pastoral psychology is both clerical and lay. It may well be especially relevant to the ordained minister. But ill most of Protestantism, the minister is not of a different order from the layman. There is a universal priesthood and pastorhood of believers. In its full scope, pastoral psychology should be as meaningful to the Society of Friends as to Anglo-Catholic members of the Protestant Episcopal Church. [33]
Conclusion

God has provided for a particular practice and model of ministry as reflected in the activity of Jesus of Nazareth. The office of pastor and role of lay minister are distinguishable and mutually supportive. I have argued that the notion of pastoral practice that arises out of an ecclesial hierarchical model of the church need not be reserved to the ordained.

[19] James 5:14-16