



This companion to
Pastors and Elders:

*Caring for the Church
and One Another*
offers support for those
who want to study
recommendations and
strategies offered by
author Timothy Mech.

Included on this enhanced DVD:

- 8 training videos (total time: 52 minutes)
- Intro: 3.5 minutes
- Video 1: 7 minutes
- Video 2: 5.5 minutes
- Video 3: 8 minutes
- Video 4: 6.5 minutes
- Video 5: 6 minutes
- Video 6: 5.5 minutes
- Video 7: 4.5 minutes
- Video 8: 5.5 minutes
- Leader's Guide—discussion questions for each chapter of the book
- PowerPoint presentation that supports the Leader's Guide
- PDF and RTF resources containing useful documents from the book

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Windows XP, Windows Vista, or later; Mac OS X 10.4 or later, 256 MB RAM; 100 MB free hard disk space; a DVD-ROM drive; a page-layout or word processing program that supports JPEG files (such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, Corel WordPerfect, Adobe InDesign, etc.) or a program capable of reading PDF-formatted files.

PASTORS AND ELDERS: CARING FOR THE CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

Leader's Guide

How to Use. This guide is intended to assist whoever is assigned to lead the teaching and training of pastors and elders at each regularly scheduled board of elders meeting. Before each meeting both pastor(s) and elders should read a chapter of the book *Pastors and Elders: Caring for the Church and One Another* and reflect on the questions at the end of the particular chapter assigned for that meeting.

PowerPoint. The leader may use this guide in preparation for a PowerPoint presentation to participants. The PowerPoint is intended to lead participants in the discussion of each chapter and in teaching and training along with the corresponding video vignette(s).

CHAPTER ONE

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Jesus [said], "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

—Matthew 28:18

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to pray that You would send forth laborers into Your harvest. Of Your infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Your Word who truly fulfill Your command and preach nothing contrary to Your holy Word. Grant that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted, and strengthened by Your holy Word, may do those things which are well pleasing to You and profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (119)¹

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- understand the difference between spiritual authority and power;
- identify on the basis of Scripture the authority given to pastors and elders;
- grow in our fellowship with Christ and one another, understanding that He is in charge and is working with us and for us and through us as His Word has its way in our lives.

¹ *Lutheran Service Book*, "Increase of the Holy Ministry," p. 306.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between spiritual authority and power?

Spiritual authority is an unlimited ability or commodity. You cannot exercise authority unless you are under authority. Authority cannot be taken. Someone else must give it to you. You exercise authority by authorizing others to act, not by keeping it to yourself. Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others. Political influence and power, on the other hand, is a limited ability or commodity. A person has power at the expense of someone else. I must disempower others in order to have it and keep it for myself. Those who lack authority use power. If you operate with power, then you have a constant battle with the other power people in the congregation. That leads to manipulation by the great power-monger: Satan. Operate with power and you are operating on Satan's terms. A good example of this would be to disregard or change the rules if the rules keep you from getting what you want.

2. How does Jesus exercise His authority in the Church?

Jesus exercises His authority through His Word. His words give and bestow what they say. For example, Jesus "rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was great calm" (Mark 4:39). Jesus said to Lazarus who had been dead for four days, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43b). Lazarus came out of the tomb alive and well. Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room, "Peace be with you" (John 20:21), and the disciples had peace.

NOTE: Leaders may want to download and have available the LCMS statement on the role of elders in the congregation:

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=545> (p. 16);

and the elder's job description:

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1196> (p. 6).

3. What are elders authorized to do in the congregation?

Elders, as members of the priesthood of all believers, are authorized to be servants in the Church. The apostle Peter writes of all Christians, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. . . . Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:9, 16).

Strictly speaking, the word “elder” in the Bible (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17–19, Titus 1:5–9 and 1 Peter 5:1–4) refers to those who hold the pastoral office. What we commonly call “elders” today are laymen appointed to serve the congregation in its temporal affairs and to assist the pastor in administrative tasks. Later such men came to be known as the “deacons” (meaning “servants”). Scripture does not define the exact role of such deacons, only their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8–13). Scripture gives them no special spiritual responsibilities in the congregation beyond those given to every Christian. While the office of pastor is divinely instituted and indispensable for the Church, the deacon is an optional office based on Apostolic and church custom. The deacon or elder is a position of lay-service, concerned with the temporal and administrative affairs of the congregation. In many congregations deacons or elders are also charged with oversight of the pastor. But, rightly understood according to Scripture, they exercise only that oversight given to every Christian in the congregation.²

4. *What is a pastor authorized to do in a congregation?*

Pastors ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry are authorized by God through the Church to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments according to the Word of God. The apostle Paul writes, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1–2). Jesus said of one in this office, “The one who hears you hears Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me, and the one who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

² “The Role of Elders,” *LCMS FAQ: Worship/Congregational Life*, <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1196> (October 2011).

