

# **The Relationship Between the Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and Public Ministry**

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There are several ways to begin an essay on “The Relationship between the Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and Public Ministry.” We could start with a huge body of evidence to demonstrate that the moral fiber of American society is decaying. The evidence would include statistics that demonstrate from every possible angle the break up of the family unit: the rise in the divorce rate over the last three decades, the rise in the number of single parent homes, increasing crime rates, media manipulation to legitimize homosexuality, government recognition of POSSLQ’s (Persons-of-Opposite-Sex-Sharing-Living-Quarters), the slaughter of the pre-born, and so on. Because we Christians are definitely “still in the world” (Jn 17:11), we cannot escape the fact that the deteriorating morality of society adds to the stress and strain of Christian living, to say nothing of the work load for Christian church workers. Since this essay has to do with the relationship between the universal priesthood of all believers and public ministry, I suppose I could wrap up a “Woe are we!” introduction and then just send you home with the encouragement, “Now go home and train your members for service so that you don’t have to bear the burden of this weighty work load by yourself!” But that would not only smack of the wrong motivation for ministry but also leave unclear and unanswered, “Who is supposed to do what - when - where - and how?”

Or an essay on this topic could begin with a huge body of evidence that people born after 1955, who grew up on television, still have an old Adam like everyone else but also have higher expectations regarding—quality and options in the services and programs offered by professionals and businesses. Typically, people under age forty don’t say, “There was nothing on TV so I grabbed a book to read.” Instead they say, “I don’t like what’s on ABC so I’ll just grab the remote control and flick to NBC, or CBS, or TBS, or TNT, or WOR, or WGN, or ESPN, or TNN, or CNN, or AMC, or HBO, or CINEMAX, or FOX, or anything else.” They don’t say, “The doctor said I need surgery.” They say, “I’m not sure the doctor knows what he’s doing so I’m going to get a second opinion, and maybe a third.” They don’t say, “Let’s walk downtown to window shop. If we get hungry, we can get a bite to eat at ‘Ma & Pa’s Cafe’.” They say, “I’d rather go to Mayfair Mall than Brookfield Square because Mayfair has more choices in the food court.” They don’t say, “We had to get a second car to cart the kids to school.” They say, “Our second car is such a beater - no cruise control, no tilt wheel, no CD player.” They don’t say, “Let’s get involved in the PTA so we can have a say in our kids curriculum.” They say, “I hope we get a voucher so we can send our kids to the private school.” They don’t say, “Well, he’s not the most interesting speaker, but he’s very kind and caring on hospital visits.” They say, “He’s boring. I’ve got to find a different church.” They may say, “You have such a beautiful church,” but they are also thinking, “What do you mean you don’t have a staffed nursery? Where’s the restroom? How come the pews aren’t padded? Do you have any activities for singles?” Those high expectations add to the stress and strain on Christian churches and especially on Christian church workers. Since this essay has to do with Christian ministry, I suppose I could wrap up an introduction with a few more sociological tidbits and send you off saying, “Now go home and start as many programs as possible.” But that would not only smack of gimmickry but also stupidity.

Or an essay on the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and public ministry could begin with a huge body of evidence that people in America today of all generations, especially those born between 1942 and 1955, have developed an anti-institutional mindset and are distrustful of authority at best and anti-authoritarian at worst, and that their children (born after 1968) may or may not share that mindset but are definitely non-joiners. The first half of the baby-boom generation (born 1942 to 1995) grew up with the Cold War, an unpopular war in the Far East, Kent State shootings, Watergate, and government scandals and have

witnessed Iran-gate, cheaters posing as bankers, corruption on Wall Street, and “No new taxes.” Their children, of course, are way too busy at work or at the health club to even think of sitting through an LWMS rally or leaving the Packer game at halftime to listen to a sainted seventy-five year old read a report of the radio ministry. And their younger teen siblings can hardly be blamed for claiming boredom as a reason for not attending the church teen group roll skating party since they just got back from Munich last week and still haven’t organized last year’s videotapes of their trip to Disney World. Those attitudes add to the stress and strain on Christian churches and especially Christian church workers. I suppose I could wrap up an introduction on contemporary materialism and self-centeredness and try to offer encouragement by saying, “Just be thankful for the faithful few who show up for worship and meetings.” But that would not only smack of condescension but also defeatism.

Or an essay on the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and public ministry could begin with a huge body of evidence that documents the spiritual and numerical decline in mainline Christian churches over the last three decades. I could wrap up an introduction with sickening statistics demonstrating a rejection of Scripture’s inspiration and inerrancy and remind, “At least we’re not doing as badly as those other guys!” But that might leave you with inadequate information about the current “state of the WELS” at best and slide the door open a crack for pride at worst.

Or an essay on the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and public ministry could begin with bits of evidence of tension between church workers and church leaders. But what should we expect at a time in our country’s history when a general anti-authoritarian spirit has infiltrated the visible church? That means that the marriage of a general lack of trust aimed at anyone in authority - “Our leaders aren’t listening;” “They’re trying to push methods and programs down our throats;” “They’re are out of touch with reality and bordering on false doctrine” - together with leaders who walk a tight rope wondering whether to be trigger-happy or gun-shy - “If only those guys in the trenches would get with the program;” “Oh, let’s just do it, and let the chips fall where they may;” “That’s a great idea, but we better not try it because somebody will object” - will naturally lead to more stress and strain on church workers and church leaders. The result can be finger-pointing and gossip, blaming and back-biting, accusations and acrimony, anonymous letters, articles in “Christian News,” and all sorts of unbrotherly activity. My brothers, this ought not be!

But there’s another reason why tension in the ranks shouldn’t surprise us. A couple months ago I received a phone call from an interviewer for “The Northwestern Lutheran” who wanted to know my views on pastoral ministry today as compared to a few decades ago. I thought, “What do I know? I’ve only been in it thirteen years.” But, on further reflection, my first thought was, “The pastoral ministry really isn’t more difficult. It’s just different.” Our fathers and forefathers had their own battles. In fact, confessing Christians have always operated with the reality that ministry and worship of the true God would never be pain free (Ac 14:22; 1 Pt 4:12-19). Who of us would be ready to say that the differences of opinion we may have over the application of doctrine, terminology, and communication are any more challenging than Domitian’s persecution; Pope Innocent’s power; the Diet of Worms; the struggle for confessionalism in the new world; the personal struggles, poor health care, paltry salaries, pitiful parsonages, pot-holed roads, and pesky mice of Depression era Dakota-ministry; or the fellowship battles with Missouri? Just read again the words of Jesus (Mt 24; Jn 15:20). Re-read the Revelation. What a magnificent reminder that while we are in this world, we life will not be a bed of roses! So tension within the ranks shouldn’t really come as a surprise. It’s just one more challenge from our gracious Lord God who is very much interested in refining us and taking us not around, not over, not under, but through difficult days so that when we come out on the other side we will be stronger and serve Him better.

