

**REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE TO STUDY DIACONAL MINISTRY
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:**

**MANDATE TO THE TASK FORCE ON THE DIACONAL MINISTRY
LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA**

1. **Nature of Task Force:** Ad hoc committee
2. **Appointment:** Appointed by and responsible to the synodical president. The president will present the report of the task force to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and to the Council of Presidents.
3. **Time-line:** Task force in place by December 15, 1993. Report and recommendations presented by September 1, 1995.
4. **Costs:** covered by CTCR budget (1994 and 1995 50/50)
5. **Make-up of committee:**
 - 1 district president
 - 1 parish pastor
 - 1 other church worker
 - 1 CTCR/seminary representative
 - 2 lay people
 - 1 synodical president (advisory)
6. **Mandate:**
 - a. To study the desirability of establishing a diaconate within Lutheran Church-Canada, in the light of the Synod's present and future needs.
 - b. To determine the scriptural/confessional implications of a diaconate, with special attention to the relationship of the diaconate both to the ordained public ministry and to the laity of the church.
 - c. To define the office of diaconate in a manner consistent with Scripture and the confessions, as well as the historical and ecumenical understanding of the office.
 - d. To determine the feasibility of establishing such an office, and to set forth the steps that would need to be taken to do so.
 - e. If deemed feasible, to determine, in preliminary form only:
 - the criteria and qualifications for the diaconate
 - the status of the diaconate within the structure of LCC (roster/how ordered, etc.)
 - requirements and standards for admission to the diaconate.
7. **To be consulted:** Selected LCMS personnel
Representatives of SELK/ELCE/LCA/ELCIC
Representatives of Concordia College

November 18, 1993

SCRIPTURAL, DOGMATIC, AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE [RE]ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIACONATE IN LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA

As Adopted by the Task Force on the Diaconal Ministry January 13, 1995

I. INTRODUCTION: OFFICES AND/OR CHARISMATA?

St. Paul's letters tell how the exalted Lord through the Holy Spirit endowed His bride the Church with both offices and *charismata*. Tensions that have arisen during the past three decades in connection with the charismatic movement may tempt us to play off one of these factors against the other. Thus some might focus on office and its mandates to the exclusion of the contribution to church life of baptised persons exercising the *charismata* given them, while others might allow their preoccupation with *charismata* to blind them to the clear New Testament witness concerning the role of office in the transmission of the spoken and sacramental Gospel and in the proper ordering of the Church.

An instance of the latter brand of onesidedness can be found in the work of Anglican James M. Barnett, according to whom St. Paul:

thought of ministry primarily as a function given by the grace of the Holy Spirit and not in terms of office. And he saw it in the broadest terms: "It was an exercise by each and every member of the Church of his own charism of the Spirit to the edification of all. ...Even apostleship was to Paul a 'spiritual gift.'"²

Barnett's refusal to acknowledge the powerful New Testament evidence concerning the role of office in the life of the Church stems in large part from his commitment to the higher critical method which encourages students of the Bible to pick and choose those parts of Scripture which appeal to them while consigning other portions of the Bible to a lower status. It is significant in this context that Barnett explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to a leading radical practitioner of higher criticism in post-war Germany, the Tuebingen exegete Ernst Kaesemann,³ who argued that:

While there is no real equivalent in the New Testament for our present-day conception of "office," there *is* a concept in Pauline and sub-Pauline theology which describes in a theologically exact and comprehensive way the essence and scope of every ecclesiastical ministry and function - namely, the concept *charisma*.⁴

Kaesemann's dismissal of office in favour of *charismata* was dependent on his distinction between "Pauline and sub-Pauline theology," that is, on his assumption that certain letters ascribed by the New Testament to St. Paul were in fact written well after the apostle's death by one or more of his spiritual heirs. This reconstruction of the New Testament data allowed Kaesemann to insist that in Pauline thought:

There is not even a prerogative of official proclamation, vested in some specially commissioned individual or other. For the Pauline community, the diversity of charismatic functions is normative even for the ministry of preaching; all in their different modes, according to their different grades and within mutually recognized limits, are bearers of the Word of God and contribute to the edification of the community. Even the apostle is, as Paul is always emphasizing, only one charismatic among many, though he may be the most important.⁵

Kaesemann anticipated a later popular phrase with his thesis that "all the baptised are office-bearers"⁶ and he minced no words in his claim that St. Paul set his doctrine of charisma in opposition to the theory of an institutionally guaranteed

² James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: a Full and Equal Order* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981) 21f. The words given in quotation marks are taken from Barnett's teacher Massey H. Shepherd Jr.

³ Barnett 9. See Ernst Kaesemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament" in: *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964) 63-94.

⁴ Kaesemann 63f.

⁵ Kaesemann 81. This author candidly acknowledged that his exposition of St. Paul stands "in direct contradiction to the modern Lutheran understanding of ecclesiastical office; neither can it easily be reconciled with the language used in many official pronouncements of the Reformation." Kaesemann 81.