By the public ministry we mean the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered by order and in the name of a Christian congregation. Concerning this office we teach that it is a divine ordinance; that is, the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow-Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16, but they are also required, by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work, whose qualifications and official functions are exactly defined in Scripture, Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2.

Although the office of the ministry is a divine ordinance, it possesses no other power than the power of the Word of God, 1 Pet. 4:11; that is to say, it is the duty of Christians to yield unconditional obedience to the office of the ministry whenever, and as long as, the minister proclaims to them the Word of God, Heb. 13:17, Luke 10:16. If, however, the minister, in his teachings and injunctions, were to go beyond the Word of God, it would be the duty of Christians not to obey, but to disobey him, so as to remain faithful to Christ, Matt. 23:8. Accordingly, we reject the false doctrine ascribing to the office of the ministry the right to demand obedience and submission in matters which Christ has not commanded.³

5. *Why is it important to authorize others to work within the church?*

Failing to authorize and equip others for work in the congregation is a recipe for disaster. It robs the people of God in the congregation of the privilege and honor of serving the Lord in His Church. It takes the pastor away from the noble task of delivering the Lord's gifts of forgiveness, life, and peace to God's people. Sooner or later, the pastor will be crushed by the weight of trying to do everything in the church himself. Worse, he may begin to think that he is indispensable or come to resent the people he serves because they don't do what he would like them to do.

³ *A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod*, "Of the Public Ministry," (adopted 1932), pp. 9–11, <http://lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=415> (October 2011).

6. *What is the meaning of the robe and stole a pastor wears for the Divine Service?*

The robe and stole a pastor wears in the Divine Service beautifully illustrate whom the pastor represents, the extent of his authority, and what he is given to say. The robe covers the man and declares that the words he speaks are not his own. The stole, first placed around the neck of the pastor at his ordination, represents the vow the pastor made to faithfully preach and teach the word of God. At ordination, a pastor is given orders to say what the Lord says through this office of the public ministry.

NOTE: Leaders may want to refer to, and possibly have available, resources such as *The Altar Guild Manual* (Lutheran Service Book Edition), "Vestments for the Clergy," pp. 69–71 (CPH © 2008, item #15-5102); and/or a fuller presentation in *Gathered Guests* (2nd ed.), "Vestments in the Lord's Service: Dress for the Occasion," pp. 205–220 (CPH © 2009, item #53-1155).

7. *What are the instruments a pastor is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls?*

The pastor has instruments that he is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls, namely, the Lord's Word and Sacraments. The Word of God consists of both Law and Gospel. Like the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) used by a medical doctor, the Law's main purpose is to identify what is wrong with us. In other words, the main purpose of the Law is to show us our sin. The Law is not an end in and of itself. It serves the Gospel just as a doctor's diagnosis of a medical problem serves the process of healing. When our sin is brought to light, that is, confessed, it is identified, and there is a desire for it to be removed.

The other two functions of the Law are to keep evil in check and to guide us in the living of the Christian life. The purpose of the Gospel is to forgive our sin, to remove it from our very being. This is done through the absolution, the declaration of the Lord's forgiveness. Just as a stethoscope is an invaluable instrument in a doctor's medical bag, one of the most important tools in the pastor's "spiritual medical bag" is private confession and absolution. In confession and absolution the source of our pain and agony, namely sin, is dealt with by the authority of Jesus Christ. The penitent is asked, "Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?"

Pastors^{and}Elders

CARING FOR THE CHURCH
AND ONE ANOTHER

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Chapter One

Who's in Charge?

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- understand the difference between spiritual authority and power;
- identify on the basis of Scripture the authority given to pastors and elders;
- grow in our fellowship with Christ and one another, understanding that He is in charge and is working with us and for us and through us as His Word has its way in our lives.

Chapter One: Who's in Charge?