So, on the one hand, we could ignore whatever tensions or strains there are among brothers in our church body and say, “Well, I’m just going to go back to the work to which God called me, serve as faithfully as I can, and pray, ‘Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly!’” or, on the other hand, we could stand shoulder to shoulder with those confessing Christians of the past who refused to bury their heads in the sand and who refused to shoot from the hip with, “I’m right, and you’re wrong” but mined the treasures of God’s Word in order to recapture the precious nuggets of truth which form the basis for confidence, hope, unity, and joy, in

order to sort out the difference between what dare never change, what may change, and what must change, and in order to be filled with motivation from and the model of the Savior's love so truth could be spoken in love.

A re-study of any of Scripture's major doctrines is always worthwhile, but a study of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and public ministry is especially appropriate at this time in our synod's history in light of the stresses and strains on parish life and parish workers from the humanistic, secular world around us (as listed above), in light of the tension between church workers and synodical "officials," in light of the current study by the Committee on Program Review which has been charged with determining whether the accusation, "Our synodical structure is top heavy" is true or not, in light of the addition of a staff ministry program at DMLC, and in light of the current debate and forth coming recommendations regarding our synodical school system.

The need for clarity on the Scripture's doctrine of ministry also became evident at our Metro-north pastoral conferences last year. I recall that after a paper was delivered on Titus 1, there was some debate and obvious disagreement on whether that chapter of the Bible should be applied only to pastors or could also be applied to congregational elders. Interestingly enough, at about the same time last year, the Board for Parish Services approached the Board for Worker Training in order to reinforce our unity regarding the doctrine and practice of ministry so that the workers prepared by our worker training system and the materials generated through the Board for Parish Services would match. The first step of that re-study process was the "Symposium on Ministry" sponsored by the Board for Worker Training and the Board for Parish Services, hosted by Northwestern College, on December 29 and 30, 1992. The four presentations were added at the end of a voluminous stack of essays, reports, and documents resulting in the two volume 839 page (actually, 829 pages because of a numerical error which eliminated the numbers 569 through 578) "WELS Ministry Compendium."

I could have made this essay quite short by stopping right here and saying, "Buy the Compendium, and enjoy it." In it you will find a rich assortment of documents from the last 134 years or so, written by various authors in our circles, offering a resource for in-depth study of the Biblical basis and historical development of the doctrine of church and ministry in our midst. It will be virtually impossible to add anything new to what has already been written on those important doctrines. In order to narrow the scope, I intend to offer a brief outline of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and public ministry and then focus on the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and public ministry.

Finally, before we get to the body of this essay, a comment from Professor August Pieper, taken from his article in "Theologische Quartalschrift" in October, 1929, entitled "Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of Its Ministry, With Special Reference to the Synod and Its Discipline," is in order:

It must be reemphasized that only in the spirit of love will we be able to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Where love does not reign, unity is already destroyed inwardly. Where one wants to become a champion at the expense of the other, unity will also be destroyed outwardly ... Where God's Word is concerned, only one principle applies to us poor human beings: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." The highest and most difficult skill in theology is to set aside one's own thoughts and to deny one's own wisdom; to believe and obey every word of God, even in the face of deeply ingrained and beloved prejudices. And especially those who daily increase in knowledge must daily learn this skill anew. (1)

## I.

### THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

#### ALL BELIEVERS

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 2:2). He is the only Savior (Ac 4:12). All who believe in Him have eternal life (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 5:12). Those who believe in Jesus are called, in Scripture:

disciples (Jn 8:31), Christians (Ac 11:26), believers (Jn 4:41; Ac 1:15; etc.), sons of God (Ga 3:26), fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household (Eph 2:19), sheep, flock (Jn 10:16), the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13, 27; Ro 12:4, 5; etc.), saints (Ro 1:7; etc.), the city of the LORD, Zion (Is 60:14), the temple of God (Eph 2:21), the bride of Christ (Re 19:7), the kingdom of God (Re 1:6); the Lord's vineyard (Is 5:7), chosen people, holy nation, a people belonging to God, a royal priesthood (1 Pt. 2:9). "The name that the New Testament uses most often to refer to all believers is church." (2)

When the Lord talks about His church in Scripture, He is not talking about a building or an organization. Sometimes the word church is used in the singular and is mentioned as being in one locality ... Sometimes the word church is used in the plural, and it is clear that more than one group of believers in more than one place is meant. But even in those passages where a church or churches are mentioned in reference to a certain locality, it always seems that the relationship of the specific group(s) to all believers is included in the mention of the word church. It is not wrong to speak of a building as a church or of a group of congregations as a church body. But the word church in the proper biblical sense means all of those who trust in Jesus as the Savior from sin. And there is only one church in that sense. (3)

## COMMISSIONED BY THE LORD

Jesus has given His church, that is, all believers, work to do. The work which Jesus has given His church to do is rightly called "ministry." "Ministry" means service. It is a broad term. It includes everything a believer does out of faith-born love: his good works (which provide evidence of faith in the heart and which provide a context for witnessing), his worship, his witness - everything! That is what the apostle described when he wrote, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices" (Ro 12:1). No doubt he had the 'olah in mind, the burnt offering, when an Israelite tossed the whole animal, not just parts of it, onto the altar of burnt offering and burnt the whole thing to God, saying in effect, "Lord, I dedicate myself, my entire life, all I have and am, to You." The all-inclusive nature of the Christian's ministry is described in many other New Testament passages, "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord" (Ro 14:8); "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).

Since a believer's ministry is all-inclusive, it certainly includes telling others what he believes. Witnessing is not only natural for the new man, "We believe and therefore speak" (2 Cor 4:13; also Ac 4:20; Ro 10:9-10; 1 Pt 3:15), but also essential since Christ Jesus commands it. Each of the four gospels ends with a commission to proclaim the good news (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47-48; Jn 20:22-23), and the book of Acts begins with the commission (Ac 1:8). The commission to proclaim the gospel is the same as Jesus entrusting "the keys" of the kingdom to believers (Mt 16:19; 18:18). "The sacred things of God which not even the angels are allowed to handle are the privilege and power of every believer. When any saint shares the gospel, the Lord stands behind his message to open or close the doors of heaven for the hearer." (4)

In regard to the Christian's use of the keys as something essential, yet natural, Professor Schaller wrote:

One cannot, strictly speaking, talk about the 'right' to preach the gospel, as if this activity of one's spiritual life were not permitted to the individual Christian until in some special way he receives a commission or permission for it ... For Christians, as in all aspects of their sanctification so also in respect to preaching the gospel, that is, to carrying on the New Testament ministry, neither restrictions nor restraints but rather admonition and encouragement to more zealous activity are always in place. (5)

