

# The Ordained Minister

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[Points to Consider in Our Teaching and Practice]

The WELS 1993: The suggested new liturgy has dropped the term "ordained" from the announcement of forgiveness. No public discussion. It is assumed that ordination is not a crucial component of the Pastor's office. In 1992 the synod defeated and then passed the resolution allowing ordination of male teachers. No long doctrinal study or synod-wide searching of Scripture to see if we are violating God's Word. The practice of 2000 years is quickly discarded. To our shame, the reason for the switch is financial not doctrinal. We made a sudden doctrinal decision for tax advantages. We have shown that when it comes to financial advantage, thorough grounding in Scripture takes a back seat to immediate gain. Is it not ironic that "ordination" is removed from the public proclamation of forgiveness but added to increase the importance of the grade school teacher before the IRS. What chicanery is this? Ordination is unimportant unless we are pulling a fast one to avoid taxes. This is at least the public impression. This occurs at the very time there is public confusion over the very term "ministry." We are now cheerfully using terms such as staff ministry, lay ministry, the "Christian's Ministry". Any and every act (if it is some how connected with the outward church) is ministry. The women who teach our children are instructed about their "ministry" although we don't have women ministers. Even Pastors and their wives now speak about "our call," "our ministry," as if she indeed is "Frau Pastor." Extra Scriptural terms like "congregational call", "regularly called" are used frequently. Scriptural titles like "Elder" are used in ways against NT usage. Bishop and deacon NT terms are never or rarely used. What is ministry? What is ordination? Who has the ministry of the keys? If the statement is true, "the Gospel creates its own forms," surely Christians can do no less than thoroughly study the New Testament forms. What are these forms? Are they descriptive only of what the early church used or are they prescriptive, binding on Christians of all generations? If not binding should these forms not be imitated as closely as possible?

When addressing such questions, it is a great temptation to rail against "them" or "they". It is very easy to lambaste officials or officialdom. It makes for more gripping reading to impugn motives or attribute hidden plans to "them." (Didn't the noun "chicanery" and the negative reference to "financial gain" do this. If you haven't liked what has gone on in synod, these have you already thirsting for more. If you have supported these changes, they raised your hackles) These issues are too important to divide ourselves because of a paper's tone. If I take issue with the exegesis of certain passages, or debate certain practices, these were indeed practices and exegesis that I myself have supported and used. There is no royal or editorial "we" in this paper. It is the inclusive "we" of an essayist who includes himself in whatever weaknesses are pointed out. It is so very easy for anyone to fall into sloppy thinking, thoughtless use of words, a hurried treatment of subject matter.

## The "Ministry of the Keys"

As we have all learned, Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16:16 is the firm foundation of the Church. To this Church Jesus gives the authority to open or lock the gates of heaven. As Jesus says in this section "I will give you the keys" Matthew 16:19. It is really from this main reference that the use of the phrase "Ministry of the Keys" has arisen. It is also from this passage that the Roman church evolved the teaching that Christ's forgiving authority was granted to Peter and he in turn grants it to the one who follows him as head of the elders/bishops, i.e. each new pope. Others said the authority was vested not in Peter but in the Apostles /bishops (Episcopalians); others said the authority was granted to the apostle/elder (Presbyterians); still others maintain that this is the authority granted to Christians in local groups (Congregationalists). The power of the keys has been a center of controversy in the church for hundreds of years. This is the reality behind the title of this paper because one must look at history, heresy and Scripture. The term "ordained minister" is loaded with preconceptions.

We need to be clear now about the keys—Christ's unique authority to forgive. It is strikingly exhibited in Luke.

Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone." Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." (Luke 5:18-24)

Notice how Jesus' words struck his hearers as blasphemous. Yet even Jews forgave one another. Remember Peter asking Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother. Peter knew that he should forgive his brother when he trespassed against him (Matt. 18:29). For Peter knew, as a believing Jew as part of God's Old Testament people, he was a royal priest before God. He could announce God's forgiveness and proclaim God's goodness but he could not and would not dream of using the phrase "I forgive you" with someone who had not sinned against him. Jesus omitted the name of God. He simply said "Your sins are forgiven". In other words "I forgive you." This is what struck his hearers as blasphemous. Here I have already taken issue with an exegesis of a passage supported even by our confessions. For generations we have used II Peter 2:9 "but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" to support the teaching that Jesus gave the Keys not to a special class of priests but to the Church. This is not an accurate use of this passage. The reasons are as follows.

1 The Old Testament people of God were already a holy priesthood.

Ex. 19:6

a They could pray to God directly Dan. 9:19 (Daniel's prayer)

b They could forgive others when sinned against I Sam 25 (David, Abigail & Nabal)

c Bring spiritual sacrifices Ps 51:17

d They still needed the mediation of the human priesthood ordained of God.

The universal priesthood is portrayed as a new gift that Jesus gave to the church. In fact it was a continuing gift of God to His people.

2 The context of the Peter passage shows that its intent is to reassure and bring joy to the new believers. We are truly God's own people just as Israel was of old. Their titles and privileges are now ours. There is no discussion here of the ministry of the keys and the authority of forgiveness. To take a passage out of its context and use it to prove a different point is never good exegesis.

3 Finally, we often make the point from this passage that Christians no longer need a human priest. Not only is that a careless statement it borders on blasphemous. We do still need a human priest. The Old Testament believers were a holy priesthood but still needed the mediation the Aaronic priesthood. We too are holy priests but we still need the mediation the Melchizedekian priesthood. The order that has but one member, our great priest Jesus. It is our great high priest's authority to forgive that is illustrated in Luke.

In the event recorded in Luke, Jesus did more. He forgave a man his sins whom he had just met. Jesus exhibited that sins against God were sins against Him. He could forgive them. This is the peculiar authority of the Church. This is the ministry of the keys—to forgive sins against God as if they were sins against you. The ministry of the Keys is the pronouncement, "I forgive your sins." It is Christ speaking.