JESUS IS LORD
OF HIS CHURCH

What is the difference between spiritual authority and power?

Authority

- Authority unlimited
- Cannot be taken
- Exercise authority by authorizing others to act
- Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others

What is the difference between spiritual authority and power?

Power

- Power is limited
- Have power at the expense of someone else
- Disempower others to keep it for yourself
- Those who lack authority use power
- Constant battle with other power people
- Satan is a great power-monger

How does Jesus exercise His authority in the Church?

- Jesus exercises His authority in the Church through His Word.
- Jesus said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:21), and the disciples had peace.

What are elders authorized to do in the congregation?

- Elders are appointed laymen
- Elders may also be called “deacons,” meaning servants
- They serve in temporal affairs
- They assist the pastor in administrative tasks
- They may be charged with oversight of the pastor but, according to Scripture, elders exercise only that oversight given to every Christian in the congregation

What is a pastor authorized to do in a congregation?

- Preach the Gospel
- Administer the Sacraments according to the Word of God

APPENDIX A

THE GREEN SHEET

The following is an example of the Green Sheet mentioned in Chapter 2. It is printed landscape on one sheet of 8 ½ x 11 paper, double-sided, and inserted in the bulletin every week.

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 2, 2011

Introit

Ps. 118:22–24; antiphon: Ps. 118:1

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for | he is good;*
 for his steadfast love endures for- | ever!
 The stone that the builders re- | jected*
 has become the | cornerstone.
 This is the LORD's | doing;*
 it is marvelous | in our eyes.
 This is the day that the | LORD has made;*
 let us rejoice and be | glad in it.
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.
 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for | he is good;*
 for his steadfast love endures for- | ever!

Collect

Gracious God, You gave Your Son into the hands of sinful men who killed Him. Forgive us when we reject Your unfailing love, and grant us the fullness of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Gradual

He will command his angels con- | cerning you*
 to guard you in | all your ways.
 Bless the LORD, | O my soul,*
 and all that is within me, bless his | holy name!

Learn by Heart: The First Article (paragraphs 1–2) **LSB # 322**

Readings for Next Sunday: Isaiah 25:6–9; Philippians 4:4–13; Matthew 22:1–14

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION—BOARD OF ELDERS¹

ACCOUNTABLE TO: _____

PURPOSE: To oversee the spiritual life of the congregation and its individual members.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

These guidelines are as intended by the congregation's constitution and the bylaws.

1. The Board of Elders shall have authority and responsibility for the spiritual welfare and activities of the congregational members, individually and corporately.
2. The chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Elders.
 - a. The chairman shall appoint a secretary to record the minutes.
 - b. The chairman shall appoint one elder to serve as an advisor on, at a minimum, each of the following committees: Worship, Board of Christian Education, Ushers, Social ministry, New Member Ministry, Youth and Health Ministry. Other committee assignments may be made to other ongoing and ad hoc committees in the congregation including, but not limited to, Assimilation, Public Relations and Sanctity of Life.
 - c. The chairman will report the recommendations of the Board of Elders to the church council and the voters assembly.
 - d. The chairman may call special meetings of the Board of Elders.
3. The Board of Elders shall meet once a month, except that up to twice per year they may be cancelled with consent of the pastor(s).
4. The Board of Elders shall consist of not less than **xxx** nor more than **xxx** geographic elders, not including the chairman, such number to be established from time to time by the voter's assembly. While the entire Board of Elders is responsible for the spiritual welfare and activities of the congregation, both individually and corporately, as a matter of convenience each geographic elder is assigned members in a geographic zone and then becomes the elder for these parishioners. Such geographic boundaries may change from time to time but no congregational member will be without an elder assigned. The chairman may act as an elder to new members for a period of time (less than six months) until their assignment/transfer to a geographic elder.

¹ "LCMS Job Descriptions: Congregation Officer: Elders," pp. 6-7,
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1196>.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTERS

The following are sample elder letters. The first two letters are addressed to someone who has been inactive. The others are sample letters that elders might send out every Advent and Lent.

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

—Psalm 122:1

Dear Member of *(your church name)*,

It is with great sadness that we note that you have not been regularly worshiping with us at *(your church name)* for quite some time. If there is something that we have done or not done that has led you away, please let us know so that we might repent and reconcile with you. We’re not perfect at *(your church name)*, and we know that we may have inadvertently said or done something that has led you away from worshiping with us. If that is the case, we ask for your forgiveness.