It should be obvious, but needs to be stated, that when we speak of Jesus instituting the Church, that does not mean He began something new. The invisible Church existed ever since Adam and Eve first trusted in God's promise of a Savior. In the same way, when we say that Jesus instituted the ministry of the gospel, we do

not mean that He began a new ministry. “Christ’s institution did not signal anything new, the for ministry of the gospel began with God’s first promise to a fallen world. All who have been called to faith are servants of Christ, ministers of the gospel of reconciliation.” (6)

## **A PRIESTHOOD**

The Bible often speaks of Christian ministers as a functioning priesthood (1 Pt 2:9; Re 1:5-6) and refers to the sacrifices which Christians bring to God (Ro 12:1; Eph 5:2; Php 4:18). In the Old Testament, priests had three main jobs. They prayed; they proclaimed the words of God; and they offered, sacrifices. The four major, blood sacrifices can be organized in two categories: The ‘olah and zebhach shelamim expressed the good relationship that God had with people and that people had with God and others. The chattath and asham were offered as a payment to, restore the relationship with God and with others if that relationship was broken. Of course, the sacrifices of the New Testament priesthood do not in any way pay for sin. That is done. “It is finished!” But (as mentioned above) the sacrifices of the New Testament priesthood, of believers, are everything a believer does in thanksgiving to God, including his use of the keys.

## **UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD**

The passages in which the Lord commands believers to do work, commissions them with the gospel, encourages a life of ministry, entrusts them with the keys, and calls them to a spiritual priesthood are all inclusive. They are meant for each individual believer and for all believers, for each individual priest and for all priests. Thus, we properly speak of “the priesthood of all believers” or “the universal priesthood.”

For further study of Scripture and for quotations from Luther and the Confessions on the subject of the priesthood of all believers, I would refer you to several other articles in the “WELS Ministry Compendium”: “Doctrine of the Church and Ministry” by Professor H. Vogel (p. 409) and “The Doctrine of Church and Ministry in the Life of the Church Today” by Professor W. Gawrisch (p. 623).

To bring this section on universal priesthood to a close, consider these insightful comments:

Keeping in mind what Luther writes about the rights, duties, privileges of the Christian priest, we can say: What a blessing would come to the church if every Christian functioned as Luther describes. How much easier the work in the Christian day schools would be, not to speak of Sunday school and confirmation instructions, if all parents would exercise their priesthood in the home in teaching the Word to their children! We might not even need schools to the same degree. Or consider the matter of delinquents, of the backsliders in our congregations. Whoever would see someone becoming lax in church attendance would admonish him as a brother or sister in Christ, would show deep concern and act on it, privately, as neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, and concerned relative, or acquaintance. Or consider evangelism. Each Christian would concern himself with the unbelievers, the unchurched in his circle of friends and relatives and acquaintances in the area where he lives and works. Each Christian would be alert to opportunities to bring an unbelieving person into contact with the life-giving gospel, to bring that person to worship services, to a Bible information class. He would feel his personal responsibility toward mission work throughout the world. Our sick members in the hospital would be prayed for not only on Sunday morning in the church service, but in the private prayers each by his friends and acquaintances, and not merely for a social visit. Recognizing his priesthood would prevent a Christian from being only a Sunday Christian who lays aside his Christianity during the intervening six days. We have pointed to some things quite at random. More might be added. In stating these things the way we do, we do not mean to imply that none of this is being done. Perhaps more is being done than we know. But we are speaking from the

viewpoint that more could be done, that in the area of sanctification we are always striving toward improvement. (7)

Professor Schuetze begins the next paragraph of his essay, “This is where the public ministry fits into the picture.” (8) And that’s where we go, too.

## II.

### PUBLIC MINISTRY

#### DEFINITION

Alongside the universal priesthood of all believers God has established the public ministry of the word. Again, we look in vain if we seek to find a simple passage from Scripture which instituted the public ministry in the same way, for example, that Christ instituted baptism or the Lord’s Supper. That God has indeed ordained a public ministry as a means of exercising the New Testament ministry may be seen from many things which God has revealed. It may be seen from the need for a call. “And how can they preach unless they be sent?” (Ro 10:15). At times such calls were direct (Is 6:8; Jr 1:4ff.; Ex 3:10; Mt 10:1; Ac 22:21). Ordinarily God calls through the church (Ac 6:1ff.; Tt 1:5). God’s plan for public ministry may be seen from the qualifications which Scripture has set down for such ministry (1 Tm 3:1-12), the fact that those who serve in it are special gifts of God to His church (Eph 4:11-13) and that public ministers are appointed by the Lord (1 Cor 12:28). That the public ministry is divinely instituted may be seen from the fact that God has provided that those who serve full-time in the church receive their livelihood from the church ...

We rightly speak of a divinely instituted public ministry. That does not suggest, however, a ministry which is essentially different from the universal priesthood. First of all, public ministry takes nothing away from the ministry which is given to all believers. All believers have the right and responsibility to confess their faith before men. All may go directly to God with their supplications and sacrifices of praise. If anything the public ministry reinforces the ministry of all believers for the church determines the needs, establishes the offices and calls those who are to serve in public ministry. Secondly, the public ministry proclaims the same gospel. It has the same purpose, the salvation of souls. The public ministry and the universal priesthood are two species of the same genus. Public ministry is a special way or form of practicing the one ministry of the gospel which is done in the name of Christians who have the right to call. There is but one Lord, one office or ministry, one gospel, and one purpose ...

It also follows that all Christians, including those called into public ministry, are equal before God. “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi’... ‘father’... ‘teacher’... the greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Mt 23:8-12). All Christians are equal, but not all are equally qualified to perform publicly the functions of the ministry. Not all are qualified to teach, to divide law and gospel, to provide leadership in the church, to judge teaching and practice within the church, etc. God is a God of order (1 Cor 14:33,40) and has provided for an orderly way for the church to carry out its ministry. He recognizes the needs of his church at any given time and place. He gives to the church men who are qualified to supply those needs (Ro 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:7-16). He has instructed his church to find and use the necessary gifts through the divine call. At the same time God himself promises to work through his church. Those who are properly called are his own appointed public ministers of the word. “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jr 3:15). “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” (Ac 20:28; cf. also 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). It is also God’s will that the church gratefully receive and employ the gifts he has given (1 Tm 3:1-13, Tt 1:6-9). At the same time the fact remains that all Christians are equal before the Lord. No

Christian has any authority in the church above and beyond that which the church has properly conferred upon him...