In all these functions the minister does not act in his own name, but, as by the authority, so also in the name of Christ; all the effect therefore, that follows the Word preached and the Sacraments administered by him proceeds not from him but from God. Thus he has also according to Matt. 16:19; John 2:23, the right to forgive the sins of the penitent, and retain those of the impenitent; and he upon whom this right is exercised must recognize in this act not a mere announcement, but can be sure of this, that thereby his sins are really forgiven or retained.<sup>1</sup>

Recall Luther's explanation of the keys: It is the special power and right of the Church given by Christ to his church on earth. How many now have the feeling that it should really be worded "special power and right of the Christian given by Christ to each Christian on earth?" Is this what our teaching and practice has become? No where in the New Testament is the individual Christian given the right of "absolution." i.e. to say "I forgive you." In keeping with our confessions, no individual Christian dare take this right upon himself. The "Ministry of the Keys" centers on the personalized proclamation of the judgments and blessings of God. This is the direct assurance of God's pardon or judgment. These are the first points of this paper.

1 The authority of the keys is given to the church believers as a group not to the individuals who make up the group. This authority is based not on the universal priesthood of believers shared by OT and NT believers alike but based on the commands and promises of the great high priest Christ. He gave these to the Church—to various groups of believers.

Confer also John 20:19-23 The disciples

Confer also Matt.28:16-20 Great Commission given to the 11

Confer also Acts 1:12-25 Matthias elected by the group or the Apostles?

Confer Acts 2:14 The Holy Spirit poured on the disciples but Peter stood up with the 11

2. The "Ministry of the Keys" centers on God speaking forgiveness or judgment. It is personalized proclamation. The use of the very "marks of the Church."

a Direct preaching to the needs of the congregation

b Direct forgiveness and blessing Absolution, Blessing

c Direct forgiveness visible—the Sacraments

The use of the "Keys" centers on the use of the marks of the church, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

### **The NT Uses of the Word Minister/Ministry**

These terms are used frequently in the New Testament and are based on the Greek word "to Serve", "διακονουη." This word can be used for any kind of service with or without the church. Confusion has arisen because the word does not always refer to the ministry but hearing the word, "ministry" tends to equate any ministry with the office of the ministry. Acts 6 serves as a useful example.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against those of the Aramaic-speaking community because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephan, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961, pp. 605-606

from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Grecian Jews complain about being neglected in the daily distribution. The NIV translates "daily distribution," which in Greek is "daily ministry." The Apostles are involved in the daily distribution, in ministry but this work is not the ministry as is clear from what follows. They do not want to neglect the "ministry of the word." They considered the first ministry a service but not the ministry of the word. Thus in the New Testament "διακοσυνη" is used in two complimentary ways. First, for describing general Christian service or a specific type of Christian service. Second, to describe the public work of the church centered in the proclamation of the word and sacraments. Notice; I used the word "service" to describe the Christian life and the word "ministry" to describe what we call "The Ministry." In this area alone, we have become worse than sloppy with Scriptural terminology. Let me use an example from Scripture of what thoughtless use of words can do. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. This event is recorded in both Matthew 8:14-15 and Luke 4:38-39. After she is healed she gets up and "ministers" (διακοσυνη) to Jesus. Both Gospels use the same word for her service. Beautiful isn't it. The right vocable as the verb and it is direct service to Jesus. She has a "ministry" (See even Scripture shows us women ministers.) Since Jesus promised that giving a cup of water to a little child is giving it to Him, every Christian mother shares in this ministry. To further her ministry, shouldn't she get congregational or maybe even synodical support? Who dare question the need? Who dare deny her the right to her ministry? Faultless logic. Terrible exegesis. It is at best weak use of Scripture to speak of the individual Christian's ministry as it is scripturally shaky to speak of any other derived work as ministry. Not because Scripture doesn't use a word meaning ministry. It does. We are constrained not by the vocable but by context and by English. There is a special connotation of the word minister in English when it is used in a religious context. We should use it where there is a special use of the word "διακοσυνη" which we single out in the NT and that is the Ministry of the Word. Often simply shortened to "The Ministry". This is the position with the special qualifications mentioned in Timothy and Titus. Even though there are limiting qualifications for "the ministry," there is one passage often quoted to show that all Christians can be referred to as ministers even in this special sense. It is taken from II Cor.5:11-21 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (v8). A simple reading of its context shows that Paul is referring to his ministry of reconciliation. Not that all Christians have been given "the ministry." We created confusion by insisting on a public ministry with the qualifications mentioned in I Timothy 3:1ff, Titus 1:6ff and in the same breath, as it were, insisting that all Christians are part of it.

To bolster our expanded use of the word ministry, another passage is used to show that there are many different types even of "the ministry"—I Tim 5:17. "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." The verse is used to show that there is ministry and ministry. Directing the affairs of the congregation and preaching. There are three problems with this interpretation. The first problem is that a simple translation may also be "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor especially those for whom preaching and teaching don't come easily." The one phrase explains the other. The second problem is that the term ministry is not used regarding these elders but rather "ruling the affairs of the congregation." These verses actually support the narrow use of the term "ministry" not the broad. (It is interesting these verses are often used for physical support of the elders; we don't apply the monetary math of "double honor" [there are church bodies that do]) The third problem is that even ministers may have as part of their work that which isn't of the ministry. The Apostles in Acts 6 initially did public work which they did not consider part of "the ministry." We added to confusion by insisting on "the ministry" and then immediately saying that there are many kinds of "ministry." What becomes quickly clear is that the current WELS use of the term to cover almost any Christian activity is nicely American and fitting for "enthusiastic" denominations but has no genuine Scriptural basis. Part of WELS confusion comes from what can only be called sloppy treatment and exegesis of the office of the "Ministry." This confusion builds on confusion. Since in the WELS, we have said there are many types of ministry how can we talk about

lay ministers? As opposed to whom? Everyone is a minister. Since we prate again and again about the ministry of our grade school teachers, society would be right in pointing out that we have women ministers. We are using the term minister in a way not squared with the Scripture and misunderstood by society. Can anyone truly try to explain the distinction between women ministers and male ministers? Males can be ordained which is supposed to be nothing but a public ceremony but you can't use this public ceremony on females?

