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From the Office of the President

Rev. Ralph E. Mayan

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**DATE:** April 9, 2001

**TO:** All Members of Lutheran Church-Canada

**FROM:** Board for Higher Education, Lutheran Church-Canada

**RE: Task Force Report - To Establish a Means for Special Needs Ministry of Word and Sacrament**

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Delegates to the June, 1999 synodical convention directed the Board for Higher Education to convene a task force to explore an alternative way of training those called and ordained into the office of Word and Sacrament Ministry, addressing special needs identified by the Council of President, - *Resolution 99.1.02B To Establish a Means for Special Needs Ministry of Word and Sacrament*. The task force has completed its work. Its report, along with two supporting study documents, are enclosed for your study and response.

The Board for Higher Education requests that all responses be submitted by October 1, 2001 to:

Board for Higher Education  
Special Needs Ministry of Word & Sacrament  
Lutheran Church-Canada  
3074 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg MB R3K 0Y2  
E-mail: [pres\\_sec@lutheranchurch-canada.ca](mailto:pres_sec@lutheranchurch-canada.ca) (Subject: Special Needs Ministry)

In Christ,

Paul H. Dorn, chairman  
Board for Higher Education  
Lutheran Church-Canada

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

### **A Crying Need**

Cases exist where small communities of Lutheran Christians in isolated areas are unable to secure and/or sustain full-time word and sacrament ministry provided by a pastor on Lutheran Church–Canada’s clergy roster. The precise nature and intensity of this need are most appropriately determined by the district president in consultation with the community in question.

### **The Biblical-Confessional Foundation**

Study of the biblical data as expounded in the Lutheran Confessions has convinced us of two truths which should guide the practice of synod (see Appendices A and B).

First, the Lord of the Church wills that regular and consistent word and sacrament ministry be provided to His sheep also in cases where their number is few and their financial resources are negligible.

Secondly, publicly recognized word and sacrament ministry should be given by a called and ordained minister, that is, by a pastor. We hold that this ministry is best provided by a resident pastor. It is a mistake to divide call from ordination or word from sacraments or to entertain the model of a two-tier ministry where most are ‘ordained’ but some are merely ‘commissioned’ or ‘licensed’.

### **Suggested Course of Action**

When a district president and a small, isolated community of faith discern the presence in its midst of a man who meets the requirements laid down in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, the pastoral office may be conferred on this individual by the accustomed processes of call, ordination, and installation. Such ‘Pastors with Alternate Training’ (PATs) should receive appropriate theological training both before and after ordination. This should involve the participation of our called seminary professors and other qualified persons. Its precise content and mode of delivery should be determined on a case by case basis.

### **Ecclesiastical Administration**

We anticipate that those who hold the office of the ministry as PATs will be acknowledged as the equals of their brethren who have arrived at their rostered position by the customary route of seminary training (SA III, 10). At the same time, we anticipate that these ‘Pastors with Alternate Training’ will not be available for call to the other parishes and calling entities of synod. Issues of polity concerning the rightful supervisory (‘episcopal’) authority of district presidents arise here that will have to be thought through on the basis of Scripture, the Book of Concord, and the whole history of Lutheran church government.

## SCRIPTURAL, CONFESSIONAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A “SPECIAL NEEDS” MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

*John R. Stephenson*

### A. DOGMATIC FOUNDATIONS

Viewed through sociological lenses, church bodies in general and local congregations in particular appear to be merely assemblies of people whose essence, structure and governance may be understood by way of analogy with other human groupings. Should Lutheran Church–Canada and its constituent congregations be regarded in such a fashion, then ways of meeting the pastoral needs of small and isolated communities of our members could be devised along pragmatic lines, on the basis of feasibility and convenience. Yet the Church of Jesus Christ is neither “from this world” (Jn. 17:14b) nor can its essence, structure and governance be rightly understood in terms of the prevailing mentality of modern Canada. Although she exists in this world’s time and space, the Church on earth is the betrothed bride of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. The Church’s essence consists in her marital relationship with Him; already in the days of His flesh He supplied her with a structure which is to abide to the end of time; and her governance is to be modeled on the apostolic practice recorded in the New Testament.

The chief premise from which this paper proceeds is articulated by C. F. W. Walther in the Scriptural proof of his 6<sup>th</sup> Thesis on Church and Office. Walther here argues that the Divine Call which confers on a suitable man the office of the apostolic ministry is to be issued neither by the laity alone, nor by the clergy alone, but by clergy and laity in unison. A main factor which prompts Walther to hold this view is his conviction that the Church [*Gemeinde*], “when properly structured, consists of preachers and listeners”.<sup>1</sup> In these few words Walther places his finger on a divinely established truth which is robustly Scriptural and confessional. St. Paul’s greeting to the Church at Philippi is instructive in this context. In directing his letter “[t]o all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1b), the Apostle outlines by divine inspiration the insight articulated by Walther nineteen centuries later. The Church is the holy people, the royal priesthood, the bride of Christ, and from this flock of His sheep and for its welfare the Lord has raised up an order of shepherds. The simultaneous establishment of royal priesthood and ministerial office and their divinely desired co-working can be detected already in what was so to say the gestation period of the Church, as a small

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“in der Gemeinde, die, wenn gehörig geordnet, aus Predigern und Zuhörern besteht.” C. F. W. Walther, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Zwickau in Sachsen: Verlag des Schriftvereins der sep. evang.-luth. Gemeinden in Sachsen, 1894) 245; emphasis added.