Nor does Scripture make any undue difference between those directly called by God and those whom he calls to ministry through his church. We said, at times God did call directly. Many of the prophets in the Old Testament were called directly by God (Is 6:8; Jr 1:4ff.; Ex 3:10). In the New Testament the twelve apostles received a direct call from the Lord (Mt 10:1). So did the apostle Paul (Ac 22:21). Direct calls were received from God at a specific time, to perform a specific function. They also had the gift of inspiration (1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pt 1:19-21). However, direct calls did not confer generically different functions. Though the prophets and apostles were authoritative teachers in the church (Eph 2:20), they were engaged in the one and same ministry of the gospel. Furthermore, preaching and teaching in both testaments was not limited to those who were called directly by the Lord. It should be no surprise when Paul refers to Timothy as a brother and fellow-worker (1 Tm 3:2), and Peter calls the leaders in the congregations of Asia Minor fellow elders (1 Pt 5:1). (9)

This public ministry is not to supplant the universal priesthood, ruling over and even robbing believers of their God-given ministry. Nor is it to be swallowed up by the universal priesthood as something extraneous and not especially necessary. It is God's institution, His gift to the church. But its functions are the same as those of the universal priesthood. Its work is to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments that sinners be converted, faith strengthened, and sanctification furthered. So Paul reminded the Corinthians when he stated that he and Apollos were "only servants through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (1 Cor 3:5). The difference lies in the word PUBLIC. Those in the public ministry carry out on the behalf of fellow believers various responsibilities of the gospel ministry as entrusted to them by those fellow believers. As representatives of those believers and in their behalf they perform publicly the responsibilities of the universal priesthood so that all in God's church maybe "done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor 14:40) ...

Martin Luther, the Reformer, in his inimitable way wrote of the connection between the universal priesthood and the public ministry in this one ministry of the church. He said, "For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office, but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude ... and he becomes a Christian like any other ... This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching ... and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests" (LW 13:332) ...

Professor August Pieper stated, "It is necessary to differentiate between the public office and the individual priesthood if there is not to be complete confusion in the Church. The public ministry has indeed the very same functions as the individual priesthood, but the 'use' is an entirely different one. The individual priesthood is carried out by each Christian in Christ's and his own name alone ... wherever he is alone and where he alone comes into consideration. As soon as others are present with him who are priests the same as he, immediately the congregational right goes into effect and curtails the outward exercise of the individual priesthood to a certain degree, to that degree, namely, where the exercise would negate the same rights of the other spiritual priests." (10)

Public ministry is not a term found in the Bible. By public ministry we do not mean ministry which is conducted in view of the public as opposed to that which is conducted in private. We mean ministry which is conducted on behalf of, in the name of, and in the place of other members of the universal priesthood of all believers...

Jesus instituted only one ministry, the ministry of the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; etc.). But it is clear that there is a public aspect of that ministry alongside of the ministry carried out individually by all members of the universal priesthood. It is clear from the Bible, first of all, from the clearly stated need for such public ministry ... (Ro 10:14-15) ... It is also clear from the Bible that what we call public ministry was intended by Christ to be an aspect of Christian ministry. St. Paul as an apostle of Christ claims that God himself gave him his ministry. He writes, "God ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). Paul frequently calls himself an apostle

of Christ by the will of God” (1 Cor 1:1) ... It is clear that although Paul received a direct call from Christ for his work as an apostle he considered others who did not have a direct call from God nevertheless to have been given their public ministry by God. He said to the Ephesian elders, “Guard 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” (Ac 20:28) ...

That public ministry is not different in essence from the ministry which Christ has given to all members of his church can be observed in two ways when reading the New Testament.. Although the public ministry derives from Christ himself, no separate word of institution is given for public ministry as opposed to the service of the universal priesthood. Also, the Bible gives no duties or forms of service to public ministers which all Christians do not already have ...

The public ministry differs from the ministry of all believers only in that it is public. It is carried out on behalf of, in the name of and in the place of other believers. This is clear from the Bible in the many passages which describe public ministry as a service and responsibility for other believers. The public ministry is to be entrusted “to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tm 2:2). They are told, “Be shepherds of the church of God” (Ac 20:28). St. Paul asks, “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe” (2 Cor 3:5). Paul was sent out by other Christians (Ac 13:1-2), and he was accountable to the ones who sent him out in their name (Ac 14:26-28; 18:22) ...

The public ministry does not in any way detract from the ministry of all believers. There is no word of Scripture which says that a public minister relieves or limits the ministry of every priest in the church. (11)

A special form of that one ministry of the gospel ... is the public ministry, that is, ministry which one is called to do in the name of and on behalf of one’s fellow Christians. Here again I am confident we are in agreement that there is no essential difference between the personal ministry Christ has given to every Christian (universal priesthood) and public, or representative, ministry. A study of the Scriptures makes it clear that no duties are assigned to public ministers that have not also been made the responsibility of every believer ...

There are certain functions of the ministry of the gospel, however, that can hardly be carried out by all at the same time without disorder and confusion, e.g., preaching in the worship service and administering the sacraments when the congregation is gathered together. There are also functions of the ministry for which not all Christians are equally trained or gifted ... It is for this purpose that Jesus instituted the public ministry. Luther writes:

You should put the Christian into two places. First, if he is in a place where there are not Christians, he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love, even though no man calls him to do so ... Second, if he is at a place where there are Christians who have the same power and right as he, he should not draw attention to himself. Instead he should let himself be called and chosen to preach and to teach in the place of and by command of others. (LW 39:310) ...

The Confessions likewise emphasize the need for a call by a body of believers: “Nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called.” (AC XIV) ...

The public ministry, ministry in the name of and on behalf of a group of Christians, is a divine institution. It did not simply develop in the church as a matter of expediency; nor was it merely derived from the universal priesthood. The Confessions state:

The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it. (Ap XIII,12)

This confessional statement echoes the way the Scriptures speak. Though one will search in vain for a direct word of institution for the public ministry as, e.g., for baptism, the Scriptures assume the existence of



what we have come to call the public ministry. The need for a call (Ro 10:15), the listing of qualifications (1 Tm 3; Ti 1), the Lord's command "that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16; cf. also 1 Tm 5:18), the counsel to honor and obey one's spiritual leaders (He 13:7,17), the Pauline example of appointing elders (Ac 14:23), the Pauline command to Titus to appoint elders (Ti 1:5), all of these make it clear that public ministry is God's will for his church. Public ministers of the gospel are Christ's own gifts to his church (Eph 4:11ff). Those who exercise spiritual oversight in the name of and behalf of a group of believers are established in that position by the Holy Spirit himself (Ac 20:28). (12)

In short, public ministry is essentially the same as the universal priesthood of believers except that public ministry is ministry or service carried out in the name of and on behalf of other Christians.

## THE CALL

Here belongs a study of what we understand by "the call" into public ministry. The authority to call someone into public ministry is derived from the authority to preach the gospel. Since Jesus gave the keys to all believers, only believers may designate, select, elect, choose, appoint, or "call" those who will serve in their name and on their behalf. It should go without saying (but better not go without saying) that believers should call only those who are properly trained for the ministry they are to carry out on behalf of others. Also, if an individual is convinced that he has the gifts to carry out a certain task or function in the name of and on the behalf of other believers, and if that individual has the time and desire to do so, that does not at all mean that the individual may claim the "right" on his own to do so. Accordingly, Art. XIV of the Augsburg Confession states, "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." Scripture indicates the necessity of a call in the well-known words from Ro 10, "How can they preach unless they are sent?"