There are no such things as various kinds of ministers and ministry. According to the Word, it is only the work grouped around publication of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. We should exclusively limit the use of the term to the Pastoral office (a title we will be discussing) and no other. Isn't this the reason we have tried to have district and synod officials remain also as parish Pastors? If this isn't possible, don't we try to have them return to the parish on a regular basis? These men too are to be involved with the Word with the use of the means of grace, the marks of the Church. (This constant contact with the Word strengthens their personal faith and gives them a Christ-like attitude of heart and action. This is the only cure for a bureaucratic mind set and papistic officialdom.)

### **The Term Minister in Society**

We rarely mention our culture and society's use of the term minister and ministry. We need to make a number of important points. The first, a minister is someone of authority. Did some of you react to my using the phrase woman minister. It is because that is giving a woman a position of authority. One she is forbidden. Our society still considers the ministry "a profession" not an activity of the general population. Since we are watching our food and health, should we all insist on being called doctors? What would the AMA say about that? What will the IRS say about a church body who distorts the government's intention in the area of ministry?

A second point. The ministry is the chief work of the Church. Using the example taken from Peter's mother-in-law again, the woman also went to her congregation for funding. How to say no to so many "ministries"! Those that are getting funding are those with the best marketing. Buildings, children, foreign missions; all of these are great marketing tools compared with supporting the congregational yearly budget. It just isn't as snazzy. The Church supports the Ministry. All other activities are secondary to that; even charity as seen in Acts. The Ministry is grouped around the proclamation of the Word. Preaching, teaching, absolving, making it visible in the sacraments. The world around us does not want the work of the church to be the proclamation of Law and Gospel. Satan surely wants us to see our work as anything but proclaiming Jesus. Society sees the church as useful when it trains children, presents beautiful music, counsels families, has social activities for young and old. How delightful to think that these are now the church's ministry. People skills are what really count.

Furthermore when members of the clergy themselves capitulate and no longer do what can be called public preaching, teaching, or absolving but rather just make public display of private emotions and experiences or invest most of their effort in private counseling, what does one need ordained clergy for? What matters is not the public exercise of the office but what "personal skills" or what kind of a (private) person the leader is...Cannot properly sensitized or trained lay persons do just as well, or better?<sup>2</sup>

Suddenly the church's funds, talents and energies are diverted. Our society is eager to see the Church lose the Ministry of the Word as it dissolves into ministries. What finally happened to Harvard, Yale, and Brown?

There are further points that bind us as Scriptural Christians living in this society which are seldom if ever mentioned.

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<sup>2</sup> Nichol & Kolden *op. cit.*, p. 126

1 "Limited Vocabulary" Even if you could somehow show that the Scripture allows a wide use of "the ministry" in which all Christians have a part. (I have tried to show it does not), the church is not free to create its own definitions of words and insist on their usage when society as a whole has a different definition. This is a Scriptural principle. Jesus himself followed this compassionate procedure. The society of his day, the people of God themselves had redefined "Messiah" to include the concept of earthly military rule and power. Jesus did not insist on its proper Scriptural meaning and cause confusion and even spiritual hurt of his people, he avoided the word, "Messiah." Imagine the confusion he would have sown by insisting on being addressed as the Messiah. He would constantly have been disarming his people and constantly having to avoid being made king by force. John the Baptist followed this same compassionate procedure in dealing with the people of his culture. In John 1:21 he is asked "Are you Elijah?" He denies it. Please notice this. John the Baptist is the "Elijah" of Malachi. He is not the reincarnate Elijah of popular thought. He denied being the fulfillment of prophecy because common usage had made admitting its fulfillment into furthering a lie. In the same way, we are constrained by Christian love not to sow confusion by redefining how we can use the word minister. Society has placed a certain meaning on it. We are in Christian love to work with a "limited vocabulary."

2 "Contending for the Truth." We have limited ourselves in our Christian freedom to avoid furthering heresy. An example is our use of the Lord's Supper. We actually deny our people weekly public use of a means of grace because we are standing for the truth. Roman Catholicism says you must celebrate mass to have a true worship service. We deliberately hold worship services without communion. We are sending a strong signal to our people that the Roman Catholic idea is false by our conduct. If we limit a means of grace, how can we be so careless in our vocabulary?

In this area of ministry there are Christians who teach that every Christian is a minister and they mean it. They deny that there is a public office and that any Christian has Christ's direct authority to forgive. Many holiness groups and some Baptists teach that there is no "Ministry" that every Christian has the same authority and power from Jesus. How dare we encourage them in thinking that we deny the office of the ministry by our careless use of the word minister? Thus we encourage and confirm them in heresy. We are to contend for the truth not blur it.

3 "Sacred and Secular." The false distinction arises again. We are not always alert to subtle changes in thinking that echo problems of the past. We are now involved in a program entitled "Training in ministry." What can we possibly be thinking? Why haven't we entitled it "Training in Christian service" or "Training to be a slave of Christ"? Are we looking to give that added fillip to our people, "I'm really a minister?" Worse still, somehow church related activities are more service to Christ than daily living. Are we not recreating the false division of sacred and secular once again? Now however our thinking has become church/ministry against normal less important daily living. In our sermons how often do we encourage people to:

- give more to church
- get more involved with church
- train your children at the church's school
- volunteer at church
- attend meetings at church
- witness through church

I suppose it's logical that if everything a Christian does is church; he might as well be a minister. What is happening to Paul's earthy, pithy inspired commands not to "ministers" but to us? Commands and guides that effect us every moment.

