

# THE MINISTRY

OFFICES,  
PROCEDURES,  
and  
NOMENCLATURE



A Report of the  
Commission on Theology and Church Relations of  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

SEPTEMBER 1981

Citations from the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord* edited by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), and, in some cases, *Concordia Triglotta*. The following abbreviations have been used:

- AC — Augsburg Confession
- Ap — Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- FC — Formula of Concord
- LC — Large Catechism
- SD — Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
- Trig.* — *Concordia Triglotta*

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## INTRODUCTION

This report on "the ministry" has been prepared in response to questions and requests for guidance from many areas of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has conducted a thorough exegetical investigation of this subject. The results of this study have been discussed in conversations and conferences with District presidents, presidents and representatives of the Synod's teacher colleges, seminary faculties, and other leaders of the church.

The manner in which the church considers issues relating to the doctrine of the ministry is important for the church and also for the men and women whose lives and services are involved. For instance, the church needs to distinguish the office of "the teacher" from the office of "the pastor," and yet to do so while paying full respect and honor to each. This necessitates a consideration of terminology and definitions. Words such as "ministry," "ordination," "installation," "pastor," "teacher," and "call" possess a variety of meanings for various people. These terms have taken on different connotations as they have evolved in our pluralistic, 20th-century society.

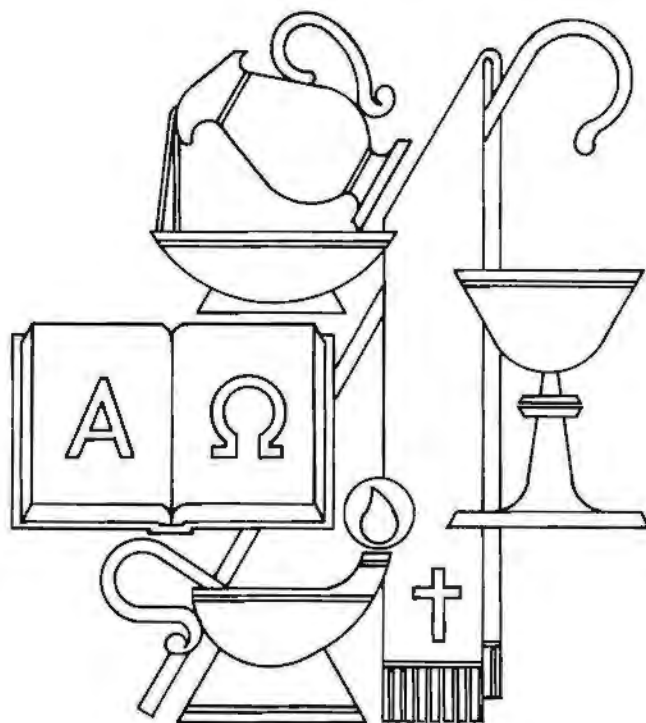
Questions concerning ministry must be approached on a number of levels. On certain levels we must speak with the authority of divine revelation. On other levels we speak in awareness that even adiaphora (things indifferent in themselves) may become matters of confession (FC SD, X). On yet a different level we may seek uniformity in the church as we use our freedom in awareness of the influence of our choices upon others. On still another level we must speak with integrity and clarity in our pluralistic society and to governmental agencies whose decisions impinge upon the personnel of the church. We must therefore take into account the following factors in this consideration of the ministry:

1. Some matters pertaining to ministry are set forth in the Holy Scriptures and are not negotiable in a church that declares God's Word to be its norm. Moreover, in a confessional church attention must be paid to those documents which are accepted as a true exposition of the Scriptures. What is taught and practiced in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod about the ministry must be in agreement with *The Book of Concord*.



2. Some matters regarding the ministry, although not divinely commanded by the Lord or by apostolic authority, have suggested patterns or models in Scripture.
3. Some matters concerning ministry, having developed by common agreement and usage, are not "doctrine" but have contributed to good order in the church.
4. Some aspects of the ministry are in themselves matters of freedom, except that the usage, understanding, and sensitivities of fellow Christians and sister churches must be carefully taken into account.
5. In a study of this type consideration must also be given to the understanding and usage of certain terms relating to the ministry in non-Lutheran churches and even among unchurched members of our society. For instance, "clergy" may mean simply a professional and duly authorized worker in some religious enterprise. It may mean something different to a hospital administration that issues "clergy" passes for parking privileges.
6. Matters of ministry are of concern to some governmental agencies. In the United States, for example, agencies concerned with internal revenue and selective service for the military require accurate definitions. While the exigencies of state-church interaction cannot dictate our doctrine of the ministry, proper and consistent definitions are needed to avoid confusion and inconvenience.
7. Finally, inadequate definitions of terms tend to lead to a drift into practices that create confusion in the church and that may even contradict sound doctrine. The result is confusion in the minds of both the lay members of the church and of those who work professionally in the church in various capacities.

# I. THE MINISTRY IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS



## I. THE MINISTRY IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

Since we are examining the doctrine of the ministry in the Lutheran Church, it is important to note the following passages from the Lutheran Confessions that set forth the doctrine of the ministry:

### **Augsburg Confession**

That we may obtain this faith [i.e., that we are justified by grace, through faith, for the sake of Christ], the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake (AC V, 1–3, *Trig.*, p. 45).

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called (AC XIV, *Trig.*, p. 49).

But this is their opinion, that the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments. . . . This power is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, according to their calling, either to many or to individuals (AC XXVIII, 5, 8, *Trig.*, p. 85).

### **Apology of the Augsburg Confession**

The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it (Ap XIII, 12).

### **Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope**

The second article is even clearer than the first because Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence. He did not give them the power of the sword or the right to establish, take possession of, or transfer the kingdoms of the world. For Christ said, "Go therefore and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20), and also, "As the Father has sent me, even so I

send you" (John 20:21). Moreover, it is manifest that Christ was not sent to wield a sword or possess a worldly kingdom, for he said, "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36). Paul also said, "Not that we lord it over your faith" (II Cor. 1:24), and again, "The weapons of our warfare are not worldly," etc. (II Cor. 10:4) (Treatise, 31).

For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers.

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, "When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. . . .

Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, "You are a royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation. . . .

From all these facts it is evident that the church retains the right of electing and ordaining ministers. Wherefore, when the bishops are heretics or refuse to administer ordination, the churches are by divine right compelled to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves (Treatise, 67—72).

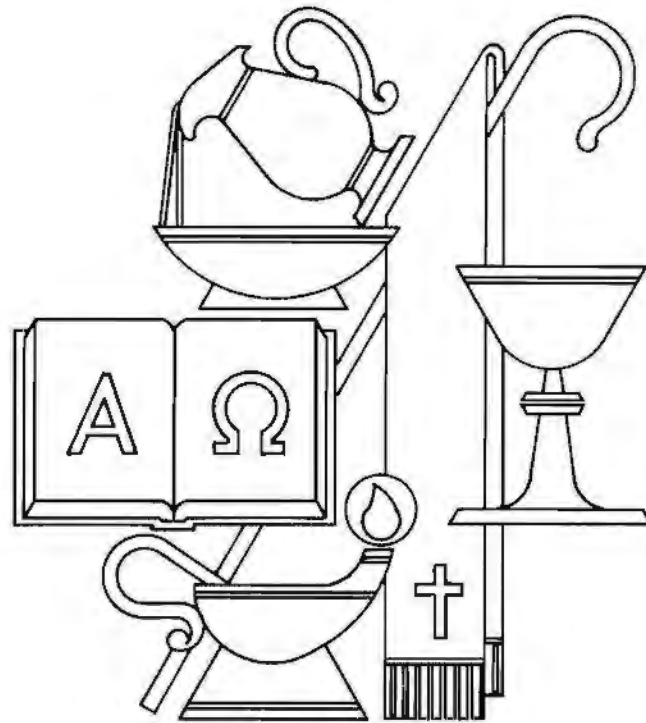
These passages from the Lutheran Confessions emphasize the following aspects of the Lutheran understanding of the ministry:

- God has given the Word and sacraments that people may come to faith.
- God has arranged that the Word and sacraments should be taught and administered.
- Since such a ministry has been established by God, individuals are called to be ministers by the church.
- Those who are called to be ministers hold and exercise the office of the ministry.
- The Power or Office of the Keys, given by Christ to the church, is



- exercised publicly on behalf of the church by the called ministers.
- The power of the ministers is the power to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and forgive and retain sins.
  - The power of the ministry is not a temporal power but a power in spiritual matters of *Word* and sacrament.
  - Ministers cannot arrogate such authority to themselves, but it must be conferred by the call of the church.