⁶ Kaesemann 123.

ecclesiastical office.⁷ His failure to recognise St. Paul as the author of the Pastoral Epistles enabled Kaesemann to assert without hesitation that the Pauline community had no presbytery [i.e., clergy] during the apostle's lifetime.⁸ This startling reconstruction of the biblical evidence depends not only on the higher critical judgment that St. Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles (which goes back to the Tuebingen scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur; d. 1860), but also on the view (which was also popularised by Baur) that the narrative recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is a romantic reconstruction of Christian origins composed well into the second century. Awareness of Kaesemann's scholarly antecedents makes clear how he could speak of the antithesis [to the Pauline outlook] which has gained a foothold in the New Testament itself, especially in the Pastorals and in Luke's writings[;]⁹ and of how the Pauline conception of a Church order based on charisma disappeared in the very church the Apostle himself created.¹⁰ Baur's ongoing influence caused Kaesemann to take a predictably dim view of the historical reliability of St. Luke:

The same development is visible in Acts; and here the prevailing attitude stands out even more clearly [than in the Pastorals]. The charisma concept has now completely disappeared. Paul himself is shown as setting up bishops and presbyteries in his communities everywhere, even at this early stage.¹¹ We cannot doubt that it is not a question here of drawing from more or less accurate historical sources but of theological construction all along the line. ...So far as we can see, then, it was Luke who was the first to propagate the theories of tradition and legitimate succession which mark the advent of early Catholicism.¹²

In his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, Ernst Haenchen (who stood in the same theological tradition as Kaesemann) made a similar appraisal of St. Luke's historical accuracy:

...here we have no collaborator of Paul telling his story, but someone of a later generation trying in his own way to give an account of things that can no longer be viewed in their true perspective. That this writer venerated Paul and sought in every way to bring his achievements to light, to make them "tell," that much is evident from every line he devotes to the Apostle -and quite half of Acts is concerned with Paul. Yet it is no less evident that the real Paul, as known to his followers and opponents alike, has been replaced by a Paul seen through the eyes of a later age, and that the primitive age of Christianity is not described here by one who lived through the greater part of it.¹³

The rubber of the foregoing review of a certain brand of higher criticism hits the road when we turn to Acts 14:23, which tells how Sts. Paul and Barnabas appointed presbyters in the churches founded during their first missionary journey. By this stage Haenchen's commentary will cause us no surprise:

That Paul and Barnabas everywhere appointed elders agrees indeed with Titus 1:5, but not with the community organization which emerges from the genuine Paulines. Luke has simply taken for granted that the ecclesiastical constitution of his own day already existed in the time of Paul.¹⁴

Those who take a different view from Haenchen and Kaesemann of St. Luke's reliability as a historian will be obliged also to differ from these scholars' understanding of the role of office in the churches of the apostolic age. It is of the utmost significance that in Acts 1:15-26 St. Peter supervised the process whereby Matthias replaced Judas not in his *charismata* (!) but precisely in his office (*diakonia*, vs. 17, 25; *episkopee*, vs. 20b; *apostolee*, vs. 25). Only if we depart from the Church's traditional acceptance of Holy Scripture as the fully inspired and absolutely inerrant Word of God shall we be able to allow the New Testament evidence concerning *charismata* to drown out the equally biblical testimony to the centrality of office in the

⁷ Kaesemann 84. This statement stands or falls with the higher critical denial of Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

⁸ Kaesemann 86.

⁹ Kaesemann 85.

¹⁰ Kaesemann 88.

¹¹ Kaesemann 89.

¹² Kaesemann 91.

¹³ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles; a Commentary* trans. R. McL. Wilson and others (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 116.

¹⁴ Haenchen 436.

life of the Church. It is salutary to note that St. Paul in fact unquestionably accords a certain primacy to office over *charismata*, and that he does this for the sake of the Gospel. The writer of a major study on *Diakonia* has put it well:

If 1 Cor. 12:1-11 is not a programme, 1 Cor. 12:28 is. The whole descriptive exercise of chapter 12 has been to remind people that the community is indeed replete with divine capacities under the divine guidance but that on this side of heaven the operation is headed by those who hold the authority of the word. The variety of life is not the principle of life; life remains the outcome of the ministry of the word.¹⁵

II. OFFICE(S) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

A bewildering plurality of offices?

At first sight the New Testament appears to attest the establishment of a dazzling variety of God-given offices in the Church. "And God has appointed in the church first [1] apostles, second [2] prophets, third [3] teachers ..." (1 Cor. 12:28 RSV). "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be [4] evangelists, and some to be [5] pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11 NIV).¹⁶ "If any one aspires to the office of [6] bishop, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1 RSV). "...Appoint [7] elders [Greek "presbyters"] in every town as I directed you" (Tit. 1:5 RSV). "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and [8] deacons" (Phil. 1:1 RSV; see also 1 Tim. 3:8-13). "Let a [9] widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age ..." (1 Tim. 5:9 RSV).

Careful attention to three factors will swiftly bring order to these jumbled data and dissuade us from supposing the New Testament to teach the divine institution of no fewer than nine disparate offices in the Church.