You know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be holy, that you should avoid sexual immorality...Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other...Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands just

as we told you, so your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (I Thessalonians 4:2-11 selected for brevity)

This is personalized proclamation. Instructions "by the authority of the Lord Jesus." Our life is our service to Christ. This proclamation encompasses everything from cleaning toilets to getting to work on time. We don't have to be doing "churchy" stuff. We are to live for Christ. Ministry/minister should in our circles be truly used in its limited Scriptural sense of what we today call the Pastoral office and not for every Christian activity.

### **Titles for the People Holding the Office of the Ministry in the NT**

I have attached lists of the various titles for the "Amt" in the NT. The titles basically are, Apostle, elder, overseer (bishop is a transliterated cognate of the Greek word for overseer, "ἐπισκοπος"), Pastor. Please take a moment to look at these lists. With a glance one can see in Titus for instance that elder and overseer are used interchangeably. In I Peter we note that the apostles consider themselves elders. In Acts 15 we see that not all elders are apostles.

It is obvious based on the last part of Acts 1 (the election of Matthias) that the term Apostle had a special significance. Not all are apostles. Used almost exclusively in the NT (Acts 14:4, Rom 16:7; II Cor 8:23 are the three exceptions) for the select group singled out by Jesus in Luke or called specially by him, as Paul. The teaching of the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Thus the whole point of the Reformation was to restore Apostolic teaching and practice to the church.

No clear distinction can be made between the other 3 titles. they are seemingly used interchangeably referring to position, activity, or attitude: Elder, Overseer, Pastor. In the history of the church, there has arisen great dissension and division among Christians based on these passages. Since both elder and bishop have been endowed with certain specific meanings through the years, it is perhaps wise to continue the use of the term Pastor (continuing the practice of "limited vocabulary"). It has the gentle "shepherd" connotation and does not add to confusion among our people and society. It is well to bear in mind that Scripturally speaking your pastor is an elder and is a bishop. This is NT usage. As we study these things we need to apply these principles concerning our use of the term "elder." We are using a term in direct conflict with its meaning in Scripture, unless of course we hold to the Westminster confession. Our current practice makes good sense if we are Presbyterians but not as Lutheran Christians. It would be more appropriate to name these men serving in our congregations with another title. To call them elders implies a Scriptural office they do not hold. Congregations have felt the division caused by one of our "elders" who applies the commands of the NT to elders to himself and usurps the role of the minister/elder.

The teacher. We have created an extra-biblical position in our congregations called "teacher." Whether this is grade school, high school or college makes no difference. It is not found in the New Testament. We have said we are free to create this form of "ministry". We took a position created in our society and "churchified" it. We issued divine calls to those who are in this "public ministry". We saw its teaching function as derived from the Pastoral office. Other Scriptural Lutherans have seen the teaching function derived from parental authority. "Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Louis and Eunice trained Timothy in the Holy Scripture when he was a child (II Tim 3:15). Teachers were not called ministers but hired Christians aiding the parents. Thus children could be instructed by men or women of the faith with teaching abilities without confusing the public office created around "The Ministry of the Keys." If one of our teachers were stopped in a grocery store for a "man on the street" interview, how would he respond to the question "What's your occupation?" Would he say "I'm a minister of the Gospel"? He or she would know that is a confusing reply and in fact actually be a lie in that context. The reporter knows the difference between a teacher and a minister. We do not need to solidify our position by ordaining male teachers. We need instead to review our practice especially in light of the previous points. In this context the following section from the 1991 synodical convention essay is especially ill advised.

It would be a mistake to think that the pastors mentioned in Ephesians 4 are exactly the same as what we call pastors today. In the Corinthian congregation preaching was done by a number of persons, as was the custom in the synagogues. Luther compares that practice with the arrangement for preaching in the church of his day and advises against reinstating it. He writes:

The text shows how it was customary for the prophets to be seated among the people in the churches as the regular parish pastors and preachers, and how the lesson was sung or read by one or two...Then one of the prophets whose turn it was spoke and interpreted the lesson...When one was through, another might have something to add in confirmation or clarification...But I would not be in favor of restoring this custom and doing away with the pulpit.<sup>3</sup>

From this it is clear that the pastorate as we know it today is a historical development and different from the preaching office in the apostolic church.

The teachers did the work of instructing people in God's Word. Again, it would be a mistake to identify them with the teachers who serve in our Christian elementary schools, high schools and colleges today. Such schools were unknown in the apostolic church.<sup>4</sup>

The last part of this quote supports what I have previously said. Our use of the word teacher is different than NT usage. The first part of this quote states that the same is true of the word Pastor. It is easy to see why the resolution to ordain male teachers passed after this essay was read. Since both the Pastoral office and the teaching position are our creations, why do we distinguish them? In attempting to equate the two positions as modern creations, ingenious inaccuracy is used. Notice how the thought progression moves from describing the Pastoral office today as "not exactly the same" to "historical development" to "different." Who can debate that what a modern Pastor does is not exactly- the same as what the Ephesian elders did. That is a difference in time and culture not in office. Feeding the people of God is still feeding the people of God. The preaching and shepherding office is not a historical development but a 2000 year old on-going office spreading the caring proclamation of Jesus to the Church which he purchased with His blood. The Luther quotation used here to bolster this position has nothing to do with the point being made. If one reads the entire section, Luther is explaining the difference in congregational custom not in Pastoral office. Luther doesn't want Pastors and priests debating publicly. Luther wants to retain the pulpit; not have preachers stand from the pews. His remarks are directed against those who think they should have the right to speak and not in showing that the Pastorate is now different. Our method of arranging the service certainly is different, not the preaching office.

Of all the titles for the position of minister in the NT, the title of Pastor is still reflective of the Scriptural office of the ministry and is not misunderstood by society.