## II. DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS



## II. DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

### A. MINISTRY

The word "ministry" can be and frequently is used in more than one sense. Francis Pieper points this out as he begins his discussion of the public ministry:

The term "ministry" is used both in Scripture and by the Church in a general, or wider, and in a special, or narrower, sense. In the wider sense it embraces every form of preaching the Gospel or administering the means of grace, whether by Christians in general, as originally entrusted with the means of grace and commissioned to apply them, or by chosen public servants (*ministri ecclesiae*) in the name and at the command of Christians. In this article we are speaking of the public ministry in the narrower sense, that is, of the office by which the means of grace, given originally to the Christians as their inalienable possession, are administered by order and on behalf of Christians.<sup>1</sup>

There are those who would prefer to use the term "ministry" only in the narrower sense. They feel that this avoids confusion. Others feel that to speak of "the ministry of the laity" is not only permissible but even essential, so that the individual witnessing and teaching of Christians in general may be properly stressed and dignified.

The service of all Christians is intimately connected with the public ministry. All Christians are commissioned in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." In Ephesians 4 special offices are pointed out as given by God to equip the saints for the work of serving (*eis ergon diakonias*).<sup>2</sup> The absence in this report of a detailed discussion of the privilege and responsibility of all Christians to proclaim the Gospel does not indicate a disregard for that service. Here the focus is on the ministry in the narrower and public sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 3:439.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. E. W. Janetzki, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia Today," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 13 (November 1979), 73. In this article a distinction between ministry in the abstract and ministry in concrete is attempted by speaking of the ministry of the church and the ministry in the church.

It will be helpful already at this point to note the definitions of the following terms as they will be used in this report:

*Ministry*—This is a general term when it stands alone. It may be used in the most general sense of the service (*diakonia*) of all Christians. For the sake of clarity it is preferably used to indicate the special service of those who are called to function publicly in the church.

*Public Ministry*—To be in “public ministry” a person must be formally assigned to labor in the work of the church on behalf of those in the church who are not in public ministry (laity). It refers to offices that have specific duties, responsibilities, and accountability.

*The Office of the Public Ministry*—It is the divinely established office referred to in Scripture as “shepherd,” “elder,” or “overseer.” This term is equivalent to “the pastoral office.” Within this office are contained all the functions of the ministry of Word and sacrament in the church.

*Auxiliary Offices*—These are offices established by the church. Those who are called to serve in them are authorized to perform certain of the function(s) of the office of the public ministry. These offices are “ministry” and they are “public,” yet they are not *the* office of the public ministry. Rather, they are auxiliary to that unique pastoral office, and those who hold these offices perform their assigned functions under the supervision of the holders of the pastoral office. Such offices are established by the church as the need arises, and their specific functions are determined by the church. The most common auxiliary office today is the office of the teaching ministry.

Details regarding these definitions are presented below.

## **B. THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS**

The church is not left to itself to decide what it shall preach and teach. God has commanded and empowered the church to proclaim the Law and the Gospel. He has instituted the sacraments and commended them to the church, and He has authorized the forgiving and retaining of sins.

The Law, of course, does an alien work. Through it the Holy Spirit brings people to an awareness of their sinful state and drives them to repentance. The Gospel alone, in Word and sacrament, is the means by which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith. The Office of the Keys is “the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His church on earth.” It belongs to



the whole church. However, its exercise is not left merely to the efforts of individual Christians or to the uncertain ventures of selfstarting, charismatic individuals. The church, as a single congregation or as a group of congregations, must call and authorize certain of its members to function publicly on its behalf.

The public ministry, it is here maintained, is not a mere human arrangement or the product of sociological evolution but a divine arrangement from the beginning of the New Testament church. Already in the Old Testament God arranged for the priesthood and prescribed the manner of the selection of the priests. He also called and sent the prophets. They did not decide to prophesy on their own authority. They were selected and commissioned by God, and in some cases they assumed "the burden" with much reluctance. In the New Testament God chose, trained, and sent the apostles. In the post-apostolic church He continued and continues to choose, call, and send men for the ministry which is an expansion of the apostolic office to succeeding ages (Treatise, 10).

### C. THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

The office of the public ministry is not merely a divine suggestion but a divine *mandate*. God has decreed that the church should carry out its functions not only in private, individual actions and speaking but also corporately by selecting men who meet God's criteria and whom He then places into the office of the public ministry.

The office and its functions are called "public" not because the functions are always discharged in public, but because they are performed on behalf of the church. The acts of one who is called to fill the office of the public ministry are "public" even when they are performed privately with one individual. Moreover, the word "public" connotes accountability to those who have placed them into "public" office.

The functions of the divinely established office of the public ministry can best be seen by looking at the nomenclature that Scripture uses to refer to it. In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul uses the word *episkopee*, that is, the "oversight," to refer to the office of bishop. As a father manages his household, so the bishop stands at the head of his congregation as one who is charged with the duty of caring for the church of God. As the apostle Paul's co-worker, Timothy himself is to exercise the duties of this office as he worked among the congregations founded through the preaching of the apostle. As an overseer of the congregation, Timothy is to command and teach pure doctrine. He is to attend to public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. He is to oversee the spiritual life of the old men, the young men, the old women, the widows, the children, the slaves, the masters, and "the rich in this world."



The people are to be encouraged and guided to pray for all men. Women are to be guided in modesty of dress and adornment. The members committed to the overseer's care are to be instructed about and warned against those who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. From all of this it is clear that the oversight is not exercised according to a man's own ideas and standards but according to the revealed will of God through the inspired apostles' God-breathed words. There is a bishop's office (*episkopee*) and oversight is one of its definitive functions.

Another Scriptural term for the office of the public ministry is elder (*presbyteros*). There are different kinds of elders, and 1 Timothy 5:17 indicates that some were specifically engaged in preaching and teaching. The presbyters teach and preach the Word of God, by which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith in the hearts of the members of the flock and empowers and guides them for Christian living and service.

Hebrews 13:7 indicates that there were in the church "leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God," and in verse 17 the people in the churches that are addressed are admonished: "Obey your leaders (*heegoumenoi*) and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account."

In Ephesians 4:11-12 St. Paul refers to the various offices that God gave to the church for the building up of the saints for the work of service. Two important observations should be made within the context of this report. In giving the "shepherds and teachers" to the church, God was also appointing them, just as He appointed kings for Israel (1 Kings 1:48; 1 Sam. 12:13; cf. also Eph. 1:22). Moreover, by attaching the definite article "the" to "shepherds and teachers" the apostle indicates that teaching belongs to the essence of the duty of shepherding. Although there are varying interpretations of this passage from Ephesians 4, it is evident that teacher (*didaskalos*) does not refer to the modern office of the parish school teacher. The emphasis here is on how the saints are prepared for service by apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. The pastor does this by teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Hence the Lutheran Confessions call his office "the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments" (AC V).

Of great significance for the nature of the New Testament ministry are expressions like "the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4), "ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6), "the ministry of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8 NIV), "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18), and Paul's reference to himself as "a minister" of the Gospel (Col. 1:23).

In Titus 1:5 Paul writes: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective [*ta leiponta*, used intransitively to indicate what is absent, lacking, missing], and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."

Immediately the prerequisites for such elders, who are referred to as bishops, are presented (v. 7).

In Acts 14:23 the example of the apostles is recorded. They appointed (ordained) elders for them in every church.<sup>3</sup> In Acts 20:17 and Acts 20:28 the terms elder and bishop are used interchangeably, as in Titus 1:5 and 7. In Acts 20:28 Paul admonishes the elders: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son."

From these references there emerges a picture of an office that was instituted by God, in and with the apostolate, for which very specific qualifications are listed, and the essence of which is properly defined in the Augsburg Confession as "teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments" (AC V) on behalf of and with accountability to the church ("publicly") (AC XIV).

No specific "checklist" of functions of the office of the public ministry is presented in the Scriptures. For instance, nowhere are we told specifically that an elder "celebrated communion" or that only the elders spoke the words of institution at the celebration of the sacrament. The supervision of the shepherd-elder-bishop is a supervision of the teaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. In this way they are leaders to be obeyed in their speaking of the Word of God. They are supervisors of the spiritual life, the faith, and the Christian service of the church and its members. This is a heavy responsibility that no man can take upon himself but rather to which he must be legitimately called by the church (*rite vocatus*) (Acts 1:23-26; 13:2-3; 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19; AC XIV).

