

What Lutherans Believe

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Keith Chuvala, Keith@BackToTheBibleCatechism.com

Office of the Holy (or Public) Ministry

There's much confusion in the Church today surrounding the pastoral office. The Roman and Eastern churches don't seem to suffer from this confusion nearly so much, but among "protestant" and other church bodies born of and after the Reformation, variations and questions abound.

Are pastors necessary? What is a pastor actually supposed to do? Is a pastor a leader, a preacher, an evangelist, a counselor, a CEO, a visionary, some combination of all of these? What does the Bible say?

There's nothing new under the sun. The early church had a problem regarding the neglect of widows. The apostles understood that while other people could be recruited to take care of this problem, not just anyone could preach the Word.

- Acts 6:1-7 _____

These days "social Gospel" sometimes gets more attention than the actual gospel, to the point where the concern of the apostles might seem anachronistic. There's pressure on pastors to spend less time doing those things that the apostles discerned as their calling, and more time on "practical" matters of ministry.

Shouldn't pastors be "tent makers" like Paul, and earn their living apart from the church?

- Matthew 10:9-10 _____
- 1 Corinthians 9:14 _____

God wants the Church to provide for the temporal needs of Her pastors so that they can give their **full attention** to the Word and Sacrament ministry. The more time a pastor spends in prayer and Scripture, the better his preaching, teaching, and pastoral care will be. The best thing for a congregation is for its pastor to live and breathe Scripture as much as possible. It is impossible to be too devoted to prayer and the Ministry of the Word.

(NB: C.F.W. Walther's "The Church & The Office of The Ministry" is a fairly lengthy treatise on this subject, but nonetheless is recommended reading; it gave me a much deeper appreciation for our pastors and God's design for them – and us, the laity.)

What's so "Public" about the Ministry ?

God declares in His word that the church should carry out its functions not only in private by individual actions and interactions, but also corporately. The office is called "public" not because its duties are always discharged in public, but because they are performed on behalf of the entire church. The functions of a pastor called to fill the office of the public ministry are "public" even when they are performed privately with one individual. Also, "public" describes the accountability of the pastor to those who have placed them into "public" office.

And it's a great calling!

- 1 Timothy 3:1 _____
- 1 Timothy 5:17 _____
- Hebrews 13:7 _____
- Ephesians 4:11-12 _____

The Biblical the definition of this "Ministry" is found in many places:

- Acts 6:4 _____
- 2 Corinthians 3:6 _____
- 2 Corinthians 3:8 _____
- 2 Corinthians 5:18 _____
- Colossians 1:23 _____

The word "Pastor" means "shepherd," following the pattern of The Good Shepherd, Christ himself. It's a fine title for the Church to use. The New Testament, even just St. Paul, uses various words in describing the role: overseer ("presbyter"), elder, bishop:

- Titus 1:5 _____
- Acts 14:23 _____
- Acts 20:17 _____
- Acts 20:28 _____

Why do Lutherans have a “Call” process? How is it different from a business-style interview/hiring process?

We are given in scripture a model of selecting men who meet God’s criteria, whom He then places into the office of the public ministry. We have the privilege of being part of the process; it is NOT OUR PROCESS!

- Acts 1:23-26 _____
- Acts 13:2-3 _____
- Acts 14:23 _____
- 2 Cor. 8:18-21 _____

The essence of this role is formally and properly defined in the Augsburg Confession as "teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments" (AC V), both on behalf of and with accountability to God’s church (AC XIV).

So in Lutheran terms, although a pastor functions as a leader, he is not a C-level executive, but he is instead a Divinely called and ordained servant of Christ, and a minister of the Lord's precious gifts to His people. He is an “under-shepherd” of Christ.