### **The Call to the Ministry**

One of the most treasured teachings of Scripture for Christians serving in our congregations is the "divine call." People who are in the office of the ministry have been placed there by Jesus Himself. Among us that means that a group of Christians, whether a congregation, or a board representing several congregations chose us to serve Jesus in serving them. We refer to this as a "congregational call." As dear as this term is to us, it is found nowhere in the New Testament. "Call" can refer to conversion, the call to faith, "called to be holy" (I Cor 1:2). In some instances it is used by Paul to refer to his call to Apostleship I Cor 1:1. It is used by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13 of his call of Paul and Barnabas. There is never a reverence to a called elder, bishop, minister,

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<sup>3</sup> LW 40, 389-393; SLXX, 1772-1676

<sup>4</sup> Wilbert R. Gawrisc, "The Doctrine of Church and Ministry in the Life of the Church Today," *Proceedings of the Fifty-first Biennial Convention Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, August 1991, pp. 237-8.



pastor. No where in the entire NT is there ever a command "to call" a preacher of the Word. Never is a congregation charged to call a minister. In fact in the whole New Testament not once is a congregational election held to supply a Pastor/elder/bishop. Two elections are mentioned. Matthias in Acts 1 and the election of the 7 in Acts 6. A brief look at both is in order. The first is the election to the special right of Apostle. In Acts 1:12-26 Peter outlines the reason for the vacancy and the requirements to fill the office. Matthias' lot is drawn by the brothers. No one can say whether only the 11 were involved but it is clear it is not an election to a local congregation but to the Apostolate. It isn't even clear that it is an election as we know it. The simplest reading is that Matthias drew the long or short straw much as in the use of Urim and Thummim of old. The second event is the well known choosing of the 7 that introduces us to Stephan, Nicanor, Philip etc. This Scripture has been fully quoted on page 5. Much abused and misused, this section has been used to show the divine call into the public ministry. In point of fact, these men are elected to a position that specifically excludes the ministry of the word. They are not even given "the ministry of tables." They will wait on tables. The entire event is very illustrative. The apostles distributed the food for the Jerusalem congregation of thousands. This was no small task. It was natural they should do this initially. The congregation found fault even with the Apostles. Unequal distribution was the complaint. Since the Apostles were all from Palestine, the impression might be quickly given that they did favor Aramaic speaking Jews. In this context the Apostles wisely remove themselves from the position and from any hint or favoritism. No group of Aramaic Jews not even the Aramaic apostles were to preside over the selection of replacements. The election to office outside the ministry is left to the congregation. This election is held by command of the Apostles. The apostles then put their seal of approval on these men by publicly laying on their hands.

These are the two "elections" of the NT: An apostle chosen by lot and non ministerial position chosen by the congregation at the apostle's command. (A case can even be made that since the apostles were the accused, this was a one time exemption to the general practice of establishing leaders in the church.) In every instance after this, the apostles or the men they appointed chose the elders/bishops/pastors. There is no doubt that Apostolic appointment was the method of furnishing pastors for the new congregations. Here I would like to illustrate what we do with the Scriptures to bolster our current practice of using a congregational call.

When the congregation in Jerusalem felt the need for persons to assist the apostles by taking care of the distribution of food to the needy, they choose seven men to take over this responsibility (Acts 6:1-6) The congregation at Antioch at the direction of the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas out on a missionary expedition (Acts 13:1-3) With the approval of the congregations in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to serve these churches (Acts 14:23). Paul instructed Titus to do the same for the congregations in Crete (Titus 1:5). Upon the recommendation of the brothers in Lystra and Iconium, Paul chose and installed Timothy as his assistant (Acts 16:1-3; I Timothy 4:14).<sup>5</sup>

What a seemingly wonderful review of congregation as the source of the call. Sadly, in each of these examples the meaning of the verses has been altered just slightly to fit our current thinking. Not one of these supports the congregational call. In fact they all seem to weigh against our practice. The election of the seven in Acts 6 was not a congregational decision but Apostolic direction. In Acts 13 it is the prophets and teachers who were directed and sent off barnabas and Saul. The Holy Spirit did not direct the congregation. Not a word is said about congregational approval in Acts 14:23. Simply that Paul and Barnabas elected elders. It was their authority that established the elders. Titus is simply told to command elders. He is not instructed to have the congregation elect them. Finally, Timothy was of good report. There is no hint that the congregation recommended him for ministerial training to Paul. Paul choose him; the congregation didn't. What are we doing to ourselves if we fall into such well intended distortion? This is even more deadly because surely we are describing the apostles attitude and conduct. Everything would have been done with Christian love and concern.

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<sup>5</sup> Wilbert R. Gawrisch, "The Doctrine of Church and Ministry in the Life of the Church Today," *Proceedings of the Fifty-first Biennial Convention Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, August 1991, p. 239

Surely they would have listened to their congregations. The point remains, you cannot from this extrapolate that the real authority for these calls came from the congregations or even imply it. The verbs "command," "elect," and "appoint" all show the keys being bestowed from the apostles or their appointed men or the Holy Spirit directly not the congregation. We undermine our current practice and teaching when we play this fast and loose with Scripture. We must admit as Scriptural Lutherans that a strong case exists in the NT for the direct appointing of ministers by other ministers. This in effect is the origin of the episcopal form of church government. The passages in Titus 1 and I Timothy 5 are also the only passages that refer to arranging successors to the apostles. This is important for several reasons. First, we have derived the authority of the congregational call from the "Ministry of the Keys." There are no clear passages commanding it. There are clear passages where the successors of the Apostles were told to "call" successors. We must be clear that our position of a congregational call can be squared with Scripture and not simply the result of a fawning equality guaranteed to please American Christians. Second, we need to understand more fully how the vast (and I repeat vast) majority of Christians view their clergy. Third, that we have a better perception of the use of the term ordination. Remember that even most Lutherans use the episcopal form of government. Let us now take a look at the term that has caused so much debate, misunderstanding, and contention.