On the basis of the Scriptural evidence and the corroborating statements of the Lutheran Confessions, the office of the public ministry, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments in the church, is divinely mandated. It may exist in various forms, that is, the "flocks" to which a man ministers may have various forms, and the office may be designated by a number of names, but it remains an office mandated by God for the good of the church. It is not enough to say that God commands that the Gospel be preached and that the sacraments be administered. God has ordained a specific office. The duty of those who hold the office by God's call through the prayerful summons ("call") of the church is to preach the Gospel and

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<sup>3</sup>The verb used in this passage is *cheirotoneo*, "elect or choose by a show of hands." Reference to this root meaning of the verb may emphasize the congregation's role in calling men into the pastoral office. However, the word is also used in the simple sense of "choose."



administer the sacraments in the church and to supervise the flock committed to their care.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. OFFICE AND FUNCTION

A distinction must be made between "office" and "function." Failure to make this distinction results in confusion. For instance, when a congregation is temporarily without a man to fill the office of the public ministry in its midst, it may ask a properly supervised teacher or a lay leader to perform some functions of the office of the public ministry. This is done in an emergency situation and not as a mere convenience. However, performing such functions does not make those who do them holders of the office of the public ministry. Even in such emergency situations a congregation properly requests a man who does hold the office of the public ministry and is serving as pastor in a neighboring congregation to assume that office for them as "vacancy pastor" or "interim overseer." Thus the oversight and accountability remain with one whom the church has called and designated as a pastor and who supervises those who temporarily perform some pastoral functions. Such practices are common and reveal a "folk" understanding of the ministry even if the root of such practices is not consciously analyzed.

#### E. OTHER OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

The office of the public ministry includes within it all of the functions of the leadership of the church. Early in the history of the church we have an example of the church selecting some of its members to carry out in the stead

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 59—62. "In the Confession and in the Apology we have set forth in general terms what we have to say about ecclesiastical power.

"The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confession of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops. Accordingly Jerome teaches clearly that in the apostolic letters all who preside over the churches are both bishops and presbyters."

of and under the direction of the apostles some of the functions of their ministry. In Acts 6 we read that, at the request of the apostles, the church selected and commissioned certain men to perform functions that the apostles had been carrying out. They were appointed to the duty of providing for the physical support of the widows in the church. They were called by the church in prayer and were set apart for their office by the laying on of hands. Scripture suggests (although it does not say it directly) that this new office was of great help to the work of the church. It is reported that immediately after they were commissioned "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (v. 7). The calibre of these men is forever memorialized in Acts 6 and 7 by the account of the witness and martyrdom of Stephen.<sup>5</sup>

The church has the right to create offices from time to time that have the purpose of extending the effectiveness of the office of the public ministry. Here a word of C. F. W. Walther is instructive. He wrote: "The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching . . ." <sup>6</sup> Walther sees such offices as "sacred offices of the church," and each exercises a function of the pastoral office of the church and is an aid to the pastoral ministry.

The church has the right to distinguish such auxiliary offices of the church from each other. Some require extensive knowledge of Scripture, ability to teach or to counsel, or other capabilities that are closely related to the teaching and shepherding functions of the office of the public ministry. The church has always exercised the right to designate some of its offices as so involved in the spiritual functions of the office of the public ministry that it has provided specific training, is more formal in summoning members of the church to such offices, and has rightly included such offices within its

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<sup>5</sup>Serving in the distribution of food did not in and of itself entitle Stephen, for instance, to preach or teach publicly. Since he clearly did so, our great theologians of the past, like Chemnitz and Gerhard, surmised either that the "seven" of Acts 6 were selected from among the ministers of the Word to begin with, or that some of them were subsequently ordained into the ministry of the Word. However, we are not told in the Scriptures that Stephen either was or became an elder of the Word.

<sup>6</sup>C. F. W. Walther, "The Theses on the Ministry," in *Walther and the Church*, ed. Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 79.

concept of "ministry." Such offices call for functions that not only are necessary for the functioning of the public ministry but that only *the church* performs as an institution. Thus, the teaching of the faith in a Christian school is a function unique to the church. Properly speaking, a professional, trained teacher who is called as a teacher by the church may be said to be performing a function of the office of the public ministry. The teaching of the faith to the children and youth of the flock is a major duty of the pastoral office. To refer to it as "the teaching ministry" is less awkward and readily understandable in the church.

By using the term "teaching ministry" we are indicating the special nature of the auxiliary office of teacher in our church. One who is in the "teaching ministry" (man or woman) meets the following qualifications established by the church. He or she

- has been trained in the educational institutions of the church, has received specific training in the understanding and teaching of religion, and has been certified as suitable and eligible for the teaching ministry by a faculty of the church. In some cases the requirements have been met by means of a colloquy program that includes training and evaluation.
- has been placed into the teaching ministry formally and officially by an assignment of the Board of Assignments, which is the Council of Presidents of the Synod.
- is given authority to function in the teaching ministry in specific places by the formal call of a congregation or other legitimate calling agency (e.g., a District, the Synod, or others).
- serves under the supervision of the called pastor in a congregation or under other pastoral supervision in nonparish calls.
- does work that is specifically spiritual in nature. Although he/she may teach some "secular" subject, the philosophy of Lutheran education includes the demand that the faith of the church be evident in all activities of the school. Law and Gospel, sin and grace are operative in the curriculum and methodology of a Lutheran school.
- knows and publicly subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions.
- is accepted formally as a member of the Synod, with the obligation to attend official conferences and District conventions.
- may be chosen to represent groups of teachers as a delegate to conventions of the Synod.
- is answerable for the confessional purity of his/her teaching and is pledged to a life that befits the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- may be removed from office because of impure doctrine, an ungodly life, or incompetence.
- is pledged to be concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of those committed to his/her care.



Although not pledged to remain in the teaching office for a lifetime, the normal expectancy of the church and of teacher candidates is that, unless prevented by personal circumstances, the teaching ministry of an individual will be followed as a lifelong calling.

These are the criteria by which our church designates the occupants of its teaching ministry office.

## F. ONE MINISTRY OR MANY?

Is there one ministry in the church or many?<sup>7</sup> In common parlance we do refer to “the pastoral ministry,” “the teaching ministry,” “the youth ministry,” “the music ministry.” Such terminology does convey meaning. It usually indicates that someone functions in a special way in the church by authorization of the church, usually full time and in a capacity that supports the ministry of Word and sacrament. However, less than cautious use of the term “minister” and “ministry” tends to blur the distinctions that need to be made and leads to practices that are theologically insupportable and that confuse the church about the doctrine of the ministry.

Putting it simply, there is only *one* pastoral office, but the office which we formally refer to as “the office of the public ministry” has multiple *functions*, some of which are best handled by another, e.g., the parochial school teacher who is performing *that* function of the pastoral office. The pastoral office with all of its functions is mandated for the church. Other offices are established by the church to assist in carrying out pastoral functions.

Thus, we may speak of various “ministries” in and of the church, but we must be careful to distinguish them properly. An office is not defined solely by what one who holds it does (function) but by the duties, responsibility, and accountability assigned to it. The pastoral office is unique in that *all* the functions of the church’s ministry belong to it.

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed. under “Amt.” “Strictly speaking only the Lutherans have a doctrine of the ministry, while at the corresponding place the Calvinists treat of ministries [*Aemter*, offices] and the Roman Catholics and Orthodox, as well as, in their own way, the Anglicans, of the hierarchy . . . . Lutheranism powerfully underscores, with its doctrine of the preaching ministry [*Predigtamt*] (AC 5) as *the* ministry [*Amt*], the position of the Gospel as the lifegiving center of the congregation.” (Our translation.)

## G. PARISH AND NON-PARISH PASTORS

In considering the office of the public ministry one must consider the relationship between "parish pastors" and "non parish pastors." Some would deny the necessity for any distinction. To them only men whose office of the public ministry is carried out as pastors of congregations that are geographically locatable are really in the ministry of Word and sacrament. Others point to the personnel listing for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in *The Lutheran Annual*. It includes 18 categories under the heading "Pastors of Missouri Synod." Only one of them is "parish pastor." To be sure, the vast majority of names listed are designated as "parish pastor," and the parish pastorate is the primary form of the pastorate. But other kinds of pastors serve to provide a support system for the work of the parish pastor and his congregation. The classification code of the Synod also includes such designations as "Administration-District," "Administration-Synod," "Campus Pastor," "Military Chaplain," "Professor Serving a Synodical School." These are all listed as "pastors" and are often called "pastor" by people in the church. The question therefore arises whether or not only parish pastors are holders of the office of the public ministry.