God called the prophets and apostles directly (or immediately). In the New Testament God often called people into service indirectly (mediately) through other believers. Thus public ministers have a double accountability: to God who called them (1 Cor 4:1-4; He 13:17) and to the believers through whom God called them (Ac 14:26-28; 18:22). Since Scripture teaches that the ministry of the gospel has been given only to the church, only groups of believers may call and confer the ministry to public workers.

The calling procedure is not mandated in Scripture. Mediate or indirect calls were issued in a variety of ways: drawing lots (Ac 1:26), congregational participation (Ac 6:1-6); appointment (Ac 14:23; Ti 1:5). In churches today "a call" could be formal, such as the calling of a pastor, teacher, staff member, synodical administrator, or an election process for a congregational officer, or it might be informal, such as when a Sunday School superintendent asks an individual to serve as a Sunday teacher. The only things a calling body would want to keep in mind are that the calling procedure is carried out in good order (1 Cor 14:33,40) and in love (1 Cor 14:1).

As can be seen from Ac 6 (the calling of deacons), Ac 13 (the calling of the first "foreign" missionaries), and 2 Cor 8:19 (the selection of Titus to assist in administering the offering for the believers in Jerusalem), the normal process for calling would begin with a group or groups of believers determining their needs and then designating the form which the public ministry would take.

Maybe you are aware of the fact that there are some in our synod who are worried that the staff ministry program will eventually lead to the desire of some in those to become pastors via the "quickie" route, that is, after four or five years in the staff curriculum and after a few years experience in the parish, someone in a staff ministry position would say, "Hey! I think I'd like to be the pastor of my own church. How can I get my name on a congregation's call list?" That would not happen as long as we retain our brotherly system of relying on district presidents to supply call lists.

However, don't ask me for a prediction regarding what will happen if we are faced with a severe shortage of pastors. Could it happen that some day some where in our church body one pastor would end up serving a "field of churches" and supervise the ministry of others in each congregation who have had less total training and who are serving the congregation part-time while also "tent-making"? Yes, I suppose that could

happen. And, by the way, there would be nothing unbiblical about that arrangement if the church in love and in good order designed it that way.

A paragraph from Professor Gawrisch's 1991 convention essay is in order:

The call, by which those in the public ministry receive their office, spells out the duties and scope of their work. It defines the area of responsibility entrusted to them. It indicates whether that is to serve an entire congregation as its sole pastor or as a member or a pastoral staff, whether that is to be a teacher in a Christian school, whether that is to administer a synodical office, serve as a missionary in a home or world field, be the director of the special Lift High the Cross offering, be a vicar, a Sunday school teacher, a congregational officer, elder, or some other kind of worker in a wide variety of ministries in the church. The call explains whether the work is full-time or part-time, whether it is on a permanent basis or for a limited period of time, whether the preaching and teaching of the gospel is directly involved or whether it is a supportive kind of ministry, whether it is a salaried or volunteer position. Whatever it may be, it is a ministry, a service, that contributes to the building or strengthening of that spiritual temple of which Christ, the Master Builder, spoke when He declared, "On this rock I will build My church." (13)

## TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

There are two important questions under the topic of public ministry that need to be addressed. The first is this: Is the congregational pastorate as we know it today a special God-ordained, God-instituted form of the public ministry? In his usual clear and Scripture-based tone, August Pieper writes:

The ministry of the church and the congregational pastorate are not simply interchangeable concepts. The concept *the ministry of the church* embraces absolutely all forms of the administration of Word and Sacrament, while the congregational pastorate designates only a specific form of the public administration of the means of grace. Not to distinguish these two concepts, *the ministry of the church* and *the congregational pastorate*, and simply to identify them with one another means confusing everything and arriving at the ill-boding error that actually only the one form, the congregational pastorate, has been instituted by God, whereas every other form is of human origin. As soon as the two concepts are clearly distinguished as genus and species, and what Scripture actually says is carefully noted, everything becomes clear and plain...

Nowhere is it stated as a permanent regulation of the Lord, valid for all times and circumstances: Every local congregation is to have a pastor! Even this is nowhere stated either as a general regulation of the Lord or of the apostles: Every congregation is to have a bishop. Moreover, our present day congregational pastorate is as to form not the same as the bishop office of the apostolic age, nor does a practical directive of the apostles automatically have universal validity and divine authority like a general precept of the Lord ...

It is a fact that the apostles appointed elders and bishops for the congregations which they had founded and that they set specific moral and official qualifications for these appointees. It is also a fact that they demanded of the congregations served by these men love, honor, and caring support commensurate with the service given to them. It is likewise a fact that such elders and bishops are in Scripture expressly declared to have been placed in the congregation by the Holy Spirit. But to construct from these facts a clear, explicit, specific ordinance, valid for all times and circumstances, for our present-day specific form of the ministry of the church, the congregational pastorate, is a complicated exegetical act of violence, a procedure by which our faith is made shaky and Scripture is turned into a wax nose, which can be squeezed into any

desired form. In a practical way this contention can only lead to this that those occupying the congregational pastorate will think of themselves as constituting a special divinely ordained station in the church, having an exclusive divine right to the proclamation of the Word taking place in the congregation and possessing the exclusive power of mediating salvation, while all other forms of the divinely instituted ministry of the church are degraded into mere human offices ...

No, there is in the Scripture of the New Testament no explicit prescription, no word of institution of universal significance and binding force, for any specific form of the New Testament ministry of the church, if one excludes the apostolate, which is something special ...

[“Some try to link the institution of the public ministry with the institution of the apostolic office. This is hardly plausible, though, since the office of apostle was a distinct, non-transferable office. The apostolic office is evidence, however, of the Lord’s intent that his church be served by spiritual leaders.” (14)] The Lord directly and personally calls and sends and instructs the apostles; but nowhere does he say that in every local congregation an elder, bishop, pastor, evangelist, prophet, shepherd and teacher, deacons, such as admonish, speak in tongues, work miracles, heal the sick are to be elected and engaged. In establishing various offices, the apostles nowhere cite a command, a commission, or an authority bestowed upon them by the Lord to do so. And yet they establish the episcopate and the diaconate, the office of elder without teaching activity (1 Tim 5:17), and other offices in the church; and the congregations willingly receive them and make use of them for their own edification and for the spreading of the Word ... But who would be so naive as to deduce universally valid regulations and arrangements binding for the church of all times and places from these procedures and instructions! ...

The situation is not that the church officials listed in Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 are prescribed for engagement to the church or even to each local congregation. Then we would ... at all times have to elect and engage a council of apostles, prophets (immediately enlightened by the Spirit), evangelists, shepherds, teachers, miracle workers, etc., just as well as shepherds and teachers. On the contrary, these were gifts of the apostolic age, in part immediately endowed for their service ...