First, there is a close interrelation between the primary offices of apostle, prophet, and teacher, two or even three of which could actually be held simultaneously by one and the same man.¹⁷ The chief mandate laid on the bearers of all three of these interlocking offices was the proclamation of the Word of God, albeit with the nuance that, while the apostle discharged this task on the basis of his eye-witness testimony to the incarnate Word, the prophet did so by orally transmitting God's message to man in the here and now, and the method proper to the teacher was the exposition of the written Word of God available in the Septuagint Bible.¹⁸

Secondly, the terms bishop (*episkopos*) and presbyter (*presbuteros*) denote not two offices, but one (see esp. Acts 20:28, where officers introduced in v. 17 as *presbuteroi* are described as *episkopoi* to whom has been committed the charge of

¹⁵ John N. Collins, *Diakonia; Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 256. That determined emphasis on office has more to do with the Gospel than with the sinful persons of officebearers is made clear by Martin Luther in his 1531 comments on Gal. 1:1. "We see then how good and necessary this boasting and glorying of our ministry is. In times past, when I was but a young divine, methought Paul did unwisely in glorying so oft of his calling in his epistles; but I did not understand his purpose; for I knew not that the ministry of God's Word was so weighty a matter. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith and a true conscience indeed, for that there was then no certainty taught in either the schools or churches, but all was full of sophistical subtleties of the schoolmen; and therefore no man was able to understand the dignity and power of this holy and spiritual boasting of the true and lawful calling, which serveth first to the glory of God, and secondly to the advancing of our ministry, and moreover, to the salvation of ourselves and of the people. For by this our boasting we seek not estimation in the world, or praise among men, or money, or pleasures, or favour of the world; but forasmuch as we be in a divine calling, and in the work of God, and the people have great need to be assured of our calling, that they may know our word to be the Word of God, therefore we proudly vaunt and boast of it. It is not then a vain, but a most holy pride against the devil and the world, and true humility before God." *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians; Based on Lectures Delivered by Martin Luther at the University of Wittenberg in the Year 1531 and First Published in 1535; A revised and completed translation based on the 'Middleton' edition of the English version of 1575* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1953) 35f.

¹⁶ RSV ("And his gifts were that some should be ...") and NEB ("And these were his gifts: some to be ...") might give the impression that St. Paul here means to say that the exalted Christ bestowed *charismata* rather than office(s) on His Church. NIV offers a more faithful rendition of the Greek original.

¹⁷ For Hermann Sasse's argument that Paul, who had been called to the apostolate on the Damascus road, held the office of teacher in the church at Antioch and began the public exercise of his apostolate only after the commissioning recorded in Ac. 13:1-13, see "Apostel, Propheten, Lehrer. Zur Urgeschichte des geistlichen Amtes," *In Statu Confessionis; Gesammelte Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften von Hermann Sasse* ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf 2 vols. (Berlin and Schleswig-Holstein: Verlag die Spur GMBH & Co., 1976) II: 97. See St. Paul's correlation of "teacher" (*didaskalos*) with preacher (*keerux*) and apostle in 1 Tim. 2:7.

¹⁸ See Sasse 97-102.

"shepherding" [*poimainein*] the Church of God; cf. also the casual equation of presbyter with bishop in Tit. 1:5 and 7).¹⁹ Moreover, Timothy's office of evangelist (II Tim. 5:4) involved his membership in the presbyteral college in which capacity he was entrusted with the supervision of other presbyters.

Thirdly, apart from the office of enrolled widow (*cheera*) which belongs in a category of its own, the only New Testament office fully distinct from all the foregoing offices is that of deacon, which is nowhere treated independently but always in relation to the office of presbyter-bishop (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8-13; possibly also Acts 6:1-6, where the Seven are presented as assistants to the Twelve). The New Testament thus presents all subsequent ages with only two offices established for the ongoing governance, nurture, and wellbeing of the Church.

Primary, temporary, and permanent offices

According to Dr. Hermann Sasse (1895-1976), the apostles, prophets, and teachers of the New Testament Church were appointed to their office directly by God Himself without the interposition of any ecclesiastical calling agency.²⁰ Furthermore, while the bearers of these three overlapping offices might make local churches both their base and main focus of operation, their authority extended over the whole Church.²¹ Sasse recounted how the apostolate as such died out within a couple of generations after Pentecost, while the prophetic charism continued until it suffered shipwreck in the Montanist movement which flourished in the late second and early third centuries, and the office of teacher of the whole Church has been occupied by certain major theologians down the centuries. Under the third of these headings Sasse mentions the ambivalent figure of Origen,²² to whom Augustine and Luther might be added from a later date. The offices of presbyter (=bishop) and deacon differed from the trio of original offices in the twofold respect of their being filled by the Lord through a mediate call and of the restriction of their direct sphere of authority to the confines of a local church.²³

Two permanent offices

Recognition that the New Testament attests the establishment of two ongoing offices for the government and nurture of the Church²⁴ is certain to raise Lutheran eyebrows. Informed pastors and laypeople are aware that our fathers, working as they did in the German and Nordic languages, differed from English-speaking Christendom by speaking of the pastorate in terms of "office" rather than "ministry." Another well-known Lutheran distinctive has been a strong emphasis on our Lord's