Some would solve problems in this area by asking what a man does during the week. Does he preach from the pulpit every Sunday? Does he celebrate communion once a month or more often? Does he make sick and shut-in calls? On that score only parish pastors—and not even some of them—would qualify as being in the office of the public ministry.

The more theologically appropriate questions to ask are the following: Has the church found an individual to be qualified for the office of the public ministry? Has the church called him to exercise an overseeing and shepherding ministry in the church? Has the church formally called him to hold the office of the public ministry and entrusted him with the responsibility of that office, even though it may ask him to specialize in certain functions of this office? And is he, upon installation into the office, pledged to be and remain accountable for the faithful conduct of his office to God, to the church, and to the believers committed to his care? Questions such as these indicate a need for clarity and precision in the issuing of "calls."

The question is also asked: Is it possible to exercise the office of shepherd and overseer in the church *only* in a typical parish situation? In the case of "administrative officials," for instance, is the church calling as an "elder of the church" a man qualified to exercise oversight when it calls him to be a District president? or a seminary professor? or a campus pastor? The answer may be yes or no. It depends on the call. If a man is asked merely to perform a necessary but only secular function for the church but is not called to public accountability as an overseer in the church, he is not in the office of the public ministry. However, District presidents who are charged with the oversight of the overseers of the flock, or professors who are charged with



the oversight of the men who are preparing to be the shepherds of the church, or men who are charged with the oversight of the faith and life of the church's youth on a college campus or in the military can be properly said to be serving in the office of the public ministry of the church.

This paper cannot delineate all of the possible ways in which the church may need to assign her spiritual leaders. Good order requires, however, that the church itself carefully define the offices and their functions to which it summons its spiritual leaders. It should exercise good stewardship in not thoughtlessly drawing men from the office of the public ministry to tasks that are necessary but that do not require one of the pastors of the church. Or, if a man agrees to accept a position that is not within the scope of the pastoral ministry, he should no longer function as a holder of the office of the public ministry but as a lay member of the church. Confusion occurs when men "resign from the ministry" but continue to appear as holders of the office of the public ministry doing such things as accepting occasional preaching engagements, performing marriages, or setting up business as ministerial marriage counselors. Since by such behavior a man holds himself forth as a pastor and performs pastoral functions without a call and without the authorization of the church—indeed having removed himself from the ministry—his actions must be declared wrong.<sup>8</sup>

A man who has been called by the church to serve as an elder who labors in Word and sacrament other than as a parish pastor is available to the whole confessional fellowship of the church to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, or perform any of the functions of the office of the public ministry at the invitation of any segment of the church. He does not need to be "called" each time he accepts an invitation to preach. The common usage of the church seems to sense this. Confusion arises when we assume that the church can function only as one congregation at a time, or that the ministry of Word and sacrament must be defined only in terms of the activities of a parish pastor. Worse confusion arises when a man who once held the office of the public ministry continues to function as such after he has publicly disavowed his call from the church.

We may say here that this same principle applies to auxiliary offices of the public ministry. A teacher of the church is defined not solely by his or her

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. "A Statement on the Relationship of the Ordained Ministry to Pastoral Counseling." This statement, approved in 1978 by the Standing Committees of the Division of Theological Studies and the Department of Specialized Pastoral Care and Clinical Education of the Lutheran Council in the USA, is available from LCUSA, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10010.

teaching in an elementary classroom. The church may call him or her to serve as a director of education, a director of youth guidance, or some other post that is just as vital to the public ministry as classroom teaching.<sup>9</sup>

## H. ORDINATION

Ordination has its historical roots in the New Testament and in the church through the ages.<sup>10</sup> It is a solemn ecclesiastical rite by which a duly qualified member of the body of Christ who has accepted a valid call from the church is presented to the church as a gift of the Holy Spirit and publicly declared to be a holder of the office of the public ministry. It is a public ratification of the call and an invocation of the blessings of God upon the new minister. While the rite of ordination including the laying on of hands is not a necessity, it is to be revered as an ancient apostolic custom. In keeping with this custom, the laying on of hands of other pastors, and the presence of teachers and members of the church from places other than the site of the ordainee's immediate call is meaningful. When a man is ordained in one congregation, for example, he is recognized as a member of the public ministry of the whole confessional fellowship. Ordination as an act does not impart an additional authority that the call does not give, nor is it a sacrament. As a matter of uniform nomenclature and in accordance with common understanding, the term "ordination" should be reserved for a man's entry into the office of the public ministry. The initial acceptance by the church of the gift also of those who are to serve in the vital auxiliary offices should be carried out with solemnity befitting the office. Tradition, common expectations, and the uniqueness of the pastoral office speak against using the term "ordination" for other than the office of the public ministry. Other suggestions regarding nomenclature appear below.

It may be added here that participation of clergymen of churches not within the confessional fellowship in the actual rite of installation is no more

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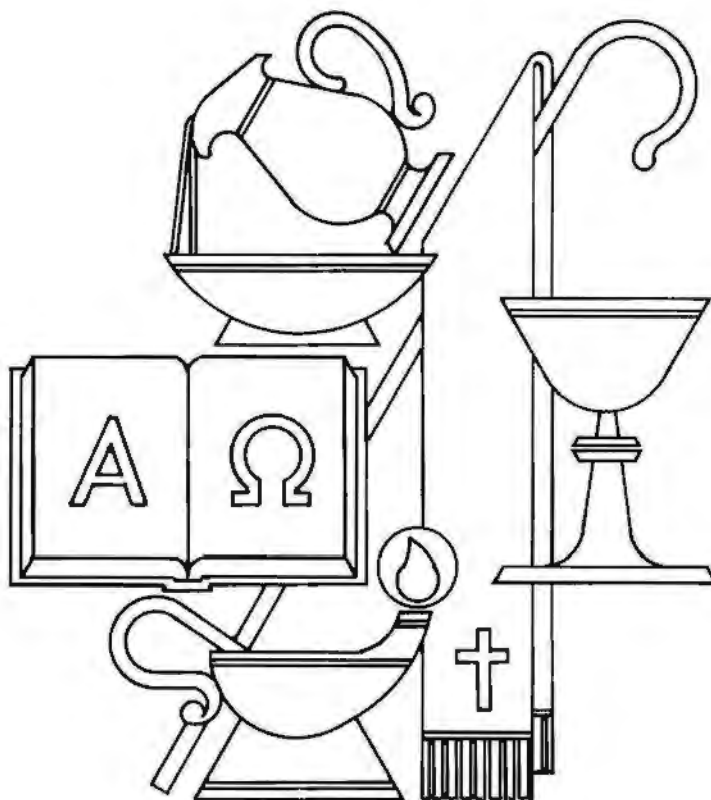
<sup>9</sup>*The Lutheran Annual* presents seven categories of "Teachers of the Missouri Synod," only one of which is "Teacher—Elementary School."

<sup>10</sup>The word "ordination" may be used in a wide or in a narrow sense. In the wide sense it refers to the whole process of placing a qualified man into the office of the public ministry (cf. Ap XIII, 11—12). In the narrow, and more usual, sense "ordination" means specifically the rite of the laying on of hands, in other words, the form of ceremony, as distinct from the call as such. Cf. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:454.

fitting than it is in a joint Communion service. In its sacred acts the church confesses its faith. Obviously, the presence of fellow Christians of other confessions or of civic leaders should be graciously welcomed and opportunity given for them to speak other than in the worship service itself, if they desire to do so.



### III. THESES ON THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY AND AUXILIARY OFFICES



### III. THESES ON THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY and AUXILIARY OFFICES

Although many points regarding the theology of the ministry have now been covered, a number of direct theses may be helpful in presenting the position of this document.

1. *The office of the public ministry in the church is distinct from the universal priesthood of believers and has its origin in the divine institution of the office.*

By reason of their baptism, all Christians receive the Holy Spirit and are constituted priests before God (Cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; Rom. 12:1). They are not priests in the sense of making atoning sacrifices. God's people are His priests by His mandate and appointment as they present their bodies a living sacrifice for the extension of His kingdom. As priests they exercise the privilege of prayer not only for themselves but also for others.

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is precious. It need not, however, confuse us regarding the doctrine of the public ministry. Not all Christians are eligible to hold the office of the *public* ministry nor should they be called to do so.

The term "the office of the public ministry" is used to differentiate the unique divinely established office of Word and sacrament from the service of all God's people in the priesthood of all believers.

