

CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE LCMS TODAY

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERANISM IS MARKED BY PASTORS AND LAYMEN WHO:

- In accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, hold that there is one divinely instituted, divinely mandated pastoral office in the Church and that this office is not occupied by every member of the congregation but by those men well prepared for it and properly called to it. Therefore, any public proclamation of God's Word in worship should and ought to be done only by such pastors called to the task. We reject as unbiblical the post-Christian trend in some denominations to allow homosexual clergy. Confessional Lutherans affirm the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and encourage Christians to practice this priesthood in their homes and vocations but it is not to be confused with the office of pastor in the Church.** (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 4:1; I Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:4-5; I Peter 5:1-3) (AC XIV; AP XIII, 11-13; AP XVIII, 13-14; TR 60, 74)

What are the Issues in Contention Today?

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY:

- Holy Scripture, in such passages as Romans 10:15; Hebrews 5:4; I Corinthians 12:28; Numbers 16; Jeremiah 23:21; and Acts 1:15-26, and the Lutheran Confessions declare in Augsburg Confession, Article XIV: "Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call." At the Synodical convention in Wichita, Kansas (1989) the unbiblical category of "lay ministers" was established. This has resulted in laymen, neither ordained nor rightly called, errantly serving LCMS congregations. Even now some Lay Ministers continue to serve in Word and Sacrament "ministry" to the congregations of Synod. This error has never been corrected and the practice of utilizing laymen who are not called to the Office of Word and Sacrament continue to serve as "pastors" within The LCMS.
- While there may be different routes to prepare a man to serve in the pastoral office, this violation of Augustana XIV was furthered by the establishment of Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) in which laymen not properly called and ordained continue to provide Word and Sacrament Ministry to LCMS Congregations. This error has never been corrected and the practice of utilizing laymen who are not called to the Office of Word and Sacrament continue to serve as "pastors" within the LCMS.

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions insist in Article XIV that the administration of the Sacraments be retained only by those properly called to administer them. The only means for "licensing" a man to serve as minister of Word and Sacrament is the divine call to the Office of the Holy Ministry and nothing else. Today many vicarage supervising pastors of the Synod illicitly insist that their vicars consecrate and administer the Lord's Supper to home bound members of their parishes and even in Divine Services. The consciences of many vicars are thereby burdened by this demand. This error has never been corrected and the practice of utilizing vicars who are not called to the Office of Word and Sacrament continue within The LCMS.

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, as well as Dr. C.F.W. Walther, clearly teach that the Office of the Holy Ministry and the royal priesthood of the baptized are distinct from one another. The notion promoted by some that "everyone is a minister" distorts both the use of the term "ministry" in the Lutheran Confessions as well as the royal priesthood of the baptized so that

what any Christian does is measured against the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and the doctrine of vocation is lost. This error has not been corrected within The LCMS.

The Witness of Holy Scripture

MATTHEW 16:18-19

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

JOHN 20:22-23

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."
²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

ACTS 14:23

²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

ACTS 20:28

²⁸ Pay careful attention 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 his own blood.

I CORINTHIANS 4:1:

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

TITUS 1:4-5

⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. ⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

I TIMOTHY 3:1-5

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

I PETER 5:1-3

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM:

What is the Office of the Keys? The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written? This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: "The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" (Jn. 20:22-23)

What do you believe according to these words? I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

AUGSBURG CONFESSION – Order in the Church, ARTICLE XIV

Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call.

APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION – The Number and Use of the Sacraments, Article XIII, 11-13

But if ordination is understood as carrying out the ministry of the Word, we are willing to call ordination a Sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and has glorious promises,...For the Church has the command to appoint ministers, which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in the ministry that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men. It is helpful, so far as can be done, to honor the ministry of the Word with every kind of praise against fanatical people.

APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, ARTICLE XXVIII, 13-14

"Therefore, the bishop has the power of the order, that is, the ministry of Word and Sacraments. He also has the power of jurisdiction. This means the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes and again to absolve them if they are converted and seek absolution. [John 20:23]. But their power is not to be tyrannical, without a fixed law. Nor is it to be regal, above the law. Rather they have a fixed command and a fixed Word of God, according to which they should teach and exercise their jurisdiction...They have the Word, the command, and how far they should exercise jurisdiction if anyone did anything contrary to that Word they have received from Christ."

TREATISE ON THE POWER AND PRIMACY OF THE POPE – The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops, 60, 74

"The Gospel assigns those who preside over Churches the command to teach the Gospel [Matthew 28:19], to forgive sins [John 20:23], to administer the Sacraments, and also to exercise jurisdiction (i.e., the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known and to absolve those who repent)...Certainly, the common jurisdiction of excommunicating those guilty of clear crimes belongs to all pastors [I Corinthians 5]

OTHER COMPLICATING ISSUES REGARDING THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

1. The establishment of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) within The LCMS:

At the 2007 Synodical Convention in Houston, Texas, Resolution 5-01B, "To Establish Specific Ministry Program" was passed. This program permits men interested in becoming pastors to take a total of eight seminary classes (almost entirely on-line, with only one week per year on a

seminary campus required), prior to ordination. Once ordained, the SMP is required to take an additional eight classes. This credit total is about half of that required by what is now termed "General Ministry" seminary students.

At a time in our culture when the orthodox Christian faith is under severe criticism, in a society that often rejects any kind of absolute truth, and at a time when many Christians (inclusive of LCMS Lutherans), often "mix and match" doctrines with those of other denominations and sometimes other non-Christian religions; it is the worst possible time to inadequately prepare our pastors thus inevitably inadequately feed God precious sheep on Word of God and the Sacraments.

2. **In various districts in our Synod, "Deacon Schools" have been opened which are taught by local pastors in which it is often true that men and women are trained to conduct Word and Sacrament ministry in congregations which already have pastors!**