2

By recognizing and establishing the order of diaconal ministry at its last synodical convention, Lutheran Church–Canada moved towards greater fidelity to Holy Scripture.

assembly of clergy and laity gathered for common prayer in the cenacle of Jerusalem, and Peter and the other apostles filled Judas' vacant office in consultation with their lay brothers and sisters (Acts 1:15-26).<sup>3</sup>

AC VIII reflects the first phrase quoted from Phil. 1:1b when it defines "the Christian church, properly speaking, [as] ...nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints". Moreover, the previous article of our premier confession also takes indirect note of the "bishops" referred to in the next phrase of Paul's greeting. Of the "one holy Christian church [which] will be and remain forever" Melancthon confesses: "This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (AC VII). That Jonathan Grothe is right to point out that there is no such thing as **ministry** without **ministers** is made plain by AC V, whose German text confesses that, "To obtain such [justifying] faith God [i.e., the Incarnate Lord, in His calling of the apostles] instituted the Preaching Office to give the Gospel and the sacraments."<sup>4</sup>

Thus the two marks of the Church (*notae Ecclesiae*) listed in AC VII presuppose the Lord's historic institution and unremitting use of the pastoral office. In his 1539 writing *On the Councils and the Church* (which was directed against the upcoming Council of Trent), Luther specifies not just two, but seven marks of the Church: (1) "the holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy word of God";<sup>5</sup> (2) "the Christian holy people are recognized by the holy sacrament of baptism";<sup>6</sup> (3) "God's people ...are

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At the end of the first century, Clement of Rome's rebuke of the Church of Corinth's firing of its entire clergy keeps pace with both the apostles and Walther when he too recognizes that the Church is intended to breathe with two lungs or stand on two feet: "In view of this, we cannot think it right for these men to be ejected from their ministry, when, after being commissioned by the Apostles (or by other reputable persons at a later date) **with the full consent of the Church**, they have since been serving Christ's flock in a humble, peaceable and disinterested way, and earning everybody's approval over so long a period of time." I Clement 44, in *Early Christian Writings; The Apostolic Fathers* trans. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1968) 46; emphasis added.

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On the proper translation of "Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakrament geben, ..." (BS 58, 1-2), which was butchered by Tappert, see Kurt E. Marquart, "The Two Realms ('Kingdoms') in the Lutheran Confessions," in John R. Stephenson ed., *God and Caesar Revisited; Luther Academy Conference Papers* No. 1:41f.

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AE 41:148.

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AE 41:151.

recognized by the holy sacrament of the altar”;<sup>7</sup> (4) “God’s people ...are recognized by the office of the keys exercised publicly”;<sup>8</sup> (5) **“the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers”**;<sup>9</sup> (6) “the holy Christian people are externally recognized by prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God”;<sup>10</sup> (7) “the holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross”.<sup>11</sup>

It is appropriate to quote in full the Reformer’s account of the fifth external “mark of the Church”:

Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it has to administer. There **must** be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 [:8], “He received gifts among men—his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc. The people as a whole cannot do these things, but **must** entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other? It **must** be entrusted to one person, and he alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments. The others should be content with this arrangement and agree to it. Wherever you see this done, be assured that God’s people, the holy Christian people, are present.”<sup>12</sup>

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AE 41:152.

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AE 41:153.

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AE 41:154.

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AE 41:164.

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AE 41:164.

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AE 41:154; emphasis added.

Luther is driven here by a thoroughly Scriptural discernment that, in a given locality containing an unspecified number of Christians, the Lord of the Church wills that His means of grace be administered by (at least) one man who has been invested with the office referred to in the New Testament as “bishop” or “presbyter” and commonly spoken of in our Lutheran parlance as “pastor”. St. Paul attended to the harvest of souls reaped during his first missionary journey by appointing presbyters to look after the infant churches which would almost immediately be deprived of his personal presence (Acts 14:23); a prime datum of the New Testament’s presentation of the office of the ministry is thus the continuation of the apostolic office in that of presbyter<sup>13</sup> (see also I Peter 5:1, where St. Peter addresses the presbyters as their “fellow presbyter”). As he labours in Crete, Titus is therefore to “appoint presbyters in every town, as I [Paul] directed you” (Tit. 1:5).

The purpose of our venturing to bold the imperative verbs in Luther’s paragraph about the ministerial office as a mark of the Church should become clear as we focus our attention on the second part of the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the more so as we bear in mind that Melancthon’s appendix on “The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops” is the most extensive treatment of the pastoral office to be found in the whole Book of Concord. In these few pages (Tappert 330-334) Philipp expands on the truths which he had earlier expressed in theological shorthand in AC V and XIV. The bottom line of the later Confession’s teaching on the pastoral ministry is that the mandates given by our Lord to the apostles are to be exercised by those who succeed them in the ministry, “whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops” (Tr 61).

The second article [confessed against the temporal claims of the mediaeval papacy] is even clearer than the first because Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command [*mandatum*] to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence (Tr 31).

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 (Tr 60-61; emphasis added).