The characteristics of the office of the public ministry are the following: (1) it is an office, conferred by God through a call of the church, which places a man under a special obligation for which he is accountable to God and to those who have called him; (2) it requires the performance of specific functions that carry out the mission of God and His church in the world. That is, it is a Gospel ministry, a ministry of Word and sacrament, although it includes concerns for the earthly welfare and needs of suffering humanity; (3) it is a public ministry, that is, it is carried out on behalf of the church, and those who hold it are accountable to the church.

The public ministry of the church is distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers and is not derived from it. It is derived from God's mandate. Believers exercise their priesthood privately in many ways. One way to do this is to join fellow Christians in calling a man to occupy the office of the public ministry in their midst. God created the office of the public ministry, and He fills that office through the call of a qualified man by the church. Other offices that assist in essential functions of the office of the public ministry are created by the church as the need arises. The functions of such offices, if they are truly auxiliary to the office of the public ministry, are mandated by God. Those who hold them by virtue of a call are doing services that are required by God in the extension of His kingdom. No one may arrogate to himself any of the public offices of the church (AC XIV).

Baptism makes all Christians members of the priesthood of believers. It does not make them public ministers of the church. The call of God, issued through the church, makes some of the priests holders of the office of the public ministry and thus responsible for all of its functions. The holder of such an office represents the church, but he does so as a representative of God. He is bound to the Word of God, and his response to the call of the church is to be bound to proclaim God's Word. That response completes his entry into the office.

To be eligible to be called to the office of the public ministry a man must be adjudged to have met God's requirements as listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

The church, availing itself of mature advice and guidance as it certifies men for the public ministry, performs the evaluation necessary to determine whether a man is in all respects suitable for the ministry of Word and sacraments.

*2. The office of the public ministry is grounded in the ministry of Christ and is an extension of the apostolate established by Him.*

The office of the public ministry of the church is rooted and grounded in the ministry of Christ. He was the Suffering Servant, the God-man, who not only taught about God's love but completely satisfied the demands of God's holy Law by vicariously living a perfect life and dying a sacrificial death for our transgressions of God's Law. His priestly, prophetic, and royal actions are the essential content and power of the ministry of the church. God not only provided salvation and declared the whole world just for the sake of Christ, but He also provided the means of grace and the ministry of the Word and sacrament "to offer and apply to us this treasure of salvation" (LC II, 38).

In the beginning our Lord appointed, trained, and sent out the apostles. In His love for the world, God arranged for the continuation of the apostolic ministry and message. The message of the apostles, learned by them directly from the Lord and taught to them by the Holy Spirit, was to remain the church's treasure.

The pastoral ministry is apostolic in terms of what it teaches but not in terms of an unbroken succession of ordaining bishops. Already in Acts 13 we read that Barnabas was set aside by the Holy Spirit working through the church in Antioch. Barnabas became an "apostle," though not one of "the twelve." He received his office mediately from God through the church in Antioch. "Overseers" or "shepherds" in the church were God's idea and remain so. In Acts 20:28 we see that the shepherding is to be performed by those who have been made bishops (*episkopoi*) by the Holy Spirit. The office was held by men chosen for this purpose (Ap XIV, 1). In Acts 20:17, for example, reference is made to *the* elders of the church, not merely to elders in a more general sense.

The office of Word and sacrament has been established by God as the

highest office in the church. Other rankings within that office or within other offices may be useful, but they are always by human authority (*de iure humano*). As Christ was the Father's obedient Suffering Servant, so His ministers are servants, even slaves, as St. Paul calls himself. No one is to seek office in the church for personal glory. A man may aspire to the office, but it is God who calls Him through the church. The church calls those who hold the office of the public ministry, and it calls those who stand beside the public ministers to labor in the Gospel mission of the church.

As a continuation of the ministry of Christ and as an extension of the apostolic ministry, the office of the public ministry is not optional for the church.<sup>11</sup>

3. *The church establishes facilitating offices.*

Other offices in the church that facilitate the proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and administration of the Office of the Keys, though not mandated, appeared already in the apostolic church. To the extent that they strengthen the performance of the functions of the office of the public ministry, they, too, find their ground in the ministry of Christ. A Christian teacher, for instance, is not merely a Christian who teaches but a servant of Christ and the church who, at the call of the church, is helping the called pastor to fulfill his mandate to teach the Gospel.

To see the office of the public ministry as being grounded in the ministry of Christ, as continuing the ministry of the apostles, and as carrying with it all of the functions of the church's mission is to understand why The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, following the assessment of C. F. W. Walther, has termed it the "highest office."<sup>12</sup> The office of the public ministry is so broad that it can effectively employ the gifts of helpers in its performance. The

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. Walther's third thesis on the ministry in the Appendix.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Walther's eighth thesis on the ministry in the Appendix.

In elaboration of this thesis, Walther states: "The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching . . . . Accordingly, the offices of school-teachers who have to teach the Word of God in their schools . . . are all to be regarded as sacred offices of the Church, which exercise a part of the one office of the Church and are aids to the ministry of preaching" (*Walther and the Church*, p. 79).



congregation is blessed when it places at the side of its pastor faithful and capable teachers, for instance, who enhance his administration of the office of the public ministry. The validity of their office derives not from the person of the pastor but from the Christ-grounded nature of the office of public ministry. Their office is a public office and an office of ministry, although it is not *the* office of the public ministry of Word and sacrament, that is, the pastoral office. Perhaps a better term than "auxiliary" might be found. The thought needs to be stressed not only that the teaching office in the church is *auxiliary* to the pastoral ministry but rather auxiliary to the *pastoral ministry*. It is grounded not merely in the priesthood of believers but, through the office of the public ministry, in the ministry of Christ and the apostles. The fact that not all appreciate this does not change its tremendous theological significance for all who labor in the church. To ground the auxiliary offices of the church in a vague and unembodied "ministry in general" is no gain for anyone. To see them flow from the specific office that is amply attested and exemplified in the New Testament and strongly championed in the Lutheran Confessions is a higher view of the auxiliary offices than that which would seek an independent grounding separate from the office of the public ministry of Word and sacrament.

In recent years there has been a tendency to refer to all fulltime workers in the church as "professional workers." That term may have its uses for certain legal explanations, but it misses the power and beauty of the Scriptural doctrine of the ministry. Even auxiliary offices appear more churchly if we say they are serving the office of the public ministry rather than functioning professionally. For in serving in a ministry that is auxiliary to the pastoral ministry one is serving the ministry of Jesus Christ and is engaged in the only kind of human efforts that will survive the end of time. The holder of an auxiliary office may rejoice to say, "I am in the ministry" with a very specific meaning. He or she holds an office that is not only the priesthood of believers (which all Christians hold) nor the office of the public ministry. It is a ministry that has its own validity.

4. *The church may rank those who hold various offices, but the distinctions within the offices are by human authority.*

Every position in the church is one of service, of Christ-exaltation and self-abasement. However, it is useful for the church to arrange for various rankings and orders of supervision also among its pastors, teachers, and others. The distinction between pastors and holders of auxiliary offices is not merely a human distinction. It is not a ranking but a distinction of offices. Within the various offices (e.g., pastorate, teaching office) rankings may be made by human authority. There may, for example, be "senior pastors" and "assistant pastors," or principals and teachers. The nomenclature adopted by the church from time to time may indicate such rankings. Uniformity of terminology is highly desirable.

Rankings that are made by human right should be made for the sake of the work and not merely to elevate individuals. The fact that some members of the church are called by God to be "overseers" does not make them a special caste. Moreover, it must be noted that where there is oversight, there is also submission. However, in the New Testament "submisison" is not a term indicating inferiority. The Greek word *hypotagee* refers to order and not to inferiority.

5. *The call from and by God through the church is essential for entry into the pastoral ministry or its auxiliary offices.*

In order to clarify what is meant by a call we define it as follows:

A person is "called" when he or she is summoned by the church to the office of Word and sacrament or to an office auxiliary to it on a full-time permanent basis and by education, by certification, and by solemn and public act (e.g., ordination or<sup>\*</sup> commissioning) is brought into a unique relationship with the church from which he or she has unique authority and through which he or she is authorized to perform functions of that office of the church into which he or she has been ordained or commissioned, at a specific post for the length of time which is ordinarily continuing and indefinite, but which in certain cases and under certain special circumstances may be a specified period of time, which is evidenced by the individual's name being placed on and retained on one of the official rosters of the Synod.<sup>13</sup>

It is God's call mediated through the church (as a single congregation or a group of congregations) as it is guided in prayer and by the Holy Spirit that makes a man "overseer" in the church. All who serve in the pastoral ministry or its auxiliary offices must be called by the church.