Today the Lord gives similar or other gifts, in lesser or greater variety. But we can be certain that today and at all times he gives the church those gifts, offices and forms of office, which it in every age and every place needs. And if today the bishop office of the middle apostolic period has developed into the congregational pastorate, if types of office of that time have changed their form, if some have dropped away altogether, if different ones have been produced by the circumstances of the time, they are for this reason no less gifts of the Lord Christ and products of the Spirit than were those of the apostolic age. (15)

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 ... 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. (16)

There are some who may feel that the paragraphs above are hinting that we ought to do away with the pastoral office as we know it today. I have two responses to that. Both are stated by Professor Pieper in his 1916 essay, “Are There Legal Regulations in the New Testament?” First:

Could the church or a congregation perhaps do away with the present congregational pastorate and introduce a Quaker type of proclaiming the Word? This certainly does not follow from what has been stated above ... To give up the glorious divine gift of the congregational pastorate,

similar to the episcopate of the middle apostolic age, though not identical, without offering something better and of equal value in its place, would mean despising God's gift for the edification of his kingdom of grace and would be hindering the same. (17)

However, here's his second point in response to those who think that the Pieper or anyone else may be suggesting that we do away with the pastoral office as we know it today:

One matter ought still to be brought out in this connection. On the one hand, a little congregation of a few souls in some remote nook of the world ought not to be charged with despising God's gifts or the gospel if it does not engage a recognized pastor but gets along with the best gifts which it has in its own midst, as this had to be done by the first congregations founded by Paul in Pisidia. On the other hand, however, it is evidently a curtailment of the edification of the church as taught in Ephesians 4 when a large congregation contents itself with a single pastor, whereas it could have and engage more. And often enough it is not merely financial considerations of the congregations but also monarchical and other fleshly inclinations of the one pastor which stand in the way of the engagement of several pastors ...

If in our congregational pastorate we have more or less copied the episcopate of the apostolic age, why do we not then also want to imitate the multiple episcopate for large congregations, as it existed at the time in Ephesus and other larger congregations? Why do we cling so tenaciously to the monarchical form of the congregational pastorate, even when it is evident that a single man cannot give each of the souls entrusted to him the proper attention at the right time? This is a clear human intrusion into Christ's government of the church. He gives the necessary gifts for the edification of the church, and we withhold them from it. In large congregations the monarchical pastorate is not the form of the public congregational office intended by Christ, as is evident from the fact that it is not in keeping with the purpose of the God-desired edification of all souls ...

Indeed, as far as the form of the public ministry of the church is concerned, there is no external regulation, either of a legal or evangelical kind ... Here we have been give freedom ... Why do not we Lutherans learn something in this matter of spiritual freedom from the Reformed churches round about us? They know how to draw the laity into the service of the church, also in the individual congregations and how to make them co-workers of the pastor. It's remarkable! No church has set forth the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians more clearly and emphasized it more strongly than the Lutheran church, and especially the Lutheran church in America. And no church puts this doctrine less into practice. Among us the laity is largely consigned to listening and doing nothing in the congregation, and the pastor wants to do everything by himself. The result is that we often succumb under the work, and many things that need to be done remain undone. This is to a large extent due to a wrong, monarchical, monopolistic view of the office, according to which the pastor concentrates all church offices, even the purely external ones, from preacher to janitor, in his own person...

Let us get rid of this erroneous tradition. Let us recognize that there is no divinely instituted and prescribed form of the ministry, even for the administration of Word and sacrament, that the Holy Spirit here works freely through free Christians, that the edification of the church amidst the social development of the world is the real guide for the forms of the ministry of the church. Let us realize that God gives each congregation the needed gifts, gives them also among the laity for the ultimate perfecting of the church, and just through us wants to equip these gifts. Where we do not have people with expertise without our doing, let us therefore for assistance in our office draw in gifted lay people who can also work in doctrine. This would be better than our present-day Sunday school teachers, taken over from Reformed sects, who are frequently wholly incompetent...

It is wrong when the matter is presented in such a way as if God through an explicit regulation instituted only the one form of the ministry, the congregational pastorate ... and thereby stamped it as one that is specifically divine and indispensably necessary, whereas all other forms of the public teaching ministry are purely by human right. This viewpoint not only has no basis in Scripture (and, thank God, also nowhere in our Confessional Writings), but it also brings in a legal element into the purely evangelical economy of the New Testament. This viewpoint can only work harm. It can only lead to an unevangelical overevaluation of the congregational pastorate and to immaturity and inactivity on the part of our Christian people. That is something from which we are already suffering to excess, whereas spiritual maturity is the distinguishing characteristic of God's children of the New Testament. (18).

The second important question regarding public ministry is this: Can one serve in the public ministry of the church without being involved directly with preaching and teaching the word and/or administering the sacraments? Professor Valleskey's recent essay says it well:

The Scriptures themselves, which prescribe no specific forms of the public ministry give us some examples of ministry done in the name of and on behalf of the congregation that did not directly involve the administration of the means of grace.

The seven "deacons" of Ac 6:1ff, for example, were not called by the congregation to preach the word or to administer the sacraments ... Their assignment was to assist with welfare work in the congregation ... They were not directly involved in word and sacrament ministry, but they did serve in an important supportive capacity, permitting the over-burdened apostles to "give attention to prayer and ministry of the word" (Ac 6:4).

Writing to Timothy, Paul says, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching"... (1 Tm 5:17).. If some elders labored in preaching and teaching, obviously there were other elders who labored in different areas ... Significantly, ... both those who labor in preaching and teaching and those who are not directly involved in these activities have the same title, elder (presbuteros). If one group, those who labored in preaching and teaching, was in the public ministry, then the other group, who in some way assisted and undergirded those directly involved with word and sacrament ministry, were also in the public ministry.

Both of these examples from Scripture (Ac 6:1ff; 1 Tm 5:17) illustrate the same point: Though the ministry of the church is the ministry of the gospel, we go too far to insist that one must be involved directly in preaching and teaching the word and/or administering the sacraments to be able to say that he or she is involved in the public ministry of the church. It is proper to say that also those whom a grouping of believers have called to support and assist the public preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments are engaging in the public ministry of the church. (19)

Professor Valleskey goes on to quote Luther from his treatise "Concerning the Ministry" to illustrate the point, and then he quotes Professor Emeritus Scharf's 1965 synod convention essay entitled, "The Call to the Public Use of the Keys." In that essay Professor Scarf speaks of those:

who work among us in the public use of the Keys, preaching, teaching, *aiding or guiding* the precious activity of sharing the gospel"... Who of these people has a divine call? They all do... [The call] is simply this that a group of Christians, however great or small, their number matters none, has expressed the desire to have a chosen person to serve them in the public use of the Keys *in one capacity or the other*. And acceptance of that wish, fulfillment of it, completes the essence of the call [emphasis added by Valleskey].