Melancthon here makes much of the distinction between the two phrases “by divine right (*iure divino*)” and “by human authority (*humana autoritate*)”. Under the second heading belong “the distinction between the grades of bishop and presbyter” (Tr 63, hence the episcopal system of church government) and the placing of the pastors of Lutheran Church–Canada under the supervisory authority of circuit counselors and district and synodical presidents. What exists in the Church “by human authority” is not to be breezily dismissed as “mere” adiaphoron, for it may well be a good gift of God whose benefits we ignore at our peril. But what exists “by divine right—*iure divino*” is what is given by the Incarnate Lord Himself and thus what may not be tampered with. Under this first heading belongs the continuation of the apostolic office in the one office of those who “are

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See the German text of Tr 10: “haben wir ein gewisse Lehre, daß das Predigamt vom gemeinen Beruf der Apostel herkommet—we have a sure doctrine that the preaching office derives from the common call of the apostles” (BS 474, 8-11).

called pastors, presbyters, or bishops”.<sup>14</sup> Both Melanchthon and Luther thus detect a divine imperative behind the age-old custom of placing a pastor in office to serve one or more communities of Christian people. More is at work here, by the way, than simply connecting the sheep of Christ with the means of grace which He instituted. A congregation is a local embodiment of the one family of God which exists in heaven and on earth, and a family is impaired which is forced to exist without a father. In his *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry: Jesus and Paul*, Jonathan Grothe develops the theme “The Ministry as Parenthood”.<sup>15</sup> His habit of describing the parish pastor as a “spiritual father in the household of God” is thus Scripturally (I Cor. 4:14-15; Philemon 10; Gal. 4:19; I Thess. 2:7-8) and confessionally (LC I:4, 158-160) well founded.

The New Testament and the patristic age know nothing of the much later practice of “licensing” laymen to discharge one or more of the “functions” of the one office without the one office’s being bestowed on them in its fullness. Evidence of such a practice can be found in the East coast Lutheranism of the time of Henry Melchior Muehlenberg,<sup>16</sup> and undoubtedly has much to do with Pietism’s rejection of the doctrine and practice of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Lutheran Orthodoxy. The cases of John Sutel and John Freder, 16<sup>th</sup>-century Lutheran ministerial candidates who wished to celebrate Holy Communion before their calls had been consummated in ordination,

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See the quotation from the German text of the Treatise given in the foregoing footnote.

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Jonathan F. Grothe, *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1988) 24-26.

16

E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 46f.

and who were soundly rebuked by the Reformer and by Melancthon,<sup>17</sup> indicate the agreement of the Church of the Augsburg Confession in its classical period with the New Testament and the fathers.

## CONCLUSIONS FOR OUR CURRENT PRACTICE

While the pastoral office in our Lutheran Church–Canada exists “by divine right—*iure divino*” for the feeding and tending of the Lord Jesus’ lambs, our two seminaries and many of the regulatory provisions of our Synodical Handbook exist “*iure humano*—by human authority”. As stated above, those aspects of our church life that fall under the second of these headings may not be breezily dismissed as “mere” adiaphora and thus casually bypassed as we go about the Lord’s work in the districts of our Synod. We need make no apology for availing ourselves of the services of secular universities and colleges for the preparation of the men who study theology at our seminaries, nor should we suppose that the instruction imparted at our seminaries is something which our pastors may normally forgo. As Walther remarked to his students more than a century ago, “A proper indoctrination is needed by you more than by pastors in Germany; for you are living in the land of sects.”<sup>18</sup>

A glance at Anglican church history may provide us with a needed distinction which will make clear the rightful status of seminary education in our midst. The classical Anglican theologians of the 17th century in the main regarded the episcopal system of church government as pertaining to the well-being (*bene esse*), but not to the essence (*esse*) of the Church. Shortly after the start of the Oxford Movement of 1833, in the first of the *Tracts for the Times*, John Henry Newman espoused the contrary view, which is rejected by most Anglicans today, namely, that episcopacy is of the essence (*esse*) of the Church. Using this terminology in a different context, one might argue that seminary education of its clergy serves the well-being (*bene esse*) of the Church, while not being necessary for its essence (*esse*).

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Arthur Carl Piepkorn, “The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* XL, 8 (September 1969):555, n. 5: “The case (1531) of John Sutel in Göttingen makes it clear that in the mind of the early Lutheran community the mere possession of a call without a public ordination through the laying on of hands did not authorize the recipient to preside over the Eucharistic assembly and pronounce the formula of consecration. Luther counsels Sutel to refrain from celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar until he ‘publicly before the altar with prayer and the laying on of hands receives from the other clergymen the evidence [of the legitimacy of his status] and authority to celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar.’ (*tum publice coram altari a reliquis ministris cum oratione et impositione manuum testimonium accipies et auctoritatem coenae tractandae* [WA Br 6, 43-44].” and 561: “The necessity of ordination was the issue in the famed ‘Freder ordination controversy’ (1550-1560), which involved primarily John Freder (1510-1562) and the Pomeranian Reformer John Knipstro (1497-1556). A general synod of the clergy of Pomerania decided the controversy in 1556 by ruling that ‘the calling or election of a person (*vocatio vel electio personae*) must be distinguished from the ordination’ and by committing itself to ‘the general rule of Luther’ that ‘there must be a rightful vocation and ordination to the sacred ministry wherever the church of Christ is.’ The Wittenberg faculty, with Melancthon concurring, rejected the position that ordination was an adiaphoron and held that Freder’s vocation did not constitute an ordination.”

18

C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928) 178.

While holding that, all things being equal, clergy should normally be the products of a seminary education, we may not blind ourselves to the Lord's clear overriding will that His household of faith in a given area be presided over by one placed into the presbyteral=episcopal=pastoral office as a spiritual father mandated to feed and tend Christ's lambs. In Walther's view, a congregation bereft of pastoral presence is not "properly structured—*gehörig geordnet*". If push comes to shove (a state of affairs which should be determined by the pastors invested with the ministry of supervision in consultation with the layfolk involved), therefore, those things that proceed "by human authority—*humana autoritate*" (viz., on-site seminary education culminating in the awarding of the master of divinity degree, and certain handbook provisions) must give way to what the Lord Himself wills "by divine right—*iure divino*".