We genuinely want you to join with us at *(your church name)* in receiving the grace of God in Jesus Christ every Sunday in the Divine Service. Be assured that our Lord who has promised to be wherever two or three are gathered in His name will be here to bless you with all the treasures of heaven. As an elder, I along with our pastors have no agenda except to serve you with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed.

Please let us know if you plan to return to us, and know that it is our heartfelt prayer that you do. You can contact me by phone at *(phone number)* or by e-mail at *(e-mail address)*. If I don’t hear from you soon, I will follow up with a call. We hope to see you soon!

In Christ,

Member of the Board of Elders
(your church name)

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE ELDER AGENDA

BOARD OF ELDERS MEETING

(YOUR CHURCH NAME)

VISION: Making Known the Love of Christ

MISSION: (Your church name) is dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within and through its church and school.

THE BOARD OF ELDERS: Assist pastors in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

Agenda

Date/Time/Place

- Opening devotion (Pastor)
- Minutes of last meeting
- Chairman's report
- Membership changes
 - › List and discuss changes
- Reports of Committees/recommendations
 - › Worship
 - › Ushers
 - › Personnel Committee
 - › Membership spiritual care—calls, highlights, tips
- Old business
- New business
- Study of Scripture and Lutheran Confessions
- Closing devotion (Pastor)

Goals for the Board of Elders

- Make visits and calls to all members of (your church name)—Minimum of three each month.
- Assist with updating church records (in conjunction with calls).
- Attend weekly Divine Service, Advent, Lenten services, and weekly Bible study.
- Attend each Board meeting. Notify the church office when unable to attend and follow up with Board Chairman after missed meeting to address any action items.
- Promote (your church name) and educate membership concerning (your church name)'s vision and mission.
- Personal support for pastor(s) including weekly pre-service devotion.
- Become familiar with (your church name) Constitution, Employee Handbook, Position Description Booklet, and School Student/Parent Handbook.

Dear *(name)*,

We have missed seeing you at God's house these past weeks and are writing you this brief note to let you know. (Of course, there is always the possibility that we simply overlooked you in the crowd—and if that is the case, accept our apologies. Also remind us of it.)

When a brother or sister is absent from the services, it could be a matter of sickness, work, or vacation that has legitimately kept him away. When there is a reason for a member's absence, we—the pastor and board of elders—like to know. It is our duty and privilege to care about, and care for, all the members of the congregation. You are precious to us, as you are to the Lord Himself.

In case there is sickness or hardship in the family, we especially want to know so that we can offer our help and our prayers. And we would urge you to contact the pastor immediately to discuss the matter with him.

Of course, it is always possible for God's children to lose some of their zeal to hear God's Word preached, to worship their loving God, and to fellowship with the other saints. It is so easy for the cares, the pleasures, the busy-ness of life itself to interfere with heart and soul activities. Where this is the case we can only recommend the remedial action of returning at once to the house of God to hear His Word and receive the Sacrament, which alone can make one's faith and love burn hot again.

We hope that nothing of a serious matter—either physical or spiritual—has developed in your life to keep you from exercising your rights and privileges as a member of *(your church name)* congregation. We are looking forward to enjoying your fellowship in the near future.

“Blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28)

Yours in the Service of Our Savior,

Chairman of the Board of Elders Pastor

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE PASTOR REPORT

To: Board of Elders

From: Pastor—May/June Report

Date:

IN NOMINE JESU

WORSHIP

- List attendance and other information relative to worship

TEACHING

- List all classes

PASTORAL CARE

- List hospital, shut-in, and pastoral care visits and appointments
- List pre-marriage meetings with couples

BAPTISMS

- List the names of those baptized and dates of Baptisms

OTHER NEW MEMBERS

- List the names of other new members, dates they were received, and how they became members (e.g., adult Baptism, adult confirmation, transfer, profession of faith)

FUNERALS

- List names and dates of funerals

WEDDINGS AND ANNIVERSARY SERVICES

- List names of those married or celebrating their marriage with anniversary services, along with the dates of weddings and anniversary services

NEW MEMBERS

- List names of new members and dates they were received

MEMBERSHIP

- List Current baptized membership
- List Current communicant membership

ADMINISTRATIVE

- List all administrative tasks

Pastors *and* Elders

CARING FOR THE CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

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CARING FOR THE CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