Not all... receive formal calls, diplomas of vocation. Some are ordained, some installed, some inducted, some commissioned, some merely introduced, and some are simply put to work, perhaps even without special mention. Be all of that as it may, as long as members of the church, in whatever way they have gathered to express themselves, have asked the service of these people,... they all have divine calls. (20)

Valleskey goes on to mention other “forms” of public ministry present in our church body. Those details are really for the next paper. But for a complete presentation of the relationship between the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and public ministry, it’s important for this essay to state that the “staff ministry” program as currently getting under way at Dr. Martin Luther College will produce graduates who will be called into public ministry, even if the staff ministry role as designed by a particular congregation does not involve direct use of Word and sacraments. Valleskey continues:

Likewise, a congregational member who is asked to serve in the name of the congregation in the congregation’s ministry of word and sacrament, either directly, e.g., as an evangelism caller, or supportively, e.g., a congregational officer, is serving in the church’s public ministry.

There will always be gray areas. In some cases, as Joel Gerlach brought out in an essay entitled, “”The Servant’s Call,” it will “depend on how the church views the task in relation to its ministry.” (21)

A caution is in place:

To say that one can be involved in the public ministry of the church even when he is not directly involved with preaching or teaching the word or administering the sacraments is not to suggest that every time a person does some work for his congregation, e.g., participates in a workday or helps with a mailing of the monthly newsletter, that then he or she is exercising the office of the public ministry. Both Ac 6:1ff and 1 Tm 5:17 describe a call to some kind of on-going leadership role ... It does not have to be a full-time position. It could have a specific time limit ... It will, however, involve more than simply responding to a general call for volunteers. Public ministry, the Scripture indicates, carries with it some kind of leadership role, though the scope of leadership will not be the same in every form of ministry. (22)

Professor Valleskey’s mention of “leadership” is the transition word into the final section of this essay. But before I go on, please note that a list of roles and tasks is offered in an appendix. If there is time later in the conference, individuals or groups could work through the list to determine if they can reach consensus on whether an item listed is “personal ministry” or “public (representative) ministry.” (See Appendix A)

### III.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

What if the pastor has spent every waking moment serving to the best of his ability as a faithful shepherd, what if he lives and breathes love for the members, what if he - the called spiritual shepherd - has given his all for the congregation and has become convinced that a certain course of action is the direction the congregation ought to go. But now he’s got all these “ministers” running around the church and all kinds of them claiming, “I have a call”? How will this pastor and these people avoid confusion? I mean, “Who’s in charge?” If the officers of the church, council members, Sunday School teachers, Lutheran elementary school teachers, Ladies’ Aid chairman, committee chairman, and every Tom, Dick, and Mary have “a call” and are

serving at least part-time or in a limited way in public ministry, what's to prevent them from running roughshod over the pastor?

I believe the answer lies in a clear understanding and application of "biblical leadership." The best passage to illustrate biblical leadership is Mk 10:35-45 (and its parallels). On one occasion near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, the sons of Zebedee, "the Sons of Thunder," approached Jesus with an open-ended question, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want Me to do for you?" He asked: They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." You know, of course, what they were asking for. They wanted seats of honor next to Jesus: They wanted to be big shots in His kingdom. They wanted to be leaders.

The Lord Jesus knew; and we do, too, that they were wrong on two accounts. First, they had a wrong view of His kingdom. Obviously they still thought that He was going to Jerusalem to establish some sort of earthly kingdom. "You've kept Your power pretty well under wraps, Jesus. But we know you've got it, and lots of it. We've seen you use it! You've been telling us about this kingdom business, but You also keep adding talk about suffering and death. We can't believe You're serious about the death part, but we do like the kingdom part. In fact, we are convinced that You could use Your power to wipe out the Romans and all Your enemies and set up a pretty decent kingdom. And we don't want to miss out on the action. So when You're ready, remember, we asked you first! We want to be right there in the thick of the action. We'll remain loyal to You, stick by You no matter what, because in the end we want to bask in the glory, the limelight. Lord, we figure You couldn't do any better than choosing us to be co-prime ministers."

Jesus knew what was on their minds. So in love and patience, He tried to redirect their thinking, "You don't know what you are asking ... Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" In other words, "Don't you know that people close to Me are going to suffer? Can you drink the cup of suffering as I am about to drink it? Are you willing to be inundated and overwhelmed with suffering as I am about to be?" In ignorance and simplicity they replied, "We can!" That's when Jesus injected a bit of reality for them, hinting at the kind of experiences they would be going through as His followers, "You will [indeed] drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with ... But, as far as positions of honor, let's leave that up to the heavenly Father."

In the meantime, the other ten disciples apparently overheard the request and, as Mark describes, "became indignant." "Hey! How dare those two try to get ahead of us! We've got just as much right to positions of honor and leadership as they do! We've spent just as much time with Jesus. Who do those wise guys think they are ... trying to scramble ahead of us, will they? Well, we've got a right to be leaders, too. Hey, Jesus! Let's be fair! We're in this too, You know!"

That's when Jesus, ever the patient and loving Teacher, called all His disciples close to Himself and said, "It's time for us to have a little chat. Sit down, boys, and listen up! I want to explain something that you really need to know. It has to do with this 'leadership' business. Here's how it works in the world - you know, among the unbelievers - Those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people, and their high officials exercise authority over them. That's the way it is, isn't it? In the world words like authority, control, and 'in charge' take on a negative connotation. Even the word "leadership" is a negative concept for most folks. You know how it is, don't you? How many leaders do you know who are kind and caring and considerate. Not many, right? Most aren't. Most people who are leaders, who are entrusted with authority, who are 'in charge', pick on all those below. They step on the little people. Sure! There probably are a few exceptions. But I'm willing to bet that most leaders in the world that you know are top-down sort of people. You know, 'My way or the highway.' That's just the way it is in the world.

"But not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (diakonos), and whoever wants to be first must be slave (doulos) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (diakonathatai), but to serve (diakonasai) and to give His life as a ransom for many. That's what greatness in My kingdom is all about. That's true biblical, Christ-like leadership. Being a leader has nothing to do with wielding authority. Being a leader does not mean stepping on people or demanding your way. In My kingdom the pyramid tips upside down. The leaders are on the bottom, serving and holding everyone else up. In

My Kingdom leaders serve; leaders minister. In My Kingdom leaders serve as I serve. You know I could have come into the world, snapped My almighty fingers, and demanded that everyone and everything bow down to Me. But I didn't do that. Instead, I came into the world to give - of Myself. I came into the world fully aware that all people are tremendously needy. I came into the world knowing that people don't need someone to push them around or tell them what to do. God's holy law already told them what to do and pushed them around, and down, to hell. I came into the world knowing full well that all humans need to be loved and accepted because by their nature and by their actions they are unlovable and unacceptable before God, unloved and unaccepted by God. I came into the world knowing full well that all humans need worth and significance because by their nature and by their actions they are unworthy before God. I came into the world knowing full well that all humans would be left alone forever because by their sinful nature and sinful actions they deserved to be abandoned by God. But I am the Son of Man, the true God-man, the ultimate Leader. And the best way I can exercise My leadership is not to push people around or tell them what to do, but to serve them, to take the responsibility for meeting all their needs, to take the initiative in selfless love and give of Myself." That's leadership - true leadership, biblical leadership, Christ-like leadership.