### **Ordination**

It is often said that the term ordination has no Scriptural basis and indeed is a human custom not of essence to the church. Unfortunately that is a simplification. It sounds great if you're talking to a group of reformed but how true is it really. Just as the term Trinity reflects the Scriptural concept of our holy loving God but is not found in Scripture, so the term ordination does reflect the practice of the early church even though the word "ordain", it can be argued, does not itself exist in Scripture. I certainly don't mean to imply that the teaching concerning ordination is on the same par as the teaching concerning the Trinity but rather Christians do use acceptable shortcuts in speaking about their teaching. Ordination in its Scriptural sense really reflects two things: one, an outward ceremony; two, the authority that comes from this ceremony. Let us address first the outward ceremony. Ordination is normally equated with the laying on of hands. This rite occurs several times in the new testament. We are familiar with Jesus blessing the little children in Matt 19:14. Ananias healing Paul in Acts 9, the election of the 7 in Acts 6. The apostolic bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit in Acts 8 etc. The reason for the laying on of hands are several. With Jesus it is to bless the little children or to heal. With the apostles to approve the 7 or to validate the work of the Holy Spirit. This validation occurs in the case of Peter's work with Samaritans and again with Paul's work among the Ephesians. The laying on of hands is always reflective of some bestowed blessing and/or derived authority from another. In Antioch hands are laid on the new missionaries. Paul commands Timothy "to lay hands on no man quickly." He orders Titus to appoint elders. We have come to the first problem with the ceremony. Is it a commanded rite or is it merely a rite appropriate to the early church? Are the verbs "appoint" and "lay hands on" just a description of what we are to do? Are they prescription, a command we are to follow? The usual answer is that these are descriptive and not binding on Christians. There is a significant problem with this answer. In Titus it begins of list of binding commands, "rebuke", "teach in accord with sound doctrine" and again in I Timothy 5:20-23. We follow all Paul's commands as proscriptive with one exception. We deny that he commands the laying on of hands. Add to this one previous point. These are the only passages that clearly command the continuation of the ministry. It must be clearly and forcefully shown that the laying on of hands is merely a description and not a NT command equivalent to teach sound doctrine. I am well aware that the laying on of hands is a ceremony but there are certainly ceremonial aspects to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Please note. I am not calling the laying on of hands a sacrament but rather point out there are some specific aspects of worship commanded by God.

The second point concerning ordination is this: Does the laying on of hands confer a special blessing? This very question is where the following presentation gets somewhat controversial.

Let us take a look at the two passages in the letters to Timothy.

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hand on you. (I Tim 5:14)

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (II Tim 7:6-7)

We view these passages loaded with a history of heresy and distortion. The Roman rite and pomp and false teaching of a special grace bestowed by ordination. We have more than a lingering distaste for "character indelebilis." We have a long standing abhorrence for the "Apostolic Succession" as claimed by the Roman church. In short, we are uncomfortable with these two passages, and we ignore them. I have heard papers on ordination that don't even discuss these passages. Other papers have simply said that was for the Apostolic age.<sup>6</sup>

You cannot prove that point from Scripture. We are in almost a fantasy situation like a strange dream. If you go to any installation or ordination of a Pastor, you will see enacted exactly the ceremony that Paul describes in I Tim 4:15. Have you never wondered why fellow Pastors put their hands on the incoming Pastor and quote Scripture, "Prophecy?" We follow the passage to the letter and then say there is no gift through the laying on of hands and prophecy. No gift through the Word. There was for Timothy the gift of the Spirit who works through the Word. Ordination is not magic but does it not make use of the Word and the human hand? However unlike a Sacrament it does not give the forgiveness of sins but rather an increased blessing of the Spirit. This much is clear in the NT for Timothy. Why do we say this has ceased? Does ordination publicly bestow the authority to forgive and call? To see this possibility let us look again at the ministry of the keys. We have clearly stated that it is the authority of the group to forgive. Are not the Apostles a group of Christians? They were part of the group of disciples called directly by Jesus. The apostolic right to forgive as Christ forgave has never been questioned. They also installed Pastors. If you want to use our term "call" the apostles called by appointment. The ordination was seen as the call. In church history from earliest times there has been direct appointment by a successor of an apostle or as in Ambrose's case direct election by a group of Christians later publicly confirmed by ordination. We have set the call and ordination apart as two separate things yet they are but one. A group of Christians setting aside another to enter the ministry. At this point I must take an historical tangent to be perfectly clear about what I am saying and what I am not saying.

### **Ordination in History and the Reformation**

In the earliest days of the church, church fathers were careful to trace their instruction directly back to an apostle. Polycarp is a noted example who traces his teaching directly back to the apostle John. Thus your ordination reflected your training. In the various waves of persecution and striving with various heresies, speaking with apostolic authority was very important. This was the same way that we listen carefully to one who has been thoroughly instructed in the Word. As the number of Christians grew and the number of men serving them with the Word grew, it was very natural that the term overseer become associated with the head Pastor. Soon the term bishop was used exclusively for the man under whom the other Pastors served. Since calls were frequently by appointment, it is a simple step to teach that only ordination by a bishop is valid. In those circumstances it is much like saying only those who are "regularly called". It is also very natural in press and stress of the parish to allow the bishop trained in direct succession from an apostle to settle disputes (Rather like calling in an outside essayist). Again it is a short step to saying the bishop is a higher doctrinal authority. So far I have pointed out 3 doctrinal shifts. 1 Overseer refers to a rank of clergy not any clergy. 2 Since he appointed

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<sup>6</sup> Glen Hellwig, *The Ministry in the Light of New Testament Designations*. Central Conference, Western Wisconsin District, 1992, p. 20.

the pastors, only ordination by a bishop is valid. 3 Along with the rank comes special insight as a doctrinal teacher. There are yet 4 more subtle but important shifts that occur.