The use of the word "call" should be limited. To be sure, even those who teach Sunday school or hold other such offices in the congregation must not arrogate such functions or offices to themselves. They must await the assignment of the congregation in some form and cooperate in the supervisor-supervised aspect of the ministry. While such an assignment might logically be termed a "call," such usage blurs the uniqueness of the office of the public ministry and its facilitating offices.

Whenever the term "call" is used it should be followed by the office designation. To say "I have a call" may be meaningless, while "I have a call to

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<sup>13</sup>The term "church" as here used means the congregation or other unit of the church, as well as the Synod itself, and also other congregations and portions of the Synod that are part of the confessional fellowship.

be a teacher of the church" has meaning. The term "call" should be used for those who have specifically been equipped to perform certain ecclesiastical functions and have made a commitment to dedicate their lives to that service unless or until God directs them to other callings. The term "call" should not be used where such commitment is lacking, and those who serve the church other than under a call should be referred to simply as "lay workers." Furthermore, in a synodical form of church fellowship and congregational interdependence, those who are "called" must be under the supervision of the *whole church*. Thus, they differ from Sunday school teachers, for example, who are chosen and assigned by and are accountable to a single congregation.

Some congregations issue "contracts" to some teachers and "calls" to others. While there may be reasons for making these distinctions, there is no justification for issuing contracts to women teachers and calls to men teachers. Both men and women who have been certified by the church may be and ordinarily should be solemnly called. While contracts may be issued for some temporary service, teachers should be called with prayer and with the assurance that the church is summoning them to assist the pastoral ministry of Word and sacrament.

Since both a person who has a call to a certain office and a "lay worker" have a contract (which may be written or verbal), it is inaccurate to distinguish between them by referring to the one who does not have a call as "having a contract." In both cases, of course, the contract between the person and the congregation or other agency of the church, and all other factors of that relationship, should be clearly expressed.

We stress the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confessional fellowship. In the end, a single congregation or an agency representing larger segments of the church does issue the call. Nevertheless, in a synod of congregations bound by a common confession and loyalty, good order demands that admission into the pastoral office or into its closely allied auxiliary offices is not the act of a single congregation or agency. Various ways can be found to establish this approval of the whole church. Presently the certification of suitability for the ministry by the faculty members who have taught the candidates and the assigning of first calls by the Council of Presidents is workable and does express the transparochial nature of the ministry.

This transparochial nature of the office of the public ministry and its auxiliary offices is important because a person called to one congregation is recognized by the whole church and, by virtue of ordination or commissioning, is eligible to be called by other segments of the church. Since ordination is a public statement of the whole church body, one cannot say that it *must* take place in the location of the calling congregation. However, separation of the rite of ordination from the place of service is seldom advisable. It is fitting that the calling agency of the church should be involved



in the ordination. The same holds true for induction into auxiliary offices.

Confusion and chaos result when congregations or agencies act unilaterally in deciding who may fill the office of the public ministry or the auxiliary offices. For this reason in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod the Council of Presidents is assigned the duty of the placing of candidates who have been approved by the faculties. In the case of subsequent calls, the District president or his representative advise the congregations or agencies, and calls may be extended only to certified candidates or persons who are on the official rosters of the Synod. For a congregation wilfully to ignore or ride roughshod over the concern of the rest of the church in establishing its ministry is a sin against the brotherhood and may even be a schismatic act in that it ignores the transparochial aspect of the “regularly called” (AC XIV).

This concern for the involvement of the whole church in the calling and placing of its servants is evidenced by the fact that the church maintains an extensive system of higher education to prepare its pastors, teachers, and other leaders.

6. *Not only a local congregation but also larger structures of the church may legitimately extend valid calls upon proper delegation.*

The right of a congregation to call its pastors and teachers is not questioned. Some do question the right of agencies such as Districts or boards and commissions of the Synod or even the whole Synod itself to issue calls. For this reason some take refuge in obtaining a second call as “assistant” in a congregation, feeling that such a call, although it involves few or no duties, is valid, while a call from an agency is not. The legitimacy of such a “second” call is questionable.<sup>14</sup>

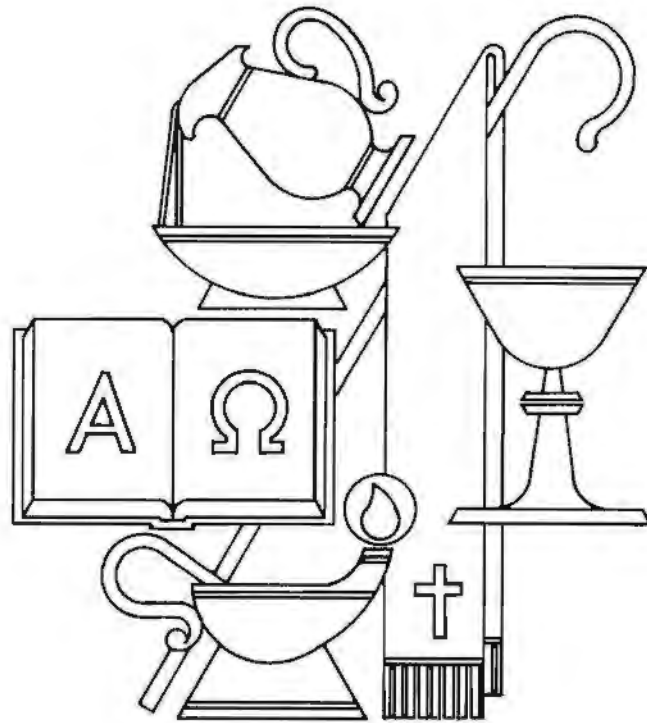
The very existence of the Synod indicates that the church must do some of its work jointly. The Synod is not an alien organization. It is the whole confessional fellowship of congregations. In this case, by common agreement, certain offices are filled by the Synod or its commissions through authority delegated from the congregations. Agencies of any kind should first assure themselves that the right to call has been properly delegated to them by the church. In some cases this is done by regulations in the bylaws that are agreed upon in convention. Moreover, agency calls should contain clear descriptions to indicate that the call is of such a nature that the candidate may assure himself that the call is truly within the scope of the office of the public ministry or the appropriate auxiliary office.

Some offices in the church cannot be defined with absolute clarity merely by referring to their titles. The call itself should demonstrate why it is a “call” and not merely an office of employment as a lay worker in the church.

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), pp. 39—40.

#### IV. SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



## IV. SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

While a study of this nature cannot respond to every possible question about the ministry, the following "catechism" is offered to indicate some applications of the theological principles that have been presented above.

### 1. Are calls always permanent?

Paul and Barnabas were separated for a specific journey (although Paul had a lifelong call into the apostolic office). Some calls, such as a call into the military chaplaincy, carry within them a point of termination or reconsideration. Some ventures of the church—such as an experimental ministry in a new territory—cannot be assured of continuation. There is no Scriptural evidence to indicate that all calls are necessarily permanent or tenured. Calls to the colleges and seminaries of the Synod are generally not tenured at first.

The office of the public ministry cannot be terminated in a congregation. Moreover, to attempt carelessly or surreptitiously to terminate a call to this office (by either the congregation or the one who has the call) is to manifest a disregard for the divinity of the call. A call may be terminated for just cause, i.e., unfaithfulness in office, false teaching, or an ungodly life. Processes of adjudication and appeal have been agreed upon by the church. After all of this is said, however, it should be noted that the nature of the ministry as a continuation of the apostolate and as a call from God implies that calls are generally not limited in time.

### 2. Are elected District or synodical officials "in the ministry"?

That depends upon the call of the church. If the office is such that it is an exercise of the office of the public ministry by virtue of its functions, or if the functions are definable as directly auxiliary to the pastoral ministry, then a person accepting such a call retains ministerial status in the church. No rule can be given to cover all offices. We have previously mentioned that a District president remains in the pastoral ministry by virtue of his being called to oversee the pastors and churches, and a theological professor or a professor in one of the colleges of the Synod may be called as an "overseer" in the sense of assuming responsibility for what will be taught in the churches for years to come.

### 3. What is the suggested nomenclature?

Here we are entering into the area of adiaphora. Order in the church requires that, as far as possible, nomenclature be uniform. We offer the following suggestions as appropriate usage in the church:

**CALL**—restricted to the call into the office of the public ministry in the congregation or to another assignment in that ministry. It should



also be used for auxiliary offices that are directly supportive of the teaching and preaching function of the pastoral ministry, the areas of such responsibility being carefully defined. It should not be used for offices having functions that, though in general supportive of the pastoral ministry, are remote and not directly connected to the central functions of the ministry (e.g., social worker, secretary, custodian, etc.) The entire confessional fellowship of congregations should agree on a *uniform designation* of such offices.