Timothy J. Mech

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INTRODUCTION

A resource was needed to assist pastors and elders in caring for the Church and one another. While at first reluctant to take on such a task, the current state of many relationships between pastors and elders and their congregations led me to recognize the great need for such a resource. On the one hand, I have observed pastors become so frustrated with their elders and congregations that they have contemplated pursuing another vocation or have actually resigned. Others have been forced out. On the other hand, pastors who refuse to be held accountable to the congregational leadership have intimidated many elders. This has led, in some cases, to people leaving their home congregation or even the Church. Other issues include elders simply not knowing what to do or not having the tools to carry out the task of assisting the pastor in caring for the congregation. In addition, strengths and weaknesses of pastors and elders have not been identified so that in some areas of ministry the pastor or elder has been set up to fail. Instead of using the gifts of a person's particular vocation, the pastor or elder has been asked to do something that he is not trained or comfortable doing. On top of that, both pastors and elders are given the very difficult task of addressing members of the congregation, who are bombarded by and submerged into a self-absorbed culture. Pastors and elders are at times perceived as barriers to people doing and getting what they want. A pastor or elder call on a member of a congregation is often not welcomed by parishioners, especially those who are inactive or who are involved in something contrary to the Word of God.

I've been a Lutheran pastor for the past twenty-one years. My first call was to a small congregation with an average Sunday attendance of around forty-five people. I currently serve a large congregation of over 1,600 members with a school (3-year-olds through eighth grade) of 155 students. I've worked

with elders on issues as diverse as helping a struggling congregation survive a scandal to personnel issues that led to a church worker being removed from office through a voter's assembly. Successful resolutions were reached in both cases because of a relationship of trust between the pastor and elders. The church worker remains a faithful member of the congregation, and my previous congregation not only survives but continues to thrive on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through these experiences and others, I've learned the value of a trusting and respectful relationship with elders. Through the years we have encouraged, taught, admonished, confided in, and forgiven one another. The positive relationships that I have had with elders were one of the reasons I was asked to write this book.

Pastors and Elders will address the issues of who is in charge in the Church, what elders do, trust between elders and pastors, dealing with a self-absorbed culture, working within one's vocation, and how pastors and elders can hold one another accountable to God. This book is also intended to be used as a training guide in the monthly board of elders meetings. Discussion questions at the end of each chapter, along with the videos found on the enhanced DVD (CPH 15-5177), will give opportunity to work through the issues identified in each chapter. My prayer is that this resource will assist pastors and elders in faithfully caring for the Church and for one another.



WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Chapter ONE

Jesus [said], “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”

—Matthew 28:18

A member of the board of elders expresses a concern. His pastor says, “Your job is to keep your ears open and your mouth shut.” A pastor adheres to a particular scriptural practice. One of his elders insists that the church take a survey to determine whether the congregation wants to eliminate this unpopular practice. Both responses are attempts to dictate and control what goes on in the church; they are an effort to grab power for oneself at the expense of others.

But does having more power in the church solve problems or create them? The above scenarios highlight the fact that the source of many problems within the church, especially problems between pastors and elders, is confusion between spiritual authority and power. Rev. John W. Kleinig, who has spoken extensively on this topic, talks about the difference between power and authority.

Power is a limited ability or commodity. A person has power at the expense of someone else. I must disempower others in order to have it and keep it for myself. Those who lack authority use power. When people operate with power the reaction to them is political. If you operate with power than you have a constant battle with the other power people in your congregation. That leads you to manipulation by the great power-monger, Satan. Operate with power and you are operating on Satan's terms.

Authority is an unlimited ability or commodity. You cannot ex-

ercise authority unless you are under authority. It is never taken. Authority is given to you by someone else. You can only receive it. I exercise authority by authorizing others to act. You don't exercise authority by keeping it to yourself. The more I give my authority away the greater my authority is. Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others. When authorities speak people listen, even if they don't agree.¹

The answer for problems in the church, then, is not to have more power, but to exercise proper authority. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:18). The source of all authority in the Church is Jesus, not the pastor or elder or other members of the congregation. Jesus is in charge, and He authorizes His people to serve in His Church through various vocations.

The apostle Peter writes of all Christians, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. . . . Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Peter 2:9, 16). Elders, as members of the priesthood of all believers, are authorized to be servants in the Church.