Since Timothy is directed to guard the sound deposit entrusted to him (II Tim 1:13-14), eventually the teaching arises that the bishops have a tap into the oral instruction of the apostles not just the written instruction. This oral tradition is on par with the written word but in actual fact always outweighs the written word. At the same time the bishop of Rome is clawing his way to the top and ultimately claims to be the world bishop to whom all bishops owe allegiance and obedience. He claims that their authority and power come from him. In wrestling with Paul speaking to Timothy about the special gift that is his, through the laying on of hands, the concept of "character indelebilis" arises. The unchangeable power to create the sacraments bestowed by the act of ordination. Finally all of this is summed up in the Roman concept of Apostolic Succession. They have the authority of the apostles because they had the right ordination from the right bishop going back to the days of the apostles. It is against all of this false teaching that the reformation takes aim. The special power of the priest, the apostolic authority of bishops, the kingly ways they had taken on, the special authority of the pope, the rites and pomp of ordination, the idea that it confers special powers etc. Against this background Luther fought and our confessions were written.

Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession heralds the narrow use of the term "ministry", "That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted."<sup>7</sup>

"No one should preach or teach in the church unless he be regularly called" (AC:XIV). Somehow this is usually used to validate our practice of congregational calls. In reality this has nothing to do with the manner in which a man is called into office but that he BE called into office. This was written by men none of whom had what we know as a congregational call. They had all been ordained and appointed by bishops. This article repeats the desire again and again to maintain the hierarchy of bishops if only the Gospel is allowed. "Regularly called" still is from the ministerium. The new attitude is that the congregation also has the authority to call.

Second, since a Christian congregation neither should nor could exist without God's word, it clearly follows from the previous that it nevertheless must have teachers and preachers who administer the word. And since in these last accursed times, the bishops and the false spiritual government neither are nor wish to be teachers—moreover, they want neither to provide nor to tolerate any, and God should not be tempted to send new preachers from heaven—we must act according to Scripture and call and institute from among ourselves those who are found to be qualified and whom God has enlightened with reason and endowed with gifts to do so...All this is done because need knows no command.<sup>8</sup>

Two chief points emerge from this formative era concerning the call and ordination. First, it is important that the call is from without not from within. The Lutheran reformation was not a lay reformation. It was a reformation brought about by ordained priests and pastors who traced their call not back to the congregation but back to the very men with whom they now took issue. Second, the authority to call rests on the congregation as well because the need for true preaching gave the congregations the right to re-assert their authority to call. They were made up of universal priests. The bishops were not God's spokesman but the agents of the antichrist set against God and His Word.

Lutherans are irrevocably committed to the view that the authenticity of the gospel is the only guarantee of the legitimacy of structures in the church, rather than the converse.<sup>9</sup>

When one reads "Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope"<sup>10</sup> you will see again and again that the right of the congregation to call and ordain is stressed and even in those heretical times it is stated that a bishop could come

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<sup>7</sup> "The Augsburg Confession." *Concordia Triglotta*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 1921, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Gritsch Editor, *Luther's Works*, Vol 39 "Church and Ministry I", Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, pp. 309-310

<sup>9</sup> Nichol & Kolden, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

and confirm that congregational call. At no time do the confessions ever take issue with the validity of a call by appointment or with the validity of the keys of the Roman Church. Never are the keys given to the congregation alone.

### **Ordination and its Use Today**

In America today ordination is still reflective of the special right of the ministerium to call and the authority to forgive. We still admit the validity of the Roman and Episcopalian sacraments and see their priests as placed over their congregations and placed there by God. We like to quote Walther against the LCMS and point out that he said that the local congregational ALSO had the keys. We then do ourselves discredit by failing to point out that the other half of "also" to which Walther was referring was the Church at large represented by the form of church government using the bishop. With their bishop gone, these Lutheran Christians were afraid they couldn't call Pastors or celebrate the sacrament. Walther was pointing out that both had the keys, bishop (church at large) and congregation.

To sum up this point again. There is really one group to whom the keys were given, the CHURCH, any group of believers. The Apostles themselves are a group of Christians. They did have the right to forgive and to appoint and ordain elders. Ordination is still reflective of this right of the ministerium. Is it so hard to see that there are two ways to be regularly called? Either direct election by a congregation or appointment by other clergy. We hold the former valid in our circles and the later valid in other circles. Ordination is reflective of the divine call through the ministerium. The very call of Luther and the reformers. It is interesting to note that in the Episcopal church the order of the ordination of the bishop contains the response by the congregation "*dignus, dignus*", "worthy, worthy." This was the ancient way of election by congregation. Even they still see the authority of the congregation. Even we still see the authority of the clergy in ordination. Two sides of the same coin. Even we admit that ordination is public confirmation. What happens if confirmation is withheld? Confirmation implies authority over the event. The authority of the Word and its pure preaching using a divine check and balance.

Second, ordination is still reflective of its very earliest meaning. I have been taught by one, who was taught by one,...who was taught by an Apostle. It still signifies a thorough grounding not in oral tradition, but in the written Word. We have ordained pastors, thoroughly trained Pastors. This is the true Apostolic Succession. We properly avoid the term because of the Scriptural principle of "limited vocabulary." If we now ordain male teachers, will they all first be given extended Scriptural training? Apostolic authority, the authority of the written Word has been passed down.

Third, this thorough training has included the study of the Lutheran symbols. Our candidates for the ministry and our Pastors thoroughly study and agree with these written statements. In our ceremony of ordination, the direct "quia" subscription to the confessions is used because the confessions are our public statement to the world. If we ordain male teachers, do we pledge ourselves to further alter their curriculum to include exhaustive study of our symbols?

Fourth, ordination is the public reassurance to the congregation. Just like it did in the early church, it serves the modern church. It is the public assurance to the Christian congregation. Many of whom may have never seen their new pastor that the local pastors they do know see this man as fit and trained for the work of the ministry among them.

In our effort to not be Roman, have we ignored and slighted the proper meaning and use of ordination? From all of the above it can be seen that our rush to ordain male teachers is not only ill-advised but also inappropriate. We need to examine our practice and our teaching in the light of the Scriptures before we make such a public change.