**ORDINATION**—restricted to those first called into the office of the public ministry.

**COMMISSIONING**—restricted for placing a person into an office clearly auxiliary to the central functions of the pastoral ministry. This would include male and female teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, etc.

**INSTALLATION**—used for induction of a person into a specific post in the pastoral ministry or one of its auxiliary offices as indicated above.

#### 4. What is an "auxiliary office"?

We have indicated this in various places, but we can state it succinctly here. An auxiliary office is an office that is auxiliary to the office of the public ministry and specifically to the uniquely ministerial functions of that office. The offices of teacher, director of Christian education, parish worker, and other offices recognized by the church and for which the church provides training are auxiliary offices. In general their functions are functions that would be performed by the man who holds the office of the public ministry and that relate to his responsibilities as teacher and spiritual guide and overseer. The most obvious assurance for a controlled and uniform definition of these offices is for the church itself to name them and list those who hold them. New and different auxiliary offices may be designated from time to time and their prerequisites spelled out. Individual congregations should not use these designations indiscriminately or assign to such offices people who are not currently eligible. As in the case of the office of the public ministry, those called to these offices should receive the recognition of the whole confessional fellowship. People who are not eligible for these offices should not assume the offices or titles, nor should they be encouraged to think they hold such offices when they do not.

#### 5. May teachers be franchised at synodical and District conventions?

We see no *theological* reason why they may not be allowed to vote, provided that this is not done to the exclusion of those who hold the office of the public ministry. In that case the church would be making its decisions without the advice and registered voting opinions of those who are specifically trained, called, and charged with the spiritual and doctrinal

oversight of the churches. Likewise, to exert an egalitarianism that equates all "professional" offices in the church is to ignore the divinely ordained nature of the office of the public ministry and equate it with those offices that are auxiliary to it.

6. Are certain functions in the church limited to the office of the public ministry?

The ministry of Word and sacrament and the *public* administration of the Office of the Keys is entrusted to the office of the public ministry. In a congregation, therefore, the man who holds the office of the public ministry is a steward of the mysteries of God. He is the shepherd, overseer, and elder of the church in that place. The ultimate responsibility for what is taught and for guiding the lives of the flock is his.

However, the reference to auxiliary offices in the New Testament indicates that some of the actual functions of the office of the public ministry may be performed by others under his guidance and direction. The church, or congregation, has the right to expect that the men to whom the office has been conveyed will not lightly distribute the functions of the ministry to others. In any case, he must not disregard his responsibility as the overseer.

If that principle is kept clearly in mind, various arrangements for the auxiliary offices to assist the pastoral ministry are possible and often desirable. All who teach in the church should do so under the guidance and supervision of the pastoral ministers. Such supervision is a duty and responsibility of the pastors and not a matter of privilege. Functions that are essentially exercises of the ministry of Word and sacrament should be performed by those who hold the office of the public ministry. Thus, preaching in the worship service, leading in public prayer, celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, baptisms, wedding and funeral services should be carried out by those who hold the office of public ministry. However, in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies (as when a pastor is incapacitated), members of the auxiliary offices or other qualified individuals may temporarily be called upon to perform, under proper supervision, functions that are otherwise performed by the pastor and that are not for other reasons precluded (e.g., women teachers or deaconesses preaching in the public service).

In this matter there needs to be a concern for order in the church. The indiscriminate assignment of functions of the office of the public ministry breeds confusion and disorder in the church. A disregard of uniformity of practice is contrary to the very reason for the existence of the Synod.

7. Can there be "lay ministers"?

*The Lutheran Annual* displays a listing of "Lutheran Lay Ministers in Service" who are graduates of the Lutheran Lay Ministers program. This nomenclature indicates that some persons are trained by the Synod to

perform certain functions of the office of the public ministry. Confusion occurs when such terms as "lay minister" or "lay pastor" are employed. This office is a recent development in the history of our church and is an example of the church developing an auxiliary office that is a blessing to the effective pursuit of the pastoral ministry. However, the danger is that the nomenclature tends to erode the proper understanding of the doctrine of the ministry in the minds of those who are called to this office and in the minds of the people in the church. This office should therefore be designated uniformly by such a term as "lay worker" or "lay assistant."

8. Who determines eligibility for calls?

The church itself does this. This means the confessional fellowship of congregations or the Synod. Scripture itself lists requirements, as noted above. Modern academic standards are not to be found in Scripture, of course. The church itself must determine from time to time the level of competence that it requires for various offices and the nature of the curricula needed to provide such competence.

The present practice of involving pastors, faculties, District presidents, the colloquy boards, and others is a proper response to the need for uniformity and the inclusion of the "wider church" in the decisions about who is eligible to study in preparation for the various offices of the church and who is ultimately declared eligible to be called. It is not possible to achieve totally objective standards, but the Word of God requires, first of all, that no one will place himself into any office of the church and also that congregations or segments of the church will not act unilaterally in placing persons into church offices.

9. What is the place of vicars and interns?<sup>15</sup>

Vicars and interns are students. In order to gain experience they are assigned to work in congregations or institutions. They are not in the office of the public ministry. They may be placed by the whole church for the sake of order. They are not "called." They may perform some functions of the office of the public ministry upon assignment and under the guidance of a pastor. In the case of teacher interns, the supervision of teaching activities may be

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. *Your Vicar and You: A Manual for the Supervision of Vicars*, n. d., pp. 8—9. This booklet, prepared by the vicarage departments of the seminaries of the LCMS, states: "The College of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in conjunction with the seminaries, has set up regulations for the congregations and pastors with regard to vicars performing official acts."



assigned to principals or others by the pastor. Also in the case of "deferred vicarages," when a colloquy student is assigned to a congregation that has no pastor, specific supervision should be provided, usually by the District president, a circuit counselor, or someone assigned in an orderly fashion. Functions that such vicars may perform should be agreed upon by the supervising pastor and the congregation. Again, order in the church requires that the definition of such functions be as uniform as possible throughout the church.

10. Are functions of men and women in the auxiliary offices to be distinguished?

Here compare the resolutions of the Synod.<sup>16</sup> Men and women may occupy the same auxiliary offices. Since an auxiliary office is not the pastoral office, there is neither a Scriptural proscription against women holding the auxiliary office of teacher nor a Scriptural basis for considering women teachers inferior to men teachers. Of course, within the ranks of teachers there may be some who supervise (e.g., principals, superintendents, etc.) and some who are supervised. The ranking is by human authority for the sake of order in the church.

The purpose of this report has not been to discuss the principles relating to women in the pastoral office. The position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on this question is that the Scriptures teach that women may not "hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office."<sup>17</sup>

Congregations or other appropriate agencies of the church may within the limitations previously discussed<sup>18</sup> request and designate a teacher to perform certain functions, under the supervision of the pastor, that belong to the pastoral office. In that case, such a request and designation may apply

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. 1965 Resolution 2-21 "To Adopt Report on Status of Certified Women Teachers, with Addition," 1965 *Convention Proceedings*, p. 99, and 1973 Resolution 7-05 "To Include Female Teachers on the Roster of the Synod," 1973 *Convention Proceedings*, p. 190.

<sup>17</sup>1969 Resolution 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership," 1969 *Convention Proceedings*, pp. 88—89. Cf. also 1971 Resolution 2-04 "To Withhold Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office," 1971 *Convention Proceedings*, pp. 114—115, and 1977 Resolution 3-15 "To Reaffirm the Synod's Position on Women with Reference to the Pastoral Office," 1977 *Convention Proceedings*, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup>See pp. 16 and 35 above.

only to men teachers. Such designation, however, is made not because they are teachers, but because they are competent men with some training in theology. For example, in exceptional circumstances, men teachers may temporarily be asked to preach under a pastor's supervision. This is a function that belongs to the office of the pastor and is normally exercised by the pastor. A congregation may, however, formally indicate that male teachers are authorized to carry out such supervised functions in case of emergency. Such functions cannot be assigned to woman teachers. Nor does the performance of such functions make a teacher a pastor. Good order in the church dictates that such assignment of pastoral functions be limited. In every case the public preaching of the Word, administering the sacraments, and spiritual oversight of the congregation are the duties of the pastor and not the teacher.