Strictly speaking, the word "elder" in the Bible (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17–19, Titus 1:5–9 and 1 Peter 5:1–4) refers to those who hold the pastoral office. What we commonly call "elders" today are laymen appointed to serve the congregation in its temporal affairs and to assist the pastor in administrative tasks. . . . Later such men came to be known as the "deacons" (meaning "servants"). As you can see, Scripture does not define the exact role of such deacons, only their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8–13). Scripture gives them no special spiritual responsibilities in the congregation beyond those given to every Christian.

While the office of pastor is divinely instituted and indispensable for the Church, the deacon is an optional office based on apostolic and church custom.

The deacon or elder is a position of lay-service, concerned with the temporal and administrative affairs of the congregation. In many congregations deacons or elders are also charged with oversight of the pastor. But, rightly understood according to Scripture, they exercise only that oversight given to every Christian in the congregation.²

Pastors ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry are authorized by God through the Church to preach the Word of God and administer the Sacraments according to the Word of God. The apostle Paul writes, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1–2). Jesus said of one in this office, “The one who hears you hears Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me, and the one who rejects Me rejects the one who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

Concerning this office [of the Public Ministry] we teach that it is a divine ordinance; that is, the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow-Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16, but they are also required, by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work, whose qualifications and official functions are exactly defined in Scripture, Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2.

Although the office of the ministry is a divine ordinance, it possesses no other power than the power of the Word of God, 1 Pet. 4:11; that is to say, it is the duty of Christians to yield unconditional obedience to the office of the ministry whenever, and as long as, the minister proclaims to them the Word of God, Heb. 13:17, Luke 10:16. If, however, the minister, in his teachings and injunctions, were to go beyond the Word of God, it would be the duty of Christians not to obey, but to disobey him, so as to

remain faithful to Christ, Matt. 23:8. Accordingly, we reject the false doctrine ascribing to the office of the ministry the right to demand obedience and submission in matters which Christ has not commanded.³

At his ordination, a pastor is given orders to be under authority; to say what the Lord says through this Office of the Public Ministry. The pastor in turn vows to humbly accept this yoke, promising to faithfully preach and teach the Word of God. The robe and stole a pastor wears in the Divine Service beautifully illustrate the terms of his office: who the pastor represents, the extent of his authority, and what he is given to say. The robe covers the man and declares that the words he speaks are not his own. The stole, placed as a yoke around his neck, represents the vow the pastor made to faithfully preach and teach the Word of God.

The robe and stole worn by the pastor teach this even to little children. A little girl who was new to the congregation said to her friend in the pew, “See that guy in the black shirt? That’s the pastor. When he puts his dress, on he’s Jesus.”

Notice the understanding that when the pastor puts on the robe and stole, he represents someone else, namely, Jesus. When faithfully preaching and teaching the Word of God, it could be said by any pastor, “If you don’t like what I have to say, see the Lord about it. I only work here!” But it is important to highlight the fact that the pastor, in his official capacity, is authorized to say what Jesus says, nothing more and nothing less. This means that in other church matters, it would be wrong for the pastor to try to use power to get people to do what he cannot otherwise do solely on the basis of his authority. For example, saying that God wants the congregation to begin a building project or pass a particular budget would be a misuse of the pastor’s authority.

Doctors who made house calls often carried a medical bag that included a number of instruments, each designed to help the doctor diagnose and cure the patient’s pain and ailment. As the doctor would pull the needed instrument from the bag, it sent a subtle, but authoritative message: *the doctor is at work*. The doctor is at work, and healing is on its way.

The pastor has instruments that he is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls, namely, the Lord's Word and Sacraments. The Word of God consists of both Law and Gospel. Like the stethoscope used by a doctor, the Law's main purpose is to listen inside and identify what is wrong with us. In other words, the main purpose of the Law is to show us our sin. The Law is not an end in and of itself. It serves the Gospel just as a doctor's diagnosis of a medical problem serves the process of healing. When our sin is brought to light, that is, confessed, it is identified and there is a desire for the sin to be removed.

The purpose of the Gospel is to forgive our sin, to remove it from our very being. This is done through the Absolution, the declarative word of the Lord's forgiveness. Just as a stethoscope is an invaluable instrument in a doctor's medical bag, one of the most important tools in the pastor's "spiritual medical bag" is private Confession and Absolution. The pastor asks the penitent, "Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?" With the acknowledgment that it is, indeed, God's forgiveness being bestowed, the pastor places his hands on the head of the penitent and says, "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*LSB*, p. 293). In Confession and Absolution, the source of our pain and agony, namely sin, is healed by the authority of Jesus Christ.

