

Session #5: Speaking the Word as  
Ecclesiastical Supervisor—Part 1

The answer may be yes or no. It depends on the call. If a man is asked merely to perform a necessary but only secular function for the church but is not called to public accountability as an overseer in the church, he is not in the office of the public ministry. However, District presidents who are charged with the oversight of the overseers of the flock...can be properly said to be serving in the office of the public ministry of the church.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The Ministry-Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature. September, 1981. p. 20-21

Besides, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons, as the Levitical priesthood is, but is spread abroad through the whole world and exists wherever God gives his gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers. Nor is this ministry valid because of any individual's authority but because of the Word given by Christ.

Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 324

The specific 'offices' of the ministry are vocationally divisible, and according to the needs and circumstances of the church they can be vocationally apportioned to various men in various ways, individually or in select combinations. As the Treatise declares, the ministry of the New Testament "exists wherever God gives his gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers."

Webber, David, "An Examination of Apology XXVII, 22 in Its Confessional Context," Logia, 10, No. 3. 2001. p. 44

Examples of this in the history of the church are the office of an episcopate, or superintendency, or any other offices, whatever they may be called. But all these offices have their right of existence only insofar as they serve the one great office of the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the sacraments.

A bishop may be entrusted with the task of seeing to the running of a great diocese. But the meaning of such an assignment can only consist in this, that he thereby gives room and support to the Church's ministry. His actual office is the office of pastor, also when he is a pastor for the pastors. By human arrangement he may have the work of superintendency. By divine mandate he has solely the office of preaching the forgiveness and justification of sinners for Christ's sake.

Sasse, Hermann. *We Confess Anthology, We Confess the Church*.  
Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, MO. 1999. p. 71

Some offices in the church cannot be defined with absolute clarity merely by referring to their titles. The call itself should demonstrate why it is a 'call' and not merely an office of employment as a lay worker in the church.

CTCR, The Ministry, p. 31

Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision...

2007 LCMS Handbook Bylaw 4.4.5. p. 190

Not one of these duties is in any way the duty of the pastoral office in the church. The pastoral office is identified with the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. The duties prescribed for the District president in the constitution are a ministry of the law, not of the Gospel.

Perception of the office of district president as a pastoral office confuses law and gospel in the church and destroys both the purpose of the office of district president and the pastoral office in the congregations. The hierarchy in the church serves only the purpose of order; therefore, this ministry is not properly speaking a ministry of the Gospel, but a ministry of law.

Wollenburg, George. "An Assessment of LCMS Polity and Practice on the Basis of the Treatise". *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. April-July 1985. p. 105

Ecclesiastical supervision: The responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies. Such supervision, subject to the provision of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws

2016 LCMS Handbook Bylaw 1.2.1.i p. 22

and resolutions, includes visitation, evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures to assure that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are followed and implemented.

If the office of the Word is entrusted to anyone then all offices that are performed by the Word in the church are also entrusted to him, such as the authority to baptize, to bless, to bind and loose, to pray and to judge or decide matters. The office to preach the Gospel is the highest of all, for it is the true apostolic office that lays the foundation for all other offices that belong to all upon which it is to build...

AE 40:36 Quoted by Walther, Church and Ministry, Harrison, p 288

“We have previously mentioned that a District president remains in the pastoral ministry by virtue of his being called to oversee the pastors and churches...”

Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The Ministry-Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature. September, 1981. p. 33

“In considering the office of the public ministry one must consider the relationship between ‘parish pastors’ and ‘non-parish pastors.’” They note that most are parish pastors, however, “...other kinds of pastors serve to provide a support system for the work of the parish pastor and his congregation.”

Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The Ministry-Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature. September, 1981. p. 20

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20: 25-28