¹⁹ Among the suggestions made to explain why two distinct terms are used by the New Testament writers to denote one and the same office, those of J. B. Lightfoot and Wilhelm Loehle merit mention. Having noted that the presbyterate arose in Jewish Christian circles, Lightfoot pointed out that, "To the officers of Gentile Churches alone is the term [bishop] applied, as a synonym for presbyter. At Philippi [Phil. 1.1], in Asia Minor [Acts xx.28, I Tim. iii. 1.2; comp. I Pet. 11. 25, v. 2], in Crete [Tit. 1.7], the presbyter is so called. In the next generation the title is employed in a letter written by the Greek Church of Rome to the Greek Church of Corinth [Clem. Rom. 42, 44]. Thus the word would seem to be especially Hellenic. Beyond this we are left to conjecture. But if we may assume that the directors of religious and social clubs among the heathen were commonly so called, it would naturally occur, if not to the Gentile Christians themselves, at all events to their heathen associates, as a fit designation for the presiding members of the new society. The infant Church of Christ, which appeared to the Jew as a synagogue, would be regarded by the heathen as a confraternity." J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903) 20f. Loehle urged that in New Testament usage episcopate and presbyterate "are two names, of which the one alludes to the calling and the other to the dignity of the same office and the same persons, the one deriving from the range of official activity, the other from the factor of personal maturity." Wilhelm Loehle, *Aphorismen ueber die neutestamentlichen Aemter* in: *Gesammelte Werke* ed. Klaus Ganzert vols. (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1954) 5, 1: 285f.; my trans.

²⁰ Sasse 95f. The appointment of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot would seem to make at least a partial exception to this rule (Acts 1:15-26).

²¹ Sasse 96.

²² Sasse 102f.

²³ Sasse 96.

²⁴ In a wide-ranging paper prepared to assist Lutheran Church-Canada's Commission on Theology and Church Relations in its deliberations on "Women in the Church," Pr. Oscar Sommerfeld has written: "So then, it would seem from I Tim. 5:17 that there are not two presbyteral offices, one pastoral and the other non-pastoral. Rather, there are two ecclesiastical offices in the New Testament: the one pastoral (*presbuteros*, *episkopos*), and the other diaconal (*diakonos*). Thayer expresses it in this way: 'Only two ecclesiastical officers, *hoi episkopoi* and *hoi diakonoi*, are distinguished in Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1, 8.' Two ecclesiastical officers: bishops (also called *presbuteroi*, i.e., 'elders,' who are preachers and teachers) - and deacons (*diakonoi*, 'servants'). No other intermediate or para-pastoral congregational office appears in the New Testament." Excerpts from Pr. Sommerfeld's essay *Women and Men in God's New Creation; an examination of male and female roles in the Bible* are scheduled to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Lutheran Theological Review*.

institution of one single office which continues in the pastorate of our Church.²⁵ No real contradiction exists here, however, between the New Testament data and Lutheran parlance. The Book of Concord mentions the diaconate only in passing (Tr 62) and otherwise focuses exclusively on the presbyteral-episcopal office for which its favoured term is *Predigtamt*. The Confessions do not deny the New Testament testimony concerning the diaconate; they simply ignore it to devote their attention wholeheartedly to the *Predigtamt*. Should we be moved by the biblical evidence and the needs of our Church to reactivate an official diaconate among us, then our talk of two offices will need to be accompanied by much clear instruction concerning the institution and mandates of the pastoral and diaconal offices respectively. It will be argued here that the first of these was founded directly by the earthly Jesus in His call of the Twelve, while the second was established under the divine guidance by the officebearers and laity of the primitive Church. The establishment of the pastoral office belongs under the heading of those things which "Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1; RSV) in His earthly lifetime. Instituting the diaconate was one of the things which our Lord continued to do after His glorification, through the Holy Spirit.

III. THE PASTORAL OFFICE FOUNDED BY OUR LORD

Prebyterate and apostolate

Writing at an early stage of his distinguished career, Sasse overlooked vital New Testament evidence when he abruptly fastened on the monarchical episcopate of the second century as the channel through which the office held by the New Testament apostles, prophets, and teachers has continued in the subsequent life of the Church.²⁶ The actual link between the apostolate and later structures of ecclesiastical office is to be discerned in the presbyter-bishops attested in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles.

Presbyters as officers in the New Testament Church are first mentioned in Acts 11:30. By the time of the council of Jerusalem they are already firmly in place as officers of the Judaeon church, for in Acts 15:6 and 22 they appear as sharers with the apostles in the government of the Church. St. Luke's failure to offer any explanatory note concerning the title introduced at Acts 11:30 has been accounted for in terms of the fact that no "claim of novelty" attached to the term "presbyter," which was the well-known name given to the leading officers of the contemporary Jewish synagogue.²⁷ The most straightforward explanation of the biblical data would be that an office well known in intertestamental Judaism was duly taken over into the structure of the primitive Church. Already on the first missionary journey, Sts. Paul and Barnabas appointed presbyters in the local churches (Acts 14:23). The clear import of St. Paul's command to Titus (Tit. 1:5) is that the appointment of presbyters in each locality is to be a universal feature of church life. A vital clue to the essence of the presbyteral office is given in the explicit readiness of two apostles and the implicit preparedness of a third to ascribe presbyteral status to themselves. St. Peter addressed presbyters as their "fellow presbyter" (*sumpresbuteros*; 1 Pet. 5:2), while St. John styled himself simply "the presbyter" (2 and 3 John 1). Petrine and Johannine usage enable us to solve the problem posed by the seeming twofold ordination of St. Timothy, once at the hands of the apostle himself (1 Tim. 1:6) and again at the hands of "the presbyterate" (*tou presbuterion*; 1 Tim. 4:14). Realisation that St. Paul too presided over presbyteral colleges as being himself a "fellow presbyter" eliminates the need to posit Timothy's having been ordained twice. On the one hand, St. Timothy's ordinator was St. Paul, while at the same time it is equally true to say that he was ordained by a whole company of presbyters, at whose head stood his spiritual father St. Paul.²⁸