11. Is a pastor or teacher answerable only to the congregation or agency that has called him or her?

Generally, that is the field of labor. However, it must be kept in mind that servants of the church are ordained or commissioned in the whole confessional fellowship of congregations, voluntarily united by their common confession and pledged mutual support of the constitution of the Synod. Therefore, congregations and agencies should encourage their pastors, teachers, and those in other auxiliary offices to serve also the larger church with their respective abilities. Good order in the church means that a servant of the church will not unilaterally decide how to distribute time and energy. The various segments of the Synod demonstrate their oneness by sharing the skills and dedication of their workers for the good of the whole church. Moreover, those who hold offices in the church by virtue of their calls are under the discipline not only of their own congregations but also of the whole church. For this reason orderly procedures have been established not only for entry into the service of the church but also for guidance in that service and for suspension or exclusion when such extreme measures become necessary.

12. Are "status calls" valid?

By "status calls" some seem to mean that a person is called, usually without pay and without duties, or is "assigned" to work elsewhere than among the calling group. It is difficult to discuss this question in the abstract. Certainly military chaplains are called by the church even though they work in the armed forces and are paid by the government. This is different from the situation of a person who is "hired" by a secular institution, really has no connection with the work of the calling body, and yet is "called and assigned" to the institution that has previously hired him. This question involves ethics as well as doctrine. It is a violation of the divinity of the call if no provision is made for proper accountability. If the "status call" is simply a device to "keep

a man in the ministry of the church” when he really is not, then it appears to be an evasion or subterfuge and condemns itself.

13. Should men who have been ordained in a different church body be “reordained” when they qualify for and accept a call into a different confessional fellowship?

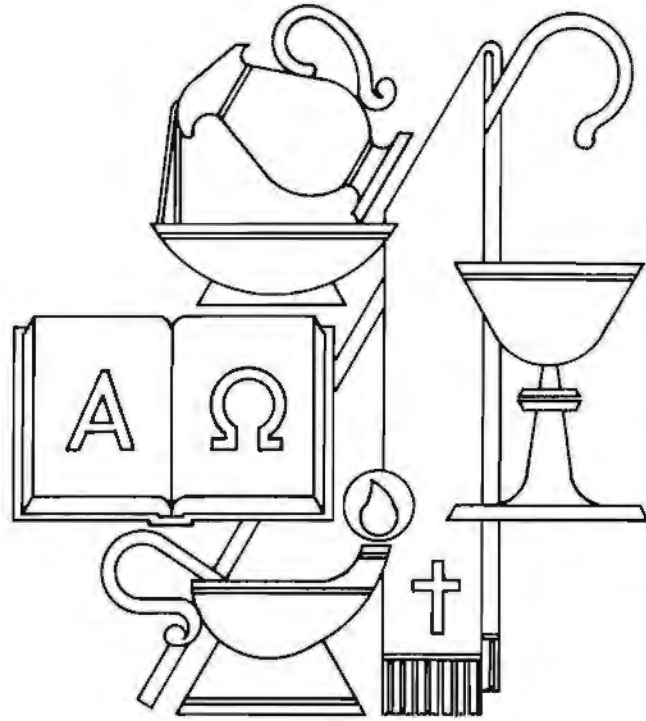
This depends to a large extent upon how one defines “ordination.” If to reordain means that the previous ministry of the man in a Christian congregation is not recognized as valid, then it would be an unacceptable practice. We should and do recognize the ordination of others to work as ministers in their own church body. However, heterodox ministers may not function in our churches, not because they are not ministers, but because they are heterodox and because they have no call.

On the other hand, a decision to “ordain” a previously ordained minister would be in order if by this action the church is publicly stating that the man is now being accepted into the ministry of our church body and that he publicly accepts and agrees to preach and teach according to the Scriptural and confessional standards of the Lutheran Church.

Since these purposes are accomplished in the rite of installation, some may prefer simply to use the term “installation” to refer to the entry of a man who has been ordained in a different church body into the ministerium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In any event, the man is publicly accepted by the church and by the calling congregation or agency of the church as a pastor in the Synod. The oath that is required will be taken in any case.



# SUMMARY



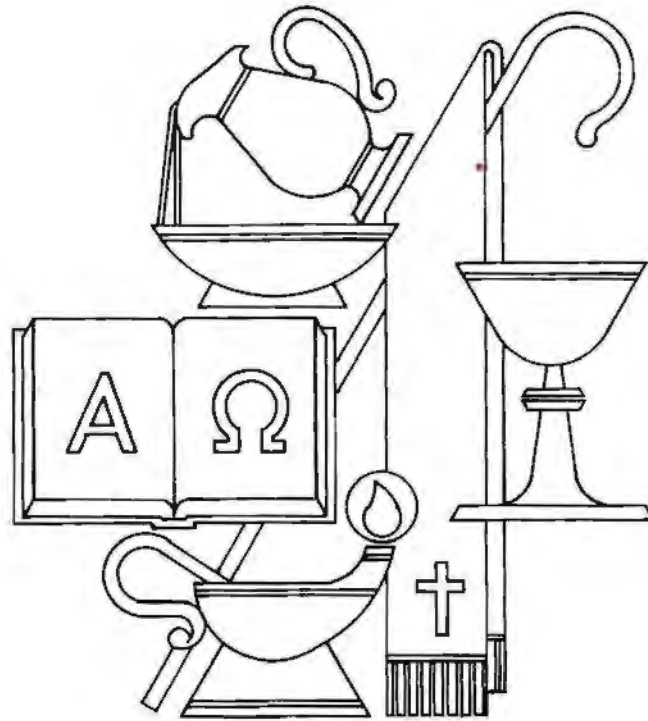
## SUMMARY

1. The office of the public ministry is unique and mandated by the Scriptures as the God-appointed means of exercising the Office of the Keys. It is a ministry of Word and sacrament and is entered into by the call of God through the church.
2. Other offices in the church have Scriptural example but are not mandated. They are auxiliary to the office of the public ministry to assist in various functions of that office.
3. The call of the church is essential for holding offices in the church, not only that of the office of the public ministry but also that of the auxiliary offices.
4. Office and functions usually go together, but may be separated. Functions of the office of the public ministry that are performed by others remain the responsibility of the office of public ministry and must be supervised by it.
5. Not only local segments of the church but the entire confessional fellowship is involved in establishing offices (other than the pastoral ministry) and in determining eligibility for calls into all such offices of the church. Such authority is delegated by the congregations of the Synod.
6. The nomenclature employed for the various offices and procedures in the church is an adiaphoron, but order and tranquility in the church require agreement and consistent practice throughout the church.
7. The Lutheran Church, and specifically a synodical fellowship, must deal with ministry according to its own theological position and not be influenced by conflicting views held in other church bodies or in society in general.
8. Emergency situations in the church may require procedures that are outside of the usual practice. In such cases order in the church requires that care be taken by those responsible for such arrangements, so that unusual circumstances are not allowed to become the rule and that the welfare of the whole church be considered in such arrangements.
9. Service in a local, geographic congregation is not the benchmark in determining who is in the office of the public ministry or its auxiliary offices. Congregations may delegate the authority to call to other agencies of the church. The church may call its pastors or its leaders in the auxiliary offices to specialized and limited functions of the office of the public ministry without thereby calling them out of their offices in the church.
10. Matters regarding the ministry that are not clearly defined by Scripture may be treated as adiaphora but with due concern for uniformity, the sensitivities of others in the church, and the progress of the work of the church in all the world.

11. The church is under obligation to explain to appropriate civil authorities and to the general public the nature of its ministry and offices. The avoidance of confusion requires that this be done consistently from place to place and from time to time.
12. Ministry in the church is ultimately the ministry of Christ. All members of the body of Christ are involved in it. The members of the priesthood of believers are not merely recipients of ministerial service. *The ministry belongs to Christ and to the church.*



APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

C. F. W. Walther's Theses on the Ministry\*

### THESIS I

The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.

### THESIS II

The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.

### THESIS III

The ministry of preaching is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of days.

### THESIS IV

The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the latter, like the priesthood of the Levites, but it is an office of service.

### THESIS V

The ministry of preaching has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a spiritual tribunal.

### THESIS VI

The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.

### THESIS VII

The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.

### THESIS VIII

The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.

### THESIS IX

Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. However, the preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has, accordingly, no right to make new laws, to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication *alone*, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.

## THESIS X

According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.

\* We append "The Theses on the Ministry" prepared by C. F. W. Walther and approved by the Synod in 1851 not merely as a matter of historical interest, but as a testimony to the theological and practical consistency of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its view of the ministry. For Walther's elaboration of these theses, cf. *Walther and the Church*, Wm. Dallmann, et al., eds. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 71—85.