Thus, should no regularly rostered clergyman be available to serve a flock in remote regions, or should a community of believers located in such areas be unable to pay for the services of a full-time clergyman, then the district president, in close consultation with the laypeople for whom provision is to be made, may obviously take steps to confer the one pastoral office in its fullness on a suitable man chosen for this purpose. In doing so, it goes without saying that he will be guided by the qualifications for office enunciated by St. Paul in I Timothy 3:1-7. In this context he will be well advised to bear in mind that a man cannot be a good undershepherd who does not permit himself to be shepherded, and that a man cannot be "apt to teach" who does not let himself be taught. And since we exist not as atomistic individuals but precisely as a Synod of men and women divinely bonded together into *communio/koinonia*, the district president would be remiss in not involving such existing structures as the colloquy committee and the seminary faculties in the needed process of discernment which goes along with the bestowal of the pastoral office (I Tim. 5:22).

A precedent for the conferral of the pastoral office on suitable men who are nevertheless deficient in terms of academic formation can actually be found in the earliest stages of the Church of the Augsburg Confession. Referring to the "emergency situation" that existed on account of the Roman bishops' refusal to ordain Lutheran candidates when parishes were crying out for pastors, A. C. Piepkorn wrote, in the article to which reference has already been made:

The need for ordination that the adherents of the Augsburg Confession felt increasingly from the 1530s onward is reflected in the Ordination Register of Saint Mary's Church, Wittenberg, which provides data on 1,979 clergymen ordained between 1537 and 1560. Of these at least 1,025 (possibly as many as 1,069) are known to have been recruited from other professions and crafts, because the former profession or craft of the ordinand is listed; 92 were former manual laborers. It is possible that many more of the 900-plus ordinands had been recruited from other professions and crafts, since it is unlikely that all of them were university graduates.<sup>19</sup>

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION

Since seminary professors are not voting members of Synod, and since the work of such officers as district and synodical presidents and circuit counselors takes place far outside his sphere of professional competence, the writer of this document is reluctant to venture much comment on the "constitutional"

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Piepkorn 560f.

dimension of the implementation of “site-specific ordination”. Since the minutes of our 23 March meeting indicate that such comment is explicitly invited, two remarks are offered nevertheless.

First, the pastoral office is conferred either in its fullness or not at all. Administering Holy Baptism and Private Absolution and celebrating Holy Communion are acts requiring such virtues as faith, reverence and discretion rather than any academic achievement. Moreover, the cultivation of the pastoral heart which enables a man to exercise spiritual fatherhood in the household of God happens on the fringes of seminary education as such, having more to do with spiritual formation and emotional maturity and role modeling than with book learning. Thus a suitable man invested with the fullness of the office without the benefit of seminary education could not do other than exercise sacramental and *seelsorgerlich* ministry at full blast. The chief impediment caused by the lack of a full theological education would manifest itself in the regular preparation of adequate sermons, a problem remediable at least in part by making available homilies preached elsewhere by such avenues as Internet e-mail.

Secondly, even if those invested with supervisory ministry should judge, with the consent of district and synodical conventions, that men ordained under extraordinary circumstances should not be available for call elsewhere (which would be an ordinance made “by human authority—*autoritate humana*), such pastors would nevertheless have to be regarded as the equals before God of their regularly rostered colleagues (SA II, iv, 9: “...all the bishops equal in office (however they may differ in gifts) and diligently joined together in unity of doctrine, faith, sacraments, prayer, works of love, etc.”). An anomalous situation would arise if the lay delegate of a congregation would have the right to vote at a district convention while his/her pastor would be denied this privilege on account of the route by which he arrived at ordination.

## **PASTORAL CARE OF ISOLATED MEMBERS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

### **Introduction**

The prime concern of LCA pastors who seek to minister to members living in isolated parts of the country will be their spiritual welfare. The spiritual welfare of church members is best served as they receive a ministry of word and sacraments within a worshipping community on a regular basis. Pastors will treat with the utmost seriousness their responsibility to ensure that people in remote areas are cared for spiritually. The LCA has always avoided providing rules and regulations designed to govern every pastoral situation that might arise, in the conviction that such an approach quickly degenerates into a casuistic approach to pastoral care, and in the confidence that pastors are well equipped to apply the theology of the LCA to whatever situation they face.

### **A Theological foundations**

1. All members of the body of Christ are in fellowship with one another and have responsibilities towards one another in accordance with their abilities and gifts (I Cor 12).
2. Christians are called to hold fast to the truth and to hear witness to the truth which has been revealed in God's word, and to do so in a spirit of gentleness and respect (2 Thess 2:4; I Pet 3:15-16).
3. Christians are called to avoid those who teach other than God's word teaches (Rom 16:17-19; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Pet 1-3; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11).
4. People are reconciled to God and continue in the state of grace through the ministry of word and sacraments (AC 4, 5, 6. ). Therefore members will not be referred to others for pastoral care unless the referring pastor is convinced that in the new place the gospel will be proclaimed and the sacraments administered according to their institution.
5. The LCA's Theses on Joint Prayer and Worship recognize that, if Lutherans attend services outside of their own fellowship for some legitimate reason, their attendance on such occasions is not due to unionistic indifference, and the circumstances will have to decide whether they can join in the prayers and to what extent they can take part in the worship (TA 11.4).

### **B Pastor considerations<sup>1</sup>**

- I Some Lutheran pastors are able to provide education and pastoral care for members in remote areas by means such as telephone or mail.
- 2 Some pastors can readily extend pastoral care to those in remote places because they have adequate resources and are open to house church-approaches that use a boundary-rider method of operation.

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<sup>1</sup> This document makes no reference to the LCA's transfer procedures. This is another issue. The information can be obtained from district presidents or the National Office.