²⁵ "A standard scholarly reference work rightly observes that 'strictly speaking only the Lutherans have a doctrine of the office [*Amt*], while at the corresponding place the Calvinists treat of offices, and the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, and in their own way the Anglicans, of the hierarchy...' That is because 'Lutheranism with its doctrine of the preaching office (CA V) as "the" office powerfully underscores the position of the Gospel as the life-giving center of the congregation. ...' Kurt Marquart, "Church Growth" as Mission Paradigm; a Lutheran Assessment; A Luther Academy Monograph Published by Our Savior Lutheran Church Houston, Texas, 1994 46. Marquart here refers to and translates from E. Schott, "Amt," in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [hereafter RGG] 3rd. ed. 7 vols. (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957) I:338-340.

²⁶ Sasse 103.

²⁷ Lightfoot 17. This scholar surmised that the immediate occasion of the founding of the Christian presbyterate was the persecution mentioned in Ac. 12:1ff., which resulted in the martyrdom of St. James the son of Zebedee: "This ...persecution was the signal for the dispersion of the Twelve on a wider mission. Since Jerusalem would no longer be their home as hitherto, it became necessary to provide for the permanent direction of the Church there; and for this purpose the usual government of the synagogue would be adopted." Lightfoot 19.

²⁸ The exercise of authority over presbyters by the apostles, Timothy, and Titus as "fellow presbyters" indicates that one and the same presbyteral/pastoral office can be held by many presbyters in equal measure yet not absolutely equally in every respect. In other words, all presbyters are not entrusted with an equal measure of *episkopee* and there is thus nothing inherently unscriptural in the subordination of one or more presbyters to another. Lightfoot supplied abundant proofs (Lightfoot 25-97) of his hypothesis that the episcopate emerged as a distinct office out of the presbyterate: "If bishop was at first used as a synonym for presbyter and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under

Presbyterate = Predigtamt = Pastoral Office

The New Testament evidence presented thus far highlights the solid biblical foundation of the Book of Concord's teaching concerning the *Predigtamt* (lit. "preaching office") or pastorate. The German version of Tr 10 notes that:

we have a sure doctrine that the *Predigtamt* [pastoral office] derives from the common call of the apostles,²⁹ while the German text of AC 5 confesses that:

In order to procure this [justifying] faith, God instituted the *Predigtamt* to give the Gospel and Sacraments...³⁰ Since pastors are bearers of the office instituted by Christ Himself in the call of the apostles, Ap VII/VIII 28 and 47 teach that they "represent not their own persons but the person of Christ" and that they discharge the mandates proper to their office "in Christ's place and stead" [*Christi vice et loco*].³¹ Tr 60 and 61 specify the mandates laid by our Lord on those who bear the pastoral office, identifying these with the commission given by Jesus to the apostles:

The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confession of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops.³²

IV. DIAKONIA - A TERM TO BE HANDLED WITH CARE

A 13-page entry in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* has exerted vast influence across confessional and geographical boundaries in the life of 20th-century Christendom. Writing in 1935, the German scholar H. W. Beyer offered an explanation of New Testament usage of the verb *diakoneo* and its cognates *diakonia* and *diakonos*³³ which has been little questioned until recent years. Beyer claimed that, among the New Testament words expressing the idea of service:

whom the presbyters served, the episcopate properly so called would seem to have been developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localisation but out of the presbyterate by elevation: and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them." Lightfoot 24f. Lightfoot's understanding of the nature of the bishop's office as a supervisory station within the presbyterate is compatible with the approval given to episcopacy in Ap 14. *The Book of Concord; The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959) [hereafter Tappert] 214; *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* 8th ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) [hereafter BS] 296. The synodical and district presidents of Lutheran Church-Canada are appropriately regarded as bishops in the sense delineated by Lightfoot, and AC XXVIII, 22 is to be read as applying to their office: "On this account parish ministers and churches are bound to be obedient to the bishops according to the saying of Christ in Luke 10:16, 'He who hears you hears me'" (Tappert 84; BS 124, 5-8 German). These officers of our Church are not bishops, however, according to the understanding of episcopacy popularised by an Anglican of different stripe from Bishop Lightfoot, namely John Henry Newman, who in the first of the *Tracts of the Times* (1833) insisted that bishops hold an office intrinsically different from that held by presbyters and that only those presbyters who have received episcopal ordination can be considered to have received valid ordination. Against such a conception of episcopacy, Tr 65 insists: "But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right" (Tappert 331; BS 490, 65-68 Latin).