Here I must go beyond words like ill-advised and inappropriate. We have erred. The word "ordained" is to be returned to the public announcement of forgiveness. Male teachers are not to be ordained.

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<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 523-527

## Our Confessional Constraint

We are facing a crisis in the Christian Church over the authority of women in the Church. Ordaining women is the flash phrase and its approval is now tearing apart the English church. During such a time when society sees the terms ordination and ministry as equivalent to the Pastoral office, we cannot confessionally change our use of the terms ministry and ordination.

We believe teach and confess also that at the time of confession [when a confession of heavenly truth is required], when the enemies of God's Word desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire congregation of God, yea, every Christian, but especially the ministers of the Word as leaders of the congregation of God [as those whom God has appointed to rule His Church], are bound by God's Word to confess freely and openly the [godly] doctrine, and what belongs to the whole of [pure] religion, not only in words but also in works and deeds; and that then, in this case, even in such [things truly and of themselves] adiaphora, they must not yield to the adversaries, or permit these [adiaphora] to be forced upon them by their enemies, whether by violence or cunning...<sup>11</sup>

From this explanation every one can understand what every Christian congregation and every Christian man, especially in time of confession [when a confession of faith should be made], and, most of all preachers, are to do or to leave undone, without injury to conscience, with respect to adiaphora, in order that God may not be angered [provoked to just indignation], love may not be injured. the enemies of God's Word be not strengthened, nor the weak in faith offended.<sup>12</sup>

We seem to be more comfortable with our tax forms than our confessions. Have we not offended the weak in faith? Have we not given aid and comfort to the enemies of Goes Word? The point of these statements is that when something is in controversy you can no longer call it adiaphoron. "For Lutherans an adiaphoron is only an adiaphoron when it is an adiaphoron for both sides."<sup>13</sup>

Are we foolish enough to believe that others do not see this as a direct change in our practice and as encouragement to their false practice? These confessional statements address the preachers directly. The very men who have vowed to uphold them. Are we now revoking our pledges? How can some of our pastors say, we have no problems with using the term ordain for women properly understood. That is purely and simply wrong. The impression is given that everything is an unimportant word game. It may be pleasing to the specific audience they were addressing but there is no Scriptural basis for it. Our confessions clearly state that during a time of offense you can no longer call something adiaphora. I will address the preachers here. My brothers have you forgotten scribbling down this note "*Nihil est adiaphoron in casu confessiones et scandali.*" Have you forgotten your ordination vows? In this time of widespread apostasy within the church, we cannot yield the term ordination for anything other than the Pastoral office. Using it for teachers confuses and distorts. To confessing Lutherans it is forbidden.

To sum up some of the main points made in this essay:

- 1 The ministry of the keys is not given to individual believers. but to the Church—any group of believers.
- 2 The office of the ministry centers in the keys. Personalized proclamation in absolution, preaching, blessing and administering the sacraments.
- 3 The word minister/ministry has a wide usage in Scripture.

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<sup>11</sup> "The Formula of Concord," *Concordia Triglotta*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 1921, p. 1055.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, "Thorough Declaration" p. 1061.

<sup>13</sup> Nichol & Kolden, op. cit., p. 143.

- 4 The term "the ministry" only refers to the public office we now call Pastoral.
- 5 English usage constrains our use of the word, "minister" just as Jesus and John the Baptist constrained themselves to fit the public religious vocabulary.
- 6 A clear confession against those who deny the office of the ministry constrains our use of the word, "ministry."
- 7 NT titles for minister are all equivalent except for the distinctive apostolic office.
- 8 We should address our use of "elder." We are using it in a non-Scriptural way.
- 9 A strong Scriptural case exists for the appointment of clergy not congregational election.
- 10 We must search the Scriptures carefully. What are the reasons for calling ordination "descriptive" and not prescriptive?
- 11 Paul refers twice to Timothy's "ordination." Why do we deny a special blessing to ordination?
- 12 Lutheran history and confessions never deny the keys to the ministerium. They stress that the congregation also can elect.
- 13 Ordination reflects this authority to elect (which we admit for other church bodies) and reflects through apostolic grounding.
- 14 Ordination among us requires a "quia" subscription.
- 15 During this time of offense Lutherans are confessionally forbidden to change their use of the terms, "ministry," and "ordination."

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### **Insight into the Word, "Apostle" Through Paul's Use of the Word**

- Rom. 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.
- Rom. 11:13 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry.

1 Cor. 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes.  
1 Cor. 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?  
1 Cor. 9:2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.  
1 Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.  
2 Cor. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia.  
2 Cor. 12:12 The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.  
Gal. 1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead  
Gal. 2:8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

### **The Word "Elder" as Used in the NT**

Acts 4:5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.  
Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!"  
Acts 4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.  
Acts 5:21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles.  
Acts 6:12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.  
Acts 11:30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.  
Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.  
Acts 15:2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.  
Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.  
Acts 15:6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question.  
Acts 15:22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.  
Acts 15:23 With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.  
Acts 16:4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.  
Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.  
Acts 21:18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.  
Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.  
Acts 24:1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.



- Acts 25:15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.
- 1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.
- 1 Tim. 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
- 1 Tim. 5:19 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.
- Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
- James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- 1 Pet. 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.
- 2 John 1 The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth—
- 3 John 1 The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

### **The Word "Deacon" as Used in the NT**

- Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.
- 1 Tim. 3:8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.
- 1 Tim. 3:10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.
- 1 Tim. 3:12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

### **The Words "Bishop", "Overseer", "Shepherd", "Pastor" as Used in the NT**

- Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
- Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.
- 1 Tim. 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.
- 1 Tim. 3:2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.
- Titus 1:7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.
- 1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- 1 Pet. 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

### **Some of the Passages Using the Phrase, "Laying on of Hands"**

- Mark 6:5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

Luke 4:40 When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Acts 8:18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money.

Acts 8:19 ...and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

1 Tim. 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

2 Tim. 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Hebrews 6:2 ...instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.