- 3 If there is sound leadership and internal cohesion in a family that lives in a remote area, that family could well function as a house church. Such a family could even serve as an outreach centre, if it were to provide Christian nurture and instruction.
- 4 Some pastors may have no option but to refer isolated members to the pastoral care of other Christian pastors who are known to preach the gospel and to have a biblical understanding of the sacraments.
- 5 Given that the spiritual welfare of members is the pastor's first and foremost consideration, it is recommended that pastors encourage members in isolated areas to remain official members of the LCA even though their best interests may be served by worshiping regularly in a church of another denomination.
- 6 An essential ingredient of pastoral responsibility in this context will be to determine whether the clergy person of the congregation the LCA member joins preaches 'another gospel' (Gal 1:6, 7) or engages in pastoral practices hurtful to the spiritual life of his or her parishioners. This would need to be monitored on a regular basis.
- 7 Pastors will continually evaluate the advice they offer, to ensure that it proceeds from a sound theological basis. Some doubtful beliefs include: 'the only way to grow the church is by developing large congregations,' 'there is little difference between Lutheran distinctive's and the beliefs of other mainline Christian churches,' 'regular reception of the Lord's supper is necessary for salvation', and 'Christians living in isolated situations will eventually become dead branches on the vine of Jesus Christ'.

### **C. Personal Issues**

Pastors will always pay close attention to the personality, values, beliefs, social and religious background, and physical circumstances of those with whom they are discussing the question of worship in remote places. No matter how overtly sound, pastoral care that fails to treat the situation of the church member or members with the utmost seriousness may well be inappropriate and spiritually harmful.

Some of the many factors to be borne in mind may be listed. Some people need social contact and find it hard to maintain their sense of belonging to Christ's body unless they can participate regularly in congregational worship. Others are more individualistic and imagine (perhaps erroneously) that they can remain in robust spiritual health without regular contact with fellow believers. Some value their Lutheran heritage to such an extent that the suggestion of worshiping in the church of another denomination – let alone joining another denomination – would sound like an invitation to be disloyal to their background and even to God.

Given the ecumenical spirit of the age in which we live, on the other hand, it is not surprising that a rapidly growing number of Lutherans relate easily and readily with Christians of other denominations. Some who come into this category clearly confess the distinctive teachings of the LCA and witness appropriately to doctrinal differences, while at the same time rejoicing in the unity of the gospel with Christians whose teachings differ from those of the LCA here and there. Other Lutherans have a different kind of ecumenical spirit. They have little time for denominational differences and have few qualms about joining another denomination if one of its churches is near at hand or its services are regarded as more appealing.

**Conclusion**

When advising far-flung LCA members in matters affecting their worship and witness, it would be irresponsible of the pastors of the church to operate with predetermined policies. The theological foundations are clear, but as pastors seek to apply the LCA's teachings they will be hard pressed to find two situations that are the same. The advice that they give may well differ from case to case, as they seek to give the advice most appropriate to each situation. The pastors of the LCA face a complicated task as they try to ensure the best possible pastoral care of those who in the short term or long term find themselves in places far removed from regular preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments at Lutheran pulpits and altars

Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations  
Church Relations Committee  
September 1994

**PART I**

The Lutheran Confessions on the Office of the Ministry, with particular reference to the restricted use of laymen to perform the functions of that office.

**A. Preamble:**

- 1.1 CA5, 7 and 14 provide the basic statements on the Lutheran understanding of the Office of the Ministry. These three articles belong to the doctrinal section of CA. They say what the Evangelical Lutheran church believes and teaches.
- 1.2 CA5, 7 and 14 were written in the context of:
  - a. The Schwaermer, who insisted on a 'charismatic' ministry, and who separated the Spirit from the Word (and hence the Spirit from the church).
  - b. Eck, who in his **404 Propositions** (1530) charged that the Lutherans denied the existence of the sacrament of orders, called it a human arrangement, and taught that any laymen can consecrate churches, confirm children, etc.
  - c. The Calvinist position (later codified in the Genevan church order of 1540) which taught that Christ instituted four offices in the church: pastor, teacher (Docteur), presbyter, and deacon.
- 2.1 CA5 teaches that the ministry of Word and Sacrament comes from Christ, not from the church. It is not a ministry of the church, but God's ministry in and to the church. The Holy Spirit works through the ministry of Word and Sacrament to create and sustain the church. God's ministry of Word and Sacrament is carried out through his appointed agents, i.e. the ministers of Word and Sacrament. Hence ministry and minister, although distinguished, should not be separated. But CA5 ignores the 'personal' factor and emphasizes the content and function of God's ministry.
- 2.2 Despite the Latin title ('De Ministerio Ecclesiastico'), CA5 does not spell out the ecclesial conditions of the divine Office of the Ministry. Rather, CA5, with its cluster of Office, Word, Spirit, and faith, forms the background for CA7 and 14. Similarly, the 'purely taught' of CA7 forms the indispensable presupposition for the rite vocatus of CA14; and the existence of an ecclesiastical office based on an orderly call is a presupposition for all order in the Church (CA15).

- 3.1 CA7 spells out the essentials of the divine ministry in the church, that is, it indicates the ecclesiological sine qua non of the ministry: to preach the Gospel in its **purity**, and to administer the Sacraments **rightly**. The presupposition is: the Office depends on the **Word**; the church depends on the **Office**.
- 3.2 The ecclesiological limitations set in **CA7** are completed in **CA14**, which deals with the *ordo ecclesiasticus*, that is, with what the **CA** teaches concerning the 'officers' of the divine office. The additional limitations are that the holder of the office must teach, preach, and administer the sacraments *publice*, and he must be **rite vocatus**. These two phrases specify the office in 'personal' terms.

Note: (1) *publice* means

- (a) in public, with legal authority;
  - (b) officially, not privately;
  - (c) with doctrinal liability;
  - (d) to all, for God wants all to be saved.
- (2) **rite vocatus** implies and includes ordination (see below, B3.1).
- (3) **CA14** uses **docent**, and is located in the doctrinal, not the 'abuse' articles. It is a dogmatic statement.
- (4) **CA14** uses **debeat/soll** (cf. **CA6**). What **CA14** teaches is a 'must', not an option.

**B. The Question:**

Can the functions of the Office of the Ministry properly be given to a layman? In seeking to answer the question, the following theses should be confirmed or demolished:

It is not appropriate:

- 1) to separate Word and Sacrament;
- 2) to separate the power of order and the power of jurisdiction;
- 3) to separate call and ordination.

**Discussion:**

1. It is not appropriate to separate Word and Sacrament.  
The essentials of the ministry which God has instituted are the Gospel AND the Sacraments. Elimination of the Sacraments means the destruction of the divine ministry and finally loss of the Gospel itself. The preaching of the Gospel opens the door to the right use of the Sacraments, and the use of the Sacraments sets the seal on the faithful reception of the Gospel as God's saving message. Sasse: 'The church keeps the Gospel only if it constantly proclaims it in the administration of the means of grace'.
2. It is not appropriate to separate the power of order and the power of jurisdiction. Both 'powers' belong to the one office of the ministry, **Ap. 14.13**; **SA Tract. 60**. If a man is given the one 'power' it is inappropriate to withhold from him the other.  
According to the Gospel, or, as they say, by divine right, there belongs to the bishops as bishops, that is, to those to whom has been committed the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, no jurisdiction except to forgive sins, to judge doctrine, to reject doctrines

contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the church wicked men, whose wickedness is known, and this without human force, simply by the Word (CA28.21).

3. It is not appropriate to separate call and ordination:

3.1 **Rite vocatus** implies and includes ordination:

3.1.1 In reply to Eck's charges, the Lutherans insisted that they do not admit laymen to the task of publicly and responsibly preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.

3.1.2 The Confessions use 'call', 'elect', and ordain' to describe a complete process. Sometimes the words are used alternately, sometimes **pars pro toto**. cf. **SA Tract.** 24 (German); 67; 70; 72.

3.1.3 The **Confutatio pontificia** accepted CA14 in principle. What the **Confutatio** insisted on was ordination by a bishop. That CA14 implied ordination is indicated by **Ap** 14.24: '... as long as we use canonical ordination'.

3.1.4 **Ap** 13.11, 12 relates ministry and ordination by using the term **ordo** for both.

3.2 **SA III**, 10 takes for granted that those who are called to the office of the holy ministry will be ordained (111.10, 1 & 3) - either by existing bishops or, failing that, by ordained pastors of the evangelical churches. But whether by bishop or pastor, it is not debated that preachers should be ordained. The disorder occasioned by a pastor receiving a call without subsequent ordination is caused by unworthy bishops; it is not the normal situation.

3.3 **Theses of Agreement (TA)** VI.7, 8 seems, at first sight, to make the call primary, and ordination secondary. But **TA VI.7** and 8 should be taken together. There is an important 'public' aspect to ordination which the call alone does not have. **TA VI.8** says that through ordination the church:

- a) receives the one-who-has-accepted-the-call as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ;
- b) publicly declares him to be a minister of the NT;
- c) ratifies and publicly acknowledges his call;
- d) invokes, by laying on of hands, the blessing of the Lord.

3.4 Hence **TA VI.7, 8** clearly takes call and ordination as two parts of the one action. The man to be ordained should have received and accepted a call; the man who has received and accepted a call should have that call publicly 'ratified' (!) by ordination, and should publicly be declared to be a minister of the NT.

3.5 The LCA, together with all Lutheran churches, has always stated in its rubrics that the candidate should be ordained by an ordained pastor. The call comes from the church; ordination is by an ordained pastor. There is thus an aspect of 'apostolic succession' (in the Lutheran sense) involved in ordination which is not inherent in the call as such.

C. Conclusions:

1. The logical, consistent thing to do is to ordain those laymen who, because of special circumstances, have to be entrusted with the ministry of Word and Sacraments. This was the advice of a faculty committee of Concordia, St. Louis, when asked to respond to our question (in 1972?). The advantage of such an action is that it maintains confessional consistency, and is not doctrinally doubtful. The disadvantage is that it could become administratively messy, and lead to 'grades' in the clergy.
2. The neater, easier action is to commission (not call and ordain) or authorize laymen to perform ALL the functions of the office of the ministry, that is, of order and of jurisdiction. However, the 'purely taught' of CA 7 requires that such laymen are able to 'purely teach' the Gospel, that is, they must be well-trained in the Word and doctrine (which is why we normally have six years of seminary training!).

**Tractatus 67** is often appealed to support such action. It should, however, be noted that **Tractatus 67**, strictly speaking, only mentions absolution by a layman, and also baptism (quoting Augustine). It does not speak of preaching and administering the Lord's Supper. Overall, the Confessions assume that the one who ministers in Word and Sacrament will be ordained, that is, elected, called, and ordained (cf CA 24.34 [German]; FC SD 7.32). The real debate was not: to ordain or not to ordain, but: who can ordain? Must it be a bishop, or can an evangelical pastor ordain?

3. The least acceptable practice is to permit a man to preach the Gospel, but not to administer the Sacraments; or to administer the Sacraments, but not to preach the Gospel; or to exercise the power of order but not the power of jurisdiction, or vice versa; or to formally call him to the full ministry of Word and Sacrament, and not to ordain him.

## PART 2

What has the LCA said and done?

4. In 1966 the Constituting Convention of the LCA adopted a statement on the use of lay-evangelists (DSOT D2). It concluded:
 

If they [lay evangelists] are to preach publicly in the church or administer the Sacraments, they should be 'rightly called' (*rite vocatus*), i.e. be examined, ordained, and called. They would then become pastors in the full sense of the word. In this way a second class of preachers in the church, a *clerus minor*, is avoided.
5. In 1974 the CTICR defined 'pastor' as one who 'has received the church's commission and authorization to the office of the public ministry'. This commission and authorization is given by the rite of ordination and by call (DSTO D1).

**Comment** The CTICR used the language of commission and authorization: these are conveyed to the pastor by means of ordination. In another context, but also in 1974, the CTICR described ordination as the ecclesiastical rite of setting apart, authorizing, and vesting with authority and responsibility, qualified persons. There is no mention of the granting of a commission (DSTO D1).

The TA VI,8 (1950) uses neither commission nor authorization when it speaks of ordination. The language it uses is: 'qualified person ... called ... received by the church . . publicly declared to be a minister ... call ratified and publicly acknowledged'.

6. In 1977 the CTICR ruled that 'all pastors whose names are on the official Roll of Pastors ... are entitled to be called "Pastor"' (DSTO D2).

Comment The By Laws of the LCA (V B,6) read:

Inclusion in the official Roll of Pastors does not determine the financial obligation of the Church towards such pastors in respect of salary, long service leave, Provident Fund, and Pension Fund benefits.

The LCA has said what inclusion on the Roll of Pastors does not mean. Have we ever said what it does mean?

7. In 1978 the GCC adopted a CTICR statement on the relationship between the auxiliary offices in the church and the office of the public ministry (DSTO D 3,4).

After noting that the nature of the office of one who is not ordained and yet has been entrusted with the ministry of word and sacrament 'is at present unclear' [!], the statement declares that authority could be conferred on such a person in one of three ways:

1. call and ordination to a limited ministry;
2. commissioning to a limited ministry;
3. call or appointment to a limited ministry, without ordination or commissioning.

The CTICR expressed the judgment that only #1 or #2 are theologically acceptable. However, it recommended:

that because of the differences that lie in the area of church practice between the pastoral ministry ... and the nature and functions of the office under discussion, and in order to avoid confusion and possible malpractice ... ordination be reserved for the former and that authorization to the latter be by commissioning.

Comment In 1974 the CTICR said that ordination gave to the pastor the commission and authorization of the church. in 1978 the CTICR said that *ordination* authorised a pastor, and *commissioning* authorised a layman.

8. Also in 1978 General Synod adopted a CTICR statement on Parish Workers (DSTO D6). This statement carefully distinguished between 'Pastor' and 'Parish Worker;' it granted that a parish worker could be commissioned to 'publicly preach or administer the sacraments;' but it spoke of a 'limited' word-and-sacrament ministry for the parish worker. It noted that a parish worker 'may be registered as an authorised Celebrant of Marriage, in an area of particular need'.

Comment In 1978 the General Synod adopted a statement which contradicted the 1966 statement of the Constituting Convention (cf A1 above). In 1966 the LCA said that laymen should be authorised for word-and-sacrament ministry by means of ordination, lest we end up with 'a second class of preachers in the church, a *clerus minor*.' In 1978 the LCA said that the same

people should be authorised for the same ministry by means of commissioning. No instructions were given as to how we then avoid a *clerus minor* in the church.

Between 1974 and 1978 the meaning of 'commission' shifted from that which is conferred at ordination (1974) to an act which parallels ordination inasmuch as it, too, authorizes for word-and sacrament ministry (1978).

It seems that in post-1978 usage, the difference between *ordaining* and *commissioning* is not one of authority: both the ordained and commissioned persons are given word-and-sacrament authority. The difference lies in the space and time limitations which are placed on that authority.

The CTICR argued (in 1978) that a further difference between the two 'offices' is that the pastor has 'authority to be regarded as, and to speak as, a pastor of the Church, not simply as pastor of a congregation'. And it added: 'Ordination ... is normally to a lifelong vocation in the Church'.

In my judgment, these additional differences do not pertain to the essence of a Lutheran theology of ordination. The essence is well expressed by the CTICR, writing in 1974:

Ordination is the Church's setting apart, authorizing and vesting with authority and responsibility in the name of Jesus Christ and His Church qualified persons for the office of the public ministry. It is the Church's public acknowledgment that a person is *rite vocatus* (AC XIV). 'Ordination, though not a Sacrament, is the solemn ecclesiastical rite in which a duly qualified person (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9), having accepted a call by a congregation or the Church, is received by the Church as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1; Titus 1:5) and publicly declared to be a minister of the New Testament, his call thereby being ratified and publicly acknowledged and the blessing of the Lord is invoked upon him with the laying on of hands.'

(Theses of Agreement, VI.8).

It should be noted that the statement says nothing either way about the setting of time and/or space limitations on the ministry for which one is authorised by ordination.

### PART 3

What should the LCA do in the future?

I am not convinced that the CTICR acted wisely in trying to teach the church that there is one office of the public ministry of word and sacrament, but two ways of being authorised for it: by ordaining and by commissioning. Since the authority which the rites convey is essentially the same, we run the risk of playing semantic games when we try to distinguish between 'ordain' and 'commission'.

I urge, earnestly, that we teach and act in such a way that all members of the LCA think: ordain = authority to minister publicly with word and sacrament.

Instead of trying to inject the word 'commissioning' with some kind of meaning which distinguishes it from 'ordaining', I suggest we are better off expanding our understanding of what ordination implies and does not imply. We already have in the LCA ordained pastors who are restricted in their ministry of word and sacrament. We have begun to bite the 'limitations' bullet; we should continue to do so.

#### Proposition 1

*Whenever a situation calls for a ministry of word and sacraments, this ministry should be performed by a person who has been regularly called and ordained to the public office.*

#### Implications

- a. Work among those who are already Christians requires the services of an ordained person.
- b. No unordained person should be entrusted with the ministry of word and sacrament.
- c. If circumstances require that a lay person should exercise a ministry of word and sacrament, then that person should be properly called and ordained.

#### Proposition 2

*When a situation calls for the ordination of a person who has not completed an approved seminary course, the ordination should take place only upon the recommendation of the council of Presidents and with the assent of the relevant District Synod.*

#### Implications

- a. The Council of Presidents is the only body which can present a non-seminary trained candidate for ordination. Thus the Council of Presidents is responsible for ensuring that the candidate meets all the requirements set down in 1 Timothy 3, and that the candidate makes a public commitment to continue to make himself 'apt to teach'.
- b. A pastor whom the church brings to ordination by the route outlined in #2a above is fully a pastor, exercising the *potestas ordinis* and *potestas iurisdictionis*. This holds true even if the church treats the pastor differently in terms of financial and other entitlements, and even if the church places limitations on the scope and duration of his work.

#### Proposition 3

*While ordination is for life, one's continued place on the Roll of Pastors is determined by the possession of a valid Call, and by any other criteria established by the church from time to time.*

#### Implications

- a. Men who are ordained in order to meet a special need will normally be given a time-limited Call (such as Presidents and Executive officers receive). Thus, unless the pastor receives another Call, his removal from the Roll of Pastors is a matter of course; it carries no negative connotations.

- b. Emeriti should have a Call if they are to remain on the Roll of Pastors. Either we change our current practice, and make the first Call a call from the whole church to service in and to the whole church, or, when a pastor retires and thus relinquishes his current Call, the Council of Presidents issues him a Call to serve the church as a pastor-at-large. An emeritus without a Call should not be on the Roll of Pastors.

#### Proposition 4

*The office of evangelist exists to meet situations which primarily require a ministry of proclamation of the Word, with a view to convicting people of sin and bringing them to faith in Christ.*

#### Implications

- a. Evangelists work among those who are not Christian (contrast #1a above).
- b. While an ordained pastor may and even should do all the work of an evangelist, an evangelist does not do all the work of a pastor, that is, exercise the *potestas ordinis* and *potestas iurisdictionis*.
- c. In relation to the evangelist, the pastor has an episcopal role, since the evangelist is an extension of the pastor. Every evangelist needs a pastor to exercise *episcopate*, to administer baptism periodically and in due course to preside over the Eucharist, as the word of the Lord grows in the community in which the evangelist is at work.
- d. Thus, as the character of the community changes, the 'ministry' needs change. Ministry to a non-Christian community requires the services of an evangelist(s) and an itinerant pastor/bishop. As Christian communities are formed, a word-and-sacrament ministry (ie a pastor) is needed more, and an evangelist is (perhaps) needed less. So either the evangelist is ordained, or a pastor is moved more permanently into the community.

#### Comments

- i. Early in its life the LCA recognized the validity of, and the need for, the office of evangelist (cf DSTO, D2).
- ii In Papua New Guinea, evangelists had three major tasks:
  1. to model the gospel in their lives in the community.
  2. to prepare candidates for baptism.
  3. to conduct worship services known as 'lotu bilong ol haiden' = Worship for the Heathen.
- iii The existence of the office of evangelist does not imply a separation of word and sacrament - unless the evangelist is removed from the *episcopate* of the pastor.

**Proposed Overture to the next Synodical Convention**

- WHEREAS Lutheran Church–Canada in convention directed the Board for Higher Education to bring recommendations to the 2002 Synodical convention concerning the establishment and implementation of a special needs ministry of Word and Sacrament; and
- WHEREAS district presidents may identify pastoral needs which arise from extraordinary situations such as the following:
- a) where a Lutheran Christian community or mission opportunity exists in a geographically remote area,
  - b) where a Lutheran Christian community or a mission opportunity exists which for cultural or linguistic reasons cannot be served by an already existing LCC pastor,
  - c) where, in conjunction with the aforementioned criteria, financial or economic conditions do not permit the provision of essential services in a traditional manner, and
  - d) where pastoral ministry cannot be provided from other sources; therefore be it
- RESOLVED that Lutheran Church–Canada provide for the certification, ordination, and installation of Pastors with Alternate Training; and be it further
- RESOLVED that the procedure for implementing this route to ordination include, but not be limited to the following considerations:
- a) That potential Pastors with Alternate Training (PATs) be identified by the local community, after consultation with the district president and mission director, and
  - b) That the Council of Presidents, in consultation with the seminaries of our Synod, supervise all aspects of the preparation, training, and certification of Pastors with Alternate Training (PATs); and
  - c) That Pastors with Alternate Training (PATs) will ordinarily not be available for call to other parishes and calling entities of the Synod; and be it further
- RESOLVED that the Council of Presidents be authorized to develop and approve interim procedures and regulations so that the provision for Pastors with Alternate Training can be implemented as soon as possible, and also bring to the 2005 convention such proposed amendments to the bylaws of the Synod that might be necessary; and be it finally
- RESOLVED that we implore God’s blessings upon these efforts to make Word and Sacrament ministry available to those in special situations, while upholding Biblical and Confessional teachings concerning the Office of the Holy Ministry.