²⁹ "haben wir ein gewisse Lehre, dasz das Predigtamt vom gemeinen Beruf der Apostel herkommet." BS 474, 9-11.

³⁰ "Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakrament geben ..." BS 58, 2-4.

³¹ "When the sacraments are administered by unworthy men, this does not rob them of their efficacy. For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you hears me.' When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ's place and stead [*Christi vice et loco*]. Christ's statement teaches us this in order that we may not be offended by the unworthiness of ministers. ...the sacraments are efficacious even when evil men administer them, for ministers act in Christ's stead and do not represent their own persons, according to the word (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you hears me'" (Luke 10:16). Tappert 173, 177; BS 240, 40-47; 246, 15-19. This definition of the pastoral office has perhaps been best publicised through the Lutheran formula of Holy Absolution.

³² Tappert 330; BS 489, 32-38 Latin. Cf. Tr 31: "Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence" (Tappert 325; BS 480, 31-481, 1 Latin).

³³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Gerhard Kittel ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982) II: 81-93.

diakoneoo has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another.³⁴ Beyer gave his readers the impression that for the New Testament writers *diakonia* is basically synonymous with love of neighbour.³⁵ In pre-New Testament profane Greek usage, according to Beyer, the primary meaning of *diakoneoo* is "to wait at table,"³⁶ while the commonest meaning of *diakonos* is "waiter."³⁷ The occurrence of *diakoneoo* on the lips of Jesus in Lk. 22:27c prompted Beyer to maintain that Jesus' attitude to service is completely new as compared with the Greek understanding.³⁸

J. N. D. Kelly's introductory remarks on I Tim. 3:8 indicate both the influence Beyer has exerted on subsequent scholarship and also the impact made by his interpretation of *diakoneoo* on the discussion of issues related to Christian ethics in general and the pastoral office in particular:

The primary meaning in the N.T. of *diakonein*, from which 'deacon' is derived, is to serve in a menial capacity, such as waiting at table (e.g. Lk. xvii.8; xxii.26f.; Jn. xii.2), and Jesus taught that the role of his disciples, like his own, could be fittingly compared with that of someone who serves at meals. It was the term 'deacon,' or servant, which he employed to express his own revolutionary ideal of human relationships as mutual service involving complete self-sacrifice (Mk. x.43-45; Mt. xx.26-8). By a natural transition, therefore, every kind of service in the propagation of the gospel is in the N.T. described as a *diakonia*.³⁹

Familiarity with certain aspects of 19th-century German Lutheran church history is required in order to understand the passionate commitment from which Beyer went to work on this family of New Testament words.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, a mixture of appalling social conditions and a growing alienation of the people from the life of the Church called forth the "Inner Mission" movement within German Lutheranism. This "program of social action and evangelism"⁴¹ paralleled a roughly contemporary movement in English Protestantism and sought to emulate certain aspects of the work of religious orders within the Roman Catholic Church. Among the leading figures of the German "Inner Mission" was the philanthropist Pastor Johannes Wichem (1808-1881), the founder of boys' homes, whose assistants were known to begin with as "brothers" and later on as "deacons." Another representative of "Inner Mission," Pastor Theodore Fliedner (1800-1864) of Kaiserswerth, was responsible for the appointment of the first Lutheran deaconesses. Florence Nightingale gained her first experience of nursing under Fliedner's auspices in 1851. While some practitioners of "Inner Mission" worked closely with their Reformed counterparts, Pastor Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872) insisted that mission and welfare work proceed from a Lutheran doctrinal basis and within the fellowship of the Lutheran confession. A house of deaconesses arose in Loehe's Neuendettelsau parish. Loehe was concerned for the revival in his own day of orders of deacons and deaconesses who would be engaged in philanthropic works of love springing from faith in the Gospel. Loehe believed such activity to have been characteristic of the deacons mentioned in the New Testament, and the section on *Diakonat* in his *Aphorismen ueber die neutestamentlichen Aemter* is an important statement of what would become a distinctively German Lutheran understanding of *Diakonia*.⁴²

The "Inner Mission"'s accompaniment of mission with philanthropy led to the development within German Lutheranism of the concept of *Diakonie*. A significant fact in the present context is Beyer's reliance in his *TDNT* article on the slightly

³⁴ Beyer 81.

³⁵ "The term thus comes to have the full sense of active Christian love for the neighbour and as such it is a mark of true discipleship of Jesus." Beyer 85 (on Mt. 25:42-44). Beyer overlooked the fact that in the similitude of the sheep and the goats *diakonein* occurs on the lips of the goats, not the sheep. See Collins 64f.

³⁶ Beyer 84.

³⁷ Beyer 88.

³⁸ Beyer 84.

³⁹ J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963) 80.

⁴⁰ See Collins 8-11, and Jeannine E. Olson, *One Ministry Many Roles: Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992) 195-220.

⁴¹ Olson 199.