Since our God is a God of order and infinite wisdom, He has seen fit to establish order in the world: in society, in government, in the home, in the visible church. Why? So leaders can take advantage of people? So leaders can get honor and glory by stepping over and on others below? No! God established order in the world so that He could channel blessings to people.

Is it true that sin may at times get in the way? Is it true that the God-established order sometimes gets botched and broken? Is it true that sometimes leaders pick on the little people, step on toes, force their opinions, swing their weight around, and make people feel insignificant? Yes! God predicted that that would happen (Gn 3:16). When good order gets goofed up, that's a reminder that this world is not the "be-all-end-all" of our existence.

But the presence and reality of sin doesn't abrogate God's gracious will. He still wants order, and He still wants leaders to be true leaders - accountable to Him and responsible for taking the initiative in selfless love so that the people being served have all their needs met; not pushing down from the top, not pulling or pushing from the side, but underneath, doing everything possible so that the people they serve feel loved and accepted, significant, and are not alone.

Wouldn't it be great if there were no sin in the world, and government officials always had the good and welfare of citizens in mind - a world in which government officials said, "We are going to do everything in our power to make sure our citizens are comfortable and happy. We are going to make sure that we listen to their concerns and involve them in our decisions."

Wouldn't it be great if there were no sin in the world, and employers always had the best interests of employees in mind. A woman at our church told me about a former boss. She works as a med-tech at a factory. Injured workers go to her for first aid. She said that the former owner of the firm was seventy years when he sold the company, but while still in charge, he used to walk the assembly at least once a week. He knew the names of the workers' children. Her new boss just sits in his office in his expensive suit and calls people in to chew them out or fire them.

Wouldn't it be great if there were no sin in the world, and parents always had the best interests of their kids in mind. No abuse. No trauma. No desertion. No divorce. Rather parents who said, "We are going to do everything in our power to make sure that our children grow up to stand on their own two feet -- physically, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually."

That would be true biblical leadership. That would be exercising authority according to God's will. And that's the mindset toward leadership the Lord brings to the church. That's how He wants spiritual leaders to function. If the passage in Philippians is true for all believers, how much more for spiritual leaders, "Let your attitude be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (doulos), being made found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Php 2:5-8)



True biblical leadership for people in public ministry is not something to be grasped but comes as a gift from God and is to be exercised in selfless love.

Sometimes brothers in public ministry wonder aloud whether anyone respects the office of public ministry any more. I believe we need to keep reminding ourselves of something all too obvious: respect cannot be mandated. It is earned by selfless service. Honor doesn't come from a title, but from a heart that exudes undeserved love from Jesus Christ.

If the gathered believers call others to serve with a scope of ministry narrower than mine, then I will work to ensure that the other called workers know I'll do everything I can to make their ministry a joy and privilege. I will serve. If God calls me to a church with a school, and the principle feels that the school is his domain, then I will let him believe that and not grasp control saying, "But I'm the pastor!" Instead I will serve him and give of myself until he sees that I have his best interests and the needs of "his domain" at heart.

If the congregation wishes to use more members in service, then I, as spiritual overseer, will work to ensure they are properly trained, resourced, called, supported, appreciated. Does that mean my secretary has to print up "In nomine Jesu..." every time a job needs to be done? No! The call can be informal, the ministry limited in scope and time. Besides, by the time I get around to training, resourcing, informally calling someone to some task in the name of and on behalf of the other believers, some saint of God has exercised his or her spiritual priesthood and gone ahead and done what needs to be done.

Here's a hot item: Will I allow members to start Bible study groups? It's not a matter of "allow." Who am I to tell Christians they can't read and study their Bibles? But if I'm taking the initiative in selfless love as their spiritual leader, I'll provide every possible means for people to be spiritually fed, keeping them involved in the primary spiritual "feeding station" - worship, Bible study at church, personal Bible reading and study - refocusing my time so I can offer to those who really prefer small group interaction the best materials, trained leaders, follow-up, advice and counsel, monitoring, etc.

But all that has been said about leadership has been aimed primarily at pastors. That's to be expected. Pastors are the primary audience at a pastoral conference. But I believe tensions could be eased along synodical lines in the same way. Thank God for tensions in synod if they drive us back into the Word to grasp more firmly the gospel, to grasp more surely the principles God offers for thankful living, to apply those truths more lovingly, to work at unity in terminology which Scripture, to develop a more Christ-like spirit and practice of biblical leadership. Then synodical, district, conference, and circuit leaders will see their role as spiritual leaders who are accountable to God for taking the initiative in selfless love so that all whom they serve feel loved and accepted, significant ("We're informed, and we're being heard!"), and not alone.

Do you see the interesting paradox? Just as God is both holy and forgiving, just as churches both care for believers and reach out to unbelievers, so leaders are both "servants serving from underneath" and "leaders out in front." Of course, the old saying is probably true, "If you're three steps in front you're a leader. If you're ten steps in front, you're a target." That just underscores the important of balancing both a "servant-mindset" and "proactive leadership." If God calls me to be a leader, then I do have a responsibility to help the group know, "Hey! Here's where we are going!" But the trick is to do so in a way that individuals in the group sense, "My opinions have been heard and valued, and I know what's going on."

Maybe the excursus on leadership took us too far afield. But I believe it's essential for a proper understanding and loving application of the principles of the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and public ministry.

As the Revelation reminds us, in every age of the church's history believers will face struggles: their faith tested, their principles challenged. But as that last book of Scripture also reminds, by faith we reign with Christ. If disagreements and tensions flare up in the church, whether in regard to the doctrine of ministry or fellowship or the role of men and women, then, "To the law and to the testimony!" (Is 8:20). Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

## ENDNOTES

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**APPENDIX A**

## Personal Ministry (P) or Representative Ministry (R)

- \_\_\_ chairman of the congregation
- \_\_\_ member of the evangelism committee
- \_\_\_ nursery coordinator
- \_\_\_ Sunday School superintendent
- \_\_\_ teacher's aide in the Kindergarten classroom
- \_\_\_ WISCO band teacher
- \_\_\_ church office secretary
- \_\_\_ the congregation's janitor
- \_\_\_ congregational property committee chairman
- \_\_\_ neighborhood Bible study started by Mr. and Mrs. Jones who invited a neighbor to join them in the daily Jones' family devotion
- \_\_\_ neighborhood Bible study started by Mr. and Mrs. Smith at the request of the congregation's pastor in order to do bring the gospel an unchurched neighbor
- \_\_\_ Sunday brunch coordinator WLCFS counselor