

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION ON STAFF MINISTRY

A joint committee, consisting of members from the Conference of Presidents, the Board for Parish Services and the Board for Worker Training was formed in the spring of 1990 to follow up on previous studies regarding staff ministry in the WELS. This is that report with recommendation, proposed for consideration and adoption at the 1991 synodical convention. The report provides 1) a recommendation regarding the role of staff ministry in the WELS, 2) a description of such ministry, and 3) a planned program of preparation for such ministry.

I. THE ROLE OF STAFF MINISTRY IN THE WELS

A. Introduction and Rationale with Recommendation

Since a 1983 synod convention resolution urging the study of "additional forms of ministry," the Conference of Presidents, the Board for Parish Services and the Board for Worker Training have each appointed committees addressed to this subject. Scripture study, research on parish ministry in our synod and brotherly dialogue have led to a joint recommendation that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod authorize and provide worker training for offices of ministry in the congregation in addition to those of pastor and teacher. Such "staff ministry" positions as Minister of Evangelism, Family and Youth Minister, Deaconess, or Minister of Administration would serve congregations in public ministry under the spiritual direction of the pastor.

A core curriculum in theology parallel to that provided the synod's teachers, focused curricula for specific areas of ministry and a parish internship will present baccalaureate-degree graduates for assignment. Like the current teacher education program, this program for staff ministry will not substitute for the regular pastor training track. The core curriculum in theology, together with recognized spiritual maturity, gifts, training and experience will be the basis for synodically certifying older or non-traditional candidates for staff ministry.

The variety of staff ministry positions our congregations may establish is not prescribed. Staff ministers may be called for positions which combine two or more specific areas of work in the congregation. Continuing education will be expected to supplement the training in theology and practical ministry.

Whether full-time or part-time, staff ministers are called and compensated by congregations. Their title, normally, is MINISTER OF _____ (the completion of that title indicating the scope of their ministry). They will be so listed in the synod's YEARBOOK.

B. Biblical Considerations

1. Our Lord Jesus instituted MINISTRY as service for him and making disciples in his world. The essence and means of that ministry is the gospel, particularly as it is proclaimed in Word and administered in the sacraments. (Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-23. See also Article V of the Augsburg Confession.)

2. This ministry belongs to every Christian as part of the "Universal Priesthood of Believers" (I Peter 2:9). This one ministry is also the charter of Christ's Church - the Holy Spirit's gathering of believers for mutual edification and common mission (Matthew 16:16-19 and 18:15-20; I Corinthians 12:1-27).

3. The "public" exercise of ministry in the church (public - in the name of and on behalf of the church) is demonstrated by the New Testament in a variety of "offices" of ministry, all conferred by the "call" of the church. (Romans 10:14-15; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Acts 13:1-3; etc. See also Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession.)