⁴² Loehe 5, 1: 298-308.

earlier work of Wilhelm Brandt, "whose career, both academic and pastoral, revolved around the Inner Mission."⁴³ What began as a grass-roots response to conditions of human need in the 19th century went on in the next to become an umbrella concept which has increasingly determined the parameters of Christian discourse.⁴⁴ The understanding of *diakonia* found in Beyer's seminal article has left its mark in at least three areas of contemporary Christendom.

First, as the Roman Catholic Church in the documents of the Second Vatican Council reacted against its former stance of unbridled hierarchicalism by recovering the image of the Church as the people of God, it began to stress the common priesthood of the faithful alongside the ministerial priesthood of the clergy, and to ascribe ministerial functions to the former as to the latter.⁴⁵ In keeping with this development, the Roman Catholic bishops of France described the Church in a statement issued in 1973 as "ministerial through and through" (*tout entiere ministerielle*).⁴⁶ The present pope has accordingly rejoiced that the diocesan synods composed of both clergy and laity which began to be held after the Second Vatican Council:

almost spontaneously got rid of the old unilateral emphasis on clergy and became *a means for expressing the responsibility of each person toward the Church*. The sense of communal responsibility toward the Church, felt especially by lay people today, is certainly a source of renewal. In view of the third millennium, this sense of responsibility will shape the image of the Church for generations to come.⁴⁷

Secondly, the pervasive effect of the master concept of *diakonia* is seen in the decision of the World Council of Churches' Lima document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to preface its treatment of the office of ordained ministry with remarks on "The Calling of the Whole People of God." *BEM* departs from the clarity of traditional Christian usage in its note that:

The word *ministry* in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.⁴⁸

The late Dr. Henry P. Hamann, sometime Principal of Luther Seminary, Adelaide, discovered in a footnote in Marcus Barth's massive two-volume commentary on Ephesians that the broad sense of the word "ministry" has been promoted since about 1940 especially by D. T. Niles and the World Council of Churches' Departments of the Laity and Evangelism.⁴⁹ Hamann underscored Marcus Barth's passionate advocacy of "ministry" in the broad sense.⁵⁰ It is significant in our context that this author's father, the famous Karl Barth (1886-1968), was a declared enemy of the Lutheran understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel!

Thirdly, over the past generation the broad sense of "ministry" has been adopted by many Lutherans in North America. Be it noted that this usage is not mandated by the New Testament which, while it presents every believer as a *doulos* (= servant minded to obey and glorify God in the conditions of his/her vocation in the world; see Lk. 1:38; 17:10), pointedly refrains from

⁴³ Collins 6. In 1931 Brandt had published a book entitled *Dienst und Dienen im Neuen Testament* ("Service and Serving in the New Testament").

⁴⁴ Collins 13f.: "...'diakonia' is now widely accepted as a finished product of modern reflection on the linguistic data of the New Testament representing what Jesus was and did, how disciples were related to him and to each other, and both the scope and style of the Christian community's responsibilities. Restored to the language of theology and church life, 'diakonia' is understood as enabling Christians to view the church from a perspective that relates it closely with the Jesus whom early tradition recognised as the man who 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38), the 'man for others' in the modern phrase, and enabling both ordained and lay Christians to view themselves as co-workers in a servant church. This vision has contributed to the development of some new attitudes and initiatives in those churches especially where the relationship of church to society had previously been problematical or where by force of a strongly institutionalised character a church tended to be identified with its ordained ministers. The vision has also served to bring into a clearer focus the ground on which the various Christian denominations might be able to achieve unity."

⁴⁵ Collins 14.

⁴⁶ Collins 27.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* trans. Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee; ed. Vittorio Messori (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994) 163.

⁴⁸ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry; Faith and Order Paper No. 111* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982) 21.

⁴⁹ Marcus Barth II:470; qtd in Henry P. Hamann, "The Translation of Ephesians 4:12 - Necessary Revision," *Concordia Journal* vol. 14 (Jan. 1988) no. 1: 45f.

⁵⁰ Hamann 46f.

depicting every Christian as a *diakonos* (= servant charged with a specific task for or on behalf of the Church). Moreover, the Book of Concord uniformly uses the Latin *ministerium* in reference to the pastoral office and its mandates. Since "priesthood" and "ministry" have had such different connotations in the two Communion, great unwisdom is involved in Lutherans' unthinkingly imitating Roman Catholic language concerning the "ministry" of the laity. Lutherans have traditionally understood all members of the baptised royal priesthood as the objects of God's Gospel ministry rendered through the pastoral office in the Divine Service. The laity are conceived in confessional Lutheran thought as responding to God's Gospel ministry by their priestly work in the world. Reversal of the customary Lutheran distinction between priesthood and ministry tends to obliterate the rightful sphere of activity of the pastoral office and to place the laity under the yoke of the Law precisely where they should, as the royal priesthood, be recipients of the service of the Gospel.⁵¹

A major study published in 1990 has demolished the long-held view that, in New Testament usage, *diakonia* chiefly refers to menial service performed for the benefit of another. Towards the outset of his work, John Collins observes that two scholars active at the end of the 19th century, i.e., at a time prior to the appearance of Beyer's *TDNT* article, explained "deacon" in terms markedly different from those which have become almost universally accepted today:

James Strong emphasised the broad range of meaning of the Greek term in the New Testament, recalled that in the opinion of the philologist Buttman its meaning must be related to "runner, i.e. messenger," and advised against trying to relate the title "deacon" to mere service at table. J. Armitage Robinson was just as little interested in presenting ideas about serving people when he observed that with the Greek common noun the emphasis is on the performance of a task in hand.⁵²

118 pages of Collins' book are taken up with an examination of the uses of the *diakonia* family of words among non-Christian Greek authors prior to and contemporary with the writing of the New Testament.⁵³ It turns out that *diakonos* mainly has the sense of a "go-between" who delivers a message or performs a task in behalf of a superior. A *diakonos* may therefore hold a position of lofty dignity just as easily as he may occupy one of menial service. In his examination of New Testament usage of *diakonos* and its cognates, Collins has called in question the widespread assumption that the apostles and evangelists poured revolutionary Christian content into a heathen word. St. Paul emphasises his official dignity as a *diakonos* of the Gospel (Col. 1:23), thus keeping in line with customary secular Greek usage. Should Collins' conclusions be well founded,⁵⁴ the Luther Bible was right - despite Kaesemann's contrary opinion⁵⁵ - to translate *diakonia* by "office" (*Amt*) in such passages as II Cor. 5:18.

V. THE DIACONATE FOUNDED BY THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Were the Seven of Acts 6 the first deacons?

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, who died around A.D. 200 and who has been called "the most Lutheran of the Church Fathers," had no doubt that the office of deacon was formally established in the apostles' appointment of the Seven recorded in Acts 6:1-6.⁵⁶ The value of Irenaeus' testimony is enhanced by his being the last major figure in the history of the Church to have been vouchsafed personal, albeit indirect, contact with the apostolic age. Irenaeus made much of his early training at the hands

⁵¹ In response to Marcus Barth's sarcastic remark that the traditional translation of Eph. 4:12 means that "...laymen are ultimately only beneficiaries," Henry Hamann asked: "What is wrong about being merely *beneficiaries*? Is that not the implication of the whole Gospel?" Hamann 47. See also Thomas M. Winger, *The Office of the Ministry and Ephesians 4:12 - The Question of a Comma* (Master of Divinity Treatise, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, 1990). Cf. also Marquart 46: "The Reformation confessed the New Testament teaching that everyone is a *priest* but not everyone a *minister*. This great truth is garbled by the Church Growth Movement into the modern populist falsehood that 'everyone is a minister.'" For an example of a modern Roman Catholic bucking an almost universal trend and going in a markedly Lutheran direction, see Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 188: "The Church baptizes to priesthood: it ordains to episcopacy, presbyterate, and diaconate."

⁵² Collins 12.

⁵³ Collins 73-191.

⁵⁴ Hamann 45: "The strange thing is that *diakonia* as far as I can see, is never used that way [i.e., in the broad, all-encompassing sense]. It is always restricted to some special kind of service, some special ministry." Collins' findings and Hamann's hunches are independently verified in Winger 32-45.

⁵⁵ Kaesemann 63.

⁵⁶ *adversus haereses* I.26.3; III.12.10; IV.15.1. See Lightfoot 12.

of Polycarp bishop of Smyrna (martyred in A.D. 155 or 156), who had himself as a young man been closely associated with the Beloved Disciple.⁵⁷

In the Early Church, Irenaeus' connection of the diaconate with the Seven was contested by John Chrysostom, the celebrated patriarch of Constantinople who died in A.D. 407.⁵⁸ Chrysostom's disagreement with Irenaeus concerning the relation of the Seven to the diaconate long represented a lonely minority voice in the Church. Writing somewhat over a century ago, J. B. Lightfoot told the story of the call of the Seven as assistants to the Twelve⁵⁹ as a prelude to his argument that the official diaconate was instituted in this event:

I have assumed that the office thus established represents the later diaconate; for though this point has been much disputed, I do not see how the identity of the two can reasonably be called in question. If the word "deacon" does not occur in the passage, yet the corresponding verb and substantive, *diakonein* and *diakonia*, are repeated more than once. The functions moreover are substantially those which devolved on the deacons of the earliest ages, and which still in theory, though not altogether in practice, form the primary duties of the office. Again, it seems clear from the emphasis with which St. Luke dwells on the new institution, that he looks on the establishment of this office, not as an isolated incident, but as the institution of a new order of things in the Church. It is in short one of those representative facts, of which the earlier part of his narrative is almost wholly made up. Lastly, the tradition of the identity of the two offices has been unanimous from the earliest times.⁶⁰

In support of his contention that the call of the Seven represents the actual establishment of the diaconate, Lightfoot pointed to the congruity between the qualifications for the diaconate spelled out by St. Paul in I Tim. 3:8-15 and the philanthropic duties assigned the Seven in Acts 6.⁶¹ He also appealed to the unwillingness of certain churches at a later date to appoint more than seven deacons in their midst, even when - as in the case of the church at Rome - the duties attached to the diaconate could not possibly be discