

PROPOSITIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CALL OF PUBLIC SERVANTS OF THE WORD,
PREPARED FOR STUDY AT THE CLC PASTORAL CONFERENCE
June 20-22, 1989

1] WE RIGHTLY SPEAK OF A DIVINE CALL, SINCE SERVANTS OF THE WORD ARE CALLED BY GOD TO SERVE HIS CHURCH.

- Ephesians 4: 11-12 And He Himself (Christ) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- Acts 26: 16-17 Jesus to Paul: "I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you."
- Romans 10: 14-15 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

2] SINCE THE LORD'S ASCENSION, GOD CALLS MEDIATELY THROUGH THOSE TO WHOM HE HAS ENTRUSTED THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM, THAT IS, THROUGH BELIEVERS.

- Acts 20:28 Paul to the elders of Ephesus: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- Acts 6: 3-5 The twelve: "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, etc.
- Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
- Smalcald Articles For wherever the Church is, there is the authority (command) to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the Church, which no human power can wrest from the Church, as Paul also testifies to the Ephesians (4:8) when he says: "He ascended, He gave gifts to men." And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Church pastors and teachers, and adds that such are given for the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Hence, wherever there is a true Church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. Just as in a case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes the minister and pastor of another; as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after Baptism then absolved the baptizer. (Paragraph #67, Concordia Triglotta, p. 523)

3] A. THE QUALITIES THAT ARE TO DETERMINE A MAN'S FITNESS FOR THE PASTORAL MINISTRY ARE SET FORTH EXTENSIVELY IN GOD'S WORD.

1 Timothy 3: 2-7

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1: 5-9

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you -- if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

1 Peter 5: 1-4

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

B. THESE QUALITIES REMAIN A REQUIREMENT THROUGHOUT A CALLED PASTOR'S MINISTRY.

1 Corinthians 4: 1-2

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

4] A. A KEY QUALITY OF THE PASTORAL MINISTRY IS TO BE "APT TO TEACH," "ABLE TO TEACH."

Matthew 28: 18-20 Jesus: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be ... able to teach;

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

B. THE ABILITY TO TEACH REQUIRES NOT ONLY SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, BUT ALSO THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THAT TRUTH TO OTHERS.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

C. ONE'S ABILITY TO TEACH MAY BE IMPAIRED OR DESTROYED BY A FAILURE TO POSSESS THE OTHER QUALITIES SET FORTH IN I TIMOTHY 3 and TITUS 1.

5] ALTHOUGH THE PASTOR IS CALLED BY THE CONGREGATION AND IS THEREFORE A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, HE IS PRIMARILY BY VIRTUE OF HIS DIVINE CALL A SERVANT OF CHRIST. THEREFORE THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF THE WORD OF GOD MUST ALWAYS TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE WISHES AND DESIRES OF THE CONGREGATION. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CONGREGATION TO YIELD TO GOD'S WORD, AND TO RESPECT AND LOVE ITS PASTOR FOR HIS WORK'S SAKE. IN MATTERS NOT DECIDED BY GOD'S WORD THE PASTOR HAS NO MORE AUTHORITY THAN ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION.

Luke 10:16 Jesus: "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

1 Thessalonians
5: 12-13 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

1 Corinthians 4: 1-2 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 22: 25-26 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you."

Matthew 23:8 One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

Brief Statement #32 Although the office of the ministry is a divine ordinance, it possesses no other power than the power of the Word of God, 1 Peter 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. ... 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.

- 6] A. WHEN IT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT THE PASTOR DOES NOT PROPERLY FULFILL THE DUTIES OF HIS OFFICE, THE CONGREGATION HAS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT BUT THE DUTY TO TERMINATE THE CALL OF ITS PASTOR, SINCE THE WELFARE OF PRECIOUS SOULS IS AT STAKE. THIS DUTY IS INCUMBENT ON THE CALLING CONGREGATION BECAUSE GOD HAS GIVEN THE CONGREGATION THE AUTHORITY OF THE KEYS.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- B. THAT THE LORD HAS GIVEN THIS AUTHORITY TO THE CONGREGATION IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES AND QUOTATIONS:

Matthew 16: 18-19 Jesus to Peter: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18: 17-20 Jesus: "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heather and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in

heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

John 20: 21-23

Then Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Smalcald Articles

In 1 Cor. 3:6 Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers. (from Paragraph #11, Concordia Triglotta, p. 507)

As the supreme possessor of the Power of the Keys, the church is above its servants. Likewise ... the local congregation, because it ... has the priesthood, has the power to call and ordain servants of the church. There is here a close relationship between the authority to call ministers and the Power of the Keys, which is exercised through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. For if the power has originally been given to the church and if the preachers, in executing this power, are only servants and instruments of the church, it must be within the power and right of the church and of each congregation to appoint such servants, to keep watch especially over doctrine, to avoid them or dismiss ministers if they do not faithfully fulfill their office. ... Let us also note how much importance is attached to the responsibility of the believers because of their priesthood. Congregations have been known to put up with an incompetent or impious preacher or teacher for years because they did not know that the priesthood was theirs and that it was their duty and their prerogative to judge both the doctrine and the life of their public servants and to dismiss them from office when necessary. (From The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher, p. 50; CPH, 1964)

7] EXCEPT IN MANIFEST CASES OF FALSE TEACHING OR AN IMMORAL LIFE, A CONGREGATION SHOULD NEVER MOVE IN HASTE IN TERMINATING ITS PASTOR'S CALL.

1 Corinthians 16:14

Let all that you do be done with love.

Apology of the
Augsburg Confession

Paul commands that there should be love in the Church in order that it may preserve concord, bear with the harsher manners of brethren as there is need, overlook certain less serious mistakes, lest the Church fly apart into various schisms, and enmities and factions and heresies arise from the schisms.

For concord must necessarily be rent asunder whenever either the bishops impose (without cause) upon the people heavier burdens, or have no respect to weakness in the people. And dissensions arise when the people judge too severely (quickly censure and criticize) concerning the conduct (walk and life) of teachers (bishops or preachers),

or despise the teachers because of certain less serious faults; for then both another kind of doctrine and other teachers are sought after. On the other hand, perfection, that is, the integrity of the Church is preserved, when the strong bear with the weak, when the people take in good part some faults in the conduct of their teachers (have patience also with their preachers), when the bishops make some allowances for the weakness of the people (know how to exercise forbearance to the people, according the circumstances, with respect to all kinds of weaknesses and faults). Of these precepts of equity the books of all the wise are full, namely, that in everyday life we should make many allowances mutually for the sake of common tranquility. (from Art. III, paragraphs #112, #113, #114, Concordia Triglotta, p. 185)

CLC Constitution
1985

Art. IX, A. In keeping with the directives of God's Word and in accord with the love and concern they owe one another (1 Corinthians 12:25) all members of congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Confession are to exercise due brotherly regard for one another that all may be preserved in the Truth and in the sanctification of the Gospel according to the will of God (Matthew 18: 15-18; Galatians 6: 1-4; Acts 20: 28-30; 2 Tim. 4: 3-4).

Art. IX, D. The official activities of the president and conference visitor shall ordinarily be limited to the members of the preaching and teaching ministry. The president and conference visitor may also serve as consultants to a congregation but only when such a request is made by the congregation with the knowledge of the pastor. A congregation shall first seek the counsel of the conference visitor before requesting it of the president. If a congregation or any member of a congregation should be offended by the doctrine or personal life of their pastor, the conference visitor or the president shall not be consulted until the congregation or member has admonished the pastor.

CLC Model
Constitution

Art. IX. No one shall bring before the voters' assembly a complaint against the pastor, teacher, or any other member unless admonition has been carried out in a Christian manner according to Matthew 18: 15-20.

- 8] IF A CONGREGATION TERMINATES A CALL WITHOUT PROPER SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS, THE ACTION OF THE CONGREGATION STANDS. HOWEVER, THE CONGREGATION IS ANSWERABLE TO GOD AND TO THE CONGREGATIONS WITH WHICH IT IS IN FELLOWSHIP. THE ACTION OF THE CONGREGATION MAY BE CHALLENGED, BUT THE TERMINATION OF THE CALL OF THE PASTOR STANDS. EVEN IF THE APPEAL FINDS FOR THE PASTOR, THE PASTOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO THAT CONGREGATION COULD ONLY BE REESTABLISHED BY ANOTHER CALL FROM THE SAME CONGREGATION.

Concerning Church
and Ministry

When the formal origin of synods as we know them is kept in mind, there will be no room for a situation where a synod invades and overrules a congregation in its exercise of Christian discipline. When a synod goes beyond the functions that have been assigned to it by the constituting

congregations, it oversteps its call and becomes a busybody in other men's matters. 1 Peter 4:15. (Thesis IV, p. 18)

- 9] AN ORGANIZED BODY OF CONGREGATIONS MAY ESTABLISH A CONSTITUTIONAL METHOD OF APPEAL, SINCE THAT IS A MATTER OF HUMAN ARRANGEMENT. YET IT CANNOT INFRINGE UPON THE AUTHORITY OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS.

ADDENDA

Martin Luther

In this view of the ministry, the so-called "indelible character" vanishes and perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. A minister may be deposed if he proves unfaithful. On the other hand he is to be permitted in the ministry as long as he is competent and has the favor of the church as a whole, just as in civil matters any administrator is treated as an equal among his brethren. In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. (Luther's Works, Vol. 40, pp. 35-36)

Martin Luther

Because we are all priests of equal standing, no one must push himself forward and take it upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that for which we all have equal authority. For no one dare take upon himself what is common to all without the authority of consent of the community. And should it happen that a person chosen for such office were deposed for abuse of trust, he would then be exactly what he was before. Therefore, a priest in Christendom is nothing else but an officeholder. As long as he holds office he takes precedence; where he is deposed, he is a peasant or townsman like anybody else. Indeed, a priest is never a priest when he is deposed. But now the Romanists have invented character indelebiles and say that a deposed priest is nevertheless something different from a mere layman. They hold the illusion that a priest can never be anything other than a priest, or ever become a layman. All this is just contrived talk, and human regulation. (Luther's Works, Vol. 44, p. 129)

See also Luther's Works, Vol. 39, pp. 305-314.

Prepared for the CLC Pastoral Conference by:
Prof. L.W. Schierenbeck
Pastor David Lau