4. Such public ministry is both humble service (Luke 22:25-26) and responsible leadership (Hebrews 13:17). Those whom the Lord has called into public ministry through the church are his gifts, for the purpose of building up his Church. (Ephesians 4:11-13).
5. The New Testament neither institutes one form of public ministry nor prescribes the number and nature of forms which public ministry may take. Such titles as overseer, elder, deacon (and deaconess), pastor, teacher, evangelists and others demonstrate New Testament freedom and flexibility. (Note the Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article III: "That chapters and cloisters, which were formerly founded with the good intention to educate learned men and chaste women, ought again to be turned to such use, in order that pastors, preachers and other ministers of the churches may be had." Cf. also "Theses on the Church and Ministry" in *Doctrinal Statements of the WELS*, 1970.)
6. While all forms of public ministry derive their authority from the gospel, not every office of ministry in the New Testament was directly involved in teaching the Word and administering the sacraments (I Timothy 5:17). Acts 6:1-6 is an example which suggests further that the church created forms of public ministry to address its needs and opportunities. Our own churchmen have also consistently emphasized that the Gospel creates its own forms (cf. "Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of its Ministry, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, April 1962, a translation of an essay by Prof. August Pieper, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, October 1929).
7. Scripture does not distinguish forms or offices of ministry by hierarchical rank, but rather by scope of responsibility. "Overseer" (I Timothy 3:1) indicates a broad scope of ministry, including aptitude for teaching the Word, and probably corresponds to the pastoral office in our church today. The office of deacon (I Timothy 3:8) suggests a more limited scope of service. I Timothy 5:17 suggests a distinction for "those (elders) whose work is preaching and teaching" without demeaning the ministry of elders whose work was apparently more general in nature. (Note how St. Paul carefully describes the scope of his ministry in Galatians 2:7, I Corinthians 1:17, and II Corinthians 2:10.) The church which calls people to public ministry establishes the scope and nature of that ministry, giving particular heed to spiritual gifts. (Acts 6:3; Romans 12:3-8).
8. While the qualifications for all who would serve in public ministry include spiritual wisdom and maturity as well as irreproachable Christian character (I Timothy 3:1-15; Acts 6:3), those called to serve in the public preaching and teaching of the Word must be especially well trained and grounded in Scripture (II Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:9).
9. Women may serve in forms of public ministry whose scope and nature reflect the biblical principle that they not teach or have authority over a man. (I Timothy 2:12-14)
10. While the church has the Christian freedom to establish forms of public ministry in response to specific needs, it will do so within the biblical principles of decency and order (I Corinthians 14:40) and expediency and constructiveness (I Corinthians 10:23; II Corinthians 8:20-21).

C. Practical Considerations

1. Congregations of our synod have already created such "staff ministry" positions as Minister of Evangelism and Youth, Minister of Administration, Family Life Minister and Director of Christian Education. Decency and order require some way of recognizing these offices, certifying candidates and assisting congregations in the theological training of those who are called to such offices.

2. The synod itself has created a variety of ministry offices to meet needs and opportunities of contemporary ministry, from administrators and giving counselors to mission counselors and evangelists. To apply our theology of church and ministry on the parish level in the same way as on the synodical level is no radical innovation.
3. Increasing expectations of parish pastors and specialized emphases in the congregation (e.g. counseling, administrative leadership, evangelism, family ministry, adult Christian education, singles ministry) have led both church councils and district presidents to recommend additional ministry staff.
4. However, at a time when congregations are calling a second and third pastor and home mission expansion is a top priority, when retirements and resignations are increasing in number, the projected number of candidates for the pastoral ministry over the next decade falls considerably short of demand.
5. Congregations may not require the breadth and depth of seminary training in a second or third called worker. Staff ministry can allow the pastor to provide consistency in the pulpit and focused pastoral leadership while specialized areas of ministry are developed by a staff minister.
6. Ministry by members, the biblical model and practical key for expanding the church's outreach and nurture, requires training and administration seldom possible without adequate ministry staff to direct the effort.
7. A number of mature, dedicated members of our churches have inquired about a "second career" in ministry but have been intimidated by the rigorous training of a full seminary curriculum. Experienced Lutheran teachers may have the gifts and desire to serve in specific forms of staff ministry. An assumption is that there will be young people in our synod, as in other church bodies, who want to prepare for ministry other than the pulpit or classroom.
8. The synod's "Mission - Vision 2000+," adopted in 1989, calls for expanded ministry in existing congregations as well as dramatic growth in home mission openings. In addition to increased numbers of pastor and teacher candidates, the mission-vision statement specifically calls for the study of "recruiting, training, certification and calling of staff workers other than pastors and teachers."
9. As we clarify biblical principles on the role and relationship of men and women for this generation, it is expedient to provide opportunities for women to serve in biblically appropriate ministries other than Lutheran elementary school teacher. The office of deaconess has both Lutheran history and contemporary applicability.
10. Responses to a survey distributed to pastors, teachers and lay delegates at 1990 district conventions indicate a fairly high degree of acceptance and interest for staff ministry. Six-hundred-thirty-eight responded that WELS congregations "should strongly consider a staff minister instead of a second pastor" in the event of a shortage of pastoral candidates. 398 said congregations "should strongly consider a staff minister instead of a third pastor." Only 181 indicated that congregations "should not consider staff ministry-an option." Five-hundred-seventy-eight thought their congregations "would consider such staff ministry in long-range planning;" and 256 of these indicated that their congregation "might call a staff minister within the next six years," whether part-time or full-time.