There is also a miracle medicine of immortality found within the pastor's spiritual medical bag. It is called the Lord's Supper, the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. Through Christ's authority, the pastor puts these into the mouth, heart, and life of penitents for the forgiveness of sins, that believing, they might rejoice in what God has given and respond with thanksgiving.

An example of someone who believed and rejoiced in God's gifts given through the Lord's Supper was a woman by the name of Bev. Bev and her mother were shut-ins, confined to their home due to illness. Bev knew that there was more going on than met the eye when the pastor, acting under Christ's authority, served the Lord's Supper to her and her mother. It is why she wanted the pastor of her church to have a Communion set that confessed the importance of what was being served even there, namely, the Lord's very body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of their sins.

So one year during Lent Bev gave up her phone, setting aside the money she saved. And that Easter, this woman on a fixed income gave her pastor a new communion set, complete with a beautiful silver plate and chalice. What a beautiful response to what God had given! What a beautiful confession of the authority of God's Word! Bev felt, "Since the Lord's forgiveness is given through His body and blood in Communion, the vessels that deliver these gifts should make a statement about their importance." The pastor will be using this Communion set for his entire ministry, not only because of the silver plate and chalice, but because of the wonderful confession of faith that led to the set being given for the distribution of the Lord's very body and blood to sinners needing forgiveness. Word and Sacraments—these are the instruments the pastor is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls.

While great blessings come by acting in accord with the authority of God's Word, many problems occur within the congregation when a pastor or elder does something that he is not authorized to do. A pastor steps beyond his authority and purchases something that has not been budgeted for or approved by the congregation. An elder disregards the pastor's mandate to preach both Law and Gospel and promises a member that he will see to it that the pastor performs the marriage of the member's daughter who is living together with her boyfriend. An elder demands the pastor give the body and blood of Christ to a visitor who is a member of a church body that rejects the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament. These are examples of a pastor or elder exercising power instead of acting under the authority of his office with his given responsibilities.

When the board of elders or the pastor exercise power instead of authority, elders' meetings can quickly deteriorate into simply reacting to or complaining about the challenges and problems within a congregation, such as poor attendance, a lack of volunteers, or the shortcomings of the pastor(s) or elders. Meetings such as this often end in frustration with little or nothing being accomplished except ill will among those involved. The problem is that such meetings begin in the wrong place. Instead of beginning with God and His Word to address the issue of poor attendance, for example, these meetings typically assume that the pastor or congregation must be doing something wrong if people are not coming to church in large numbers.

The reason for this presupposition is that we live in a consumerist culture. In marketing, the goal is to find out what consumers want and sell it to them. In such a system, the customer is always right. This is why many conclude that, in order to solve attendance problems, we need to ask members or others what it will take to get them to attend or to return to church. Members of the church, inactive members, and maybe even unbelievers are then given power within the church, even at the expense of God's Word. What is often not considered is that some people may not be attending church because they fail to recognize the need for Jesus Christ and His Word in their lives. They may have put other things ahead of God and His Word and thus trust in someone or something other than Jesus Christ. Instead of consulting them as to what the congregation should do, we need to speak the authoritative Word of God to them.

In such cases, both pastor(s) and elders need to trust in the authority of God's Word to bring people to repentance and faith through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It may take longer to turn things around, but the results are eternal. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes that we do not build the Church, but Christ builds the Church by the authority of His Word.

We shall confess—he shall build. We shall preach—he shall build. We shall pray to him—he shall build. We do not know his plan. We do not see whether he builds or tears down. It may be that the times, which by human standards are times of collapse, are for him the times of great building. It may be that the times, which by human standards are times of great success, are for him the times to tear down. It is a great comfort that Christ gives to his church: confess, preach, and bear witness to me. I alone will build as it pleases me. Don't give me orders. Do your job—then you have done enough. You are all right. Don't seek out reasons and opinions. Don't keep judging. Don't keep checking again and again to see if you are secure. Church, remain a church! But, you, church—confess, confess, confess! You have only one Lord—Christ alone. By his grace alone you live. Christ builds.⁴