D. Terminology

Conventional usage of such terms as ministry, public ministry and lay ministry have not always served to distinguish what Scripture teaches.

There is only one ministry Christ established - service for him centered in the gospel. That one ministry is expressed in two ways. Personal ministry is that which every Christian has as a member of the Universal Priesthood of Believers. It is his or her life of sanctification, stewardship and witness.. in home, work and community... service to brothers and sisters in Christ as well as to those as yet without faith in Christ. Public ministry or representative ministry is that which is done in the name of and at the call of the church. According to spiritual gifts and spiritual maturity, in answer to needs and opportunities, the church elects or appoints from its midst those who will carry out aspects of its ministry in its behalf.

Within public ministry two categories can be identified. Member Ministry is volunteer in nature and typically limited as to scope and time. The church calls members, whether by election or appointment, to serve in its name as Sunday school teachers, evangelists, elders, officers and any number of other ministry roles and tasks. The local congregation assures (informally "certifies") that the people it calls to these forms of ministry are qualified to serve.

Offices of Ministry are typically a person's (primary) vocation and therefore compensated. The scope of the office is determined by the congregation's call, from the broad and general responsibilities of pastor to specific responsibilities identified as to nature (e.g. third grade, youth, families, the institutionalized, singles, women). Such "offices of ministry" are normally certified by the synod, which assures that candidates for these offices of ministry are qualified for the work to which they are called.

II. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF MINISTRY

Staff ministry is a form of public ministry, specific in scope, to which a certified candidate receives a formal call.

A. Relationship of Staff Ministry to Public Ministry Regarding Form, Scope, Certification, and Call

1. Public Ministry

Personal ministry is what every Christian does every day, openly and in private, as a priest of God. Public ministry is performed only by those whom God calls from among his believers to serve those believers. So, in reference to ministry, public means service to other Christians at their request. This service may be carried out openly or in private. God works through the invitation of Christians to call people into public ministry. Hence, the term, divine call.

2. Form

Forms of public ministry have often been called offices. Thus, the office of pastor, the office of teacher. But since the word office has also been used in a general way to refer to the whole of public ministry, it may be better to use the word form when speaking of a specific type of service in the office of public ministry.

3. Scope

The scope of a call refers to its definition and limitations within a form. Thus within the form of the pastoral ministry we have traditionally identified parish pastor, professor, missionary, counselor, and administrator. Within the form of the teaching ministry we have identified elementary teacher, secondary teacher, professor, administrator and counselor. We have usually defined the form of ministry by our training program and certification of candidates. But the scope of ministry within the forms is defined by the calling body.

4. Certification

Certification is a brotherly agreement to require certain spiritual qualifications and essential training for a particular form of public ministry. We certify people as pastors or teachers, but do not certify them for the various scopes of ministry they may serve within those forms. Certification qualifies a candidate for service within the church body.

5. Formal Call

No one may serve in any form of the public ministry without a divine call. That call is the invitation of fellow Christians to serve them. This divine call may be extended in a formal or less formal way. Many Christians serve the public ministry within their own congregation with an informal call. An informal call may be the voting assembly's election of an officer, or a board's appointment of a temporary position, or simply the request of the pastor to assist with Holy Communion. Although informal, all these are divine calls and the service rendered in response to them is public ministry. A formal call is an invitation by a gathering of Christians that is extended to a certified candidate by formal correspondence, allows significant time for consideration of a response, and initiates the ministry by a public rite of installation.

6. Staff

We use the word staff, then, to refer to a form of public ministry, like pastoral ministry or teaching ministry. The word staff has no reference to the temporary or permanent nature of the call, although a staff minister will usually receive a permanent call. Staff does not signify the full time or part time nature of a call, although a staff minister will often be called for full time service. Staff does not apply to the nature of the called minister's support, although staff ministers will often receive full salary and benefits from their calling body. These specifics of staff ministry calls will vary according to individual circumstances as they do with other forms of ministry.

B. Staff Ministry Positions

We are willing at the present time to identify four staff ministry positions for which we will require spiritual qualifications, formal training, certification and calling according to procedures accepted among our congregations. We have arrived at these positions and definitions by surveying present practice and anticipated needs in our congregations. We believe it is the Gospel itself which has produced this form of ministry.

1. Minister of Family and Youth

A minister of family and youth will serve to strengthen the Christian families within our congregations. Typically he will work to encourage parents to participate directly in the spiritual training of their children, to conduct daily Bible study and prayer in the home. He will teach families to support and minister to other families, to make use of the educational resources of the church, and develop an integrated ministry to young people. He will use the Word to teach concepts of Christian marriage, parental role relationships, and spiritual example. He will work first to prevent and then to heal divorce, abuse, neglect, impurity, materialism, and selfishness. He will develop and provide resources, make visits, encourage learning and worship, and coordinate his work with that of pastors and teachers under the direction of a congregational board or committee for family and youth ministry.

2. Minister of Evangelism

A minister of evangelism will lead every member of his congregation to comprehend the mission Christ gave him to share the Gospel with the world. He will educate, motivate and train members to reach out to others. He will work to make sure that the mission of outreach is reflected in the church's worship, education and stewardship programs. He will develop a strategy for the congregation to reach out to its community. He will work with the pastor and elders with visits on straying members. He will orient new members and provide evangelism resources to every member. He will coordinate his work with that of the pastor under the direction and review of a committee or board for evangelism in the congregation.

3. Minister of Administration

A minister of administration will serve as an executive officer for the organizational work of the congregation. He will prepare schedules and agendas for meetings, coordinate the work of boards and committees, ensure the proficiency of purchasing and record keeping, administer the maintenance of buildings and grounds, write and revise work descriptions, devise budgets and monitor performance, and serve as a catalyst for congregational planning. He will work under the direction of the officers of the congregation and in cooperation with other called workers.

4. Deaconess

The ministry of the deaconess is spiritual service to the women and youth of the congregation. A deaconess will work in the home, school and church to promote Bible study and Christian life. She may work with nursery and preschool programs, Sunday school, confirmation follow-up and youth ministries. She may participate in special ministries, mercy ministries, and ministry to unwed mothers, single mothers and widows. She may work in other ministries in cooperation with the pastors, teachers and other staff ministers.

5. Other Staff Positions

We have not included the positions minister of education and minister of music and worship because those ministries usually demand the qualifications and training which we presently give to the forms of pastoral and teaching ministry. Ministry of early childhood education has been referred to Dr. Martin Luther College for study and recommendation. Similarly, ministry of counseling has been referred to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for study and recommendation. No doubt the Gospel may prompt the development of other forms of staff ministry among us.

C. Relationships Among Staff Ministers

No form of public ministry encompasses all the work of ministry. This requires that congregations carefully define the scope of the call of each public worker. Especially important is the notation of what work is shared and what work is given solely to one minister. When congregations define the scope of their called ministers, they should note that by common agreement we train pastoral ministers for the broadest scope of ministry and for theological leadership. Teaching ministers are trained in theology and elementary education. Staff ministers will receive basic theological training and practical skills for one of the four positions in which they are certified. Calling congregations should define the scope of each minister's call by comparing their needs with each worker's training, aptitude and experience.

Parish ministry requires evangelical cooperation and communication among all called ministers. Regular attention in staff meetings to the Word of God and prayer motivates such cooperation. Since spiritual leadership, too, is a part of evangelical ministry, congregations will ask ministers with pastoral training and experience, to lead their staff. Congregations will put workers' care committees in place to monitor and mediate staff needs and relationships. It is in their own spiritual self interest that congregations require and underwrite ongoing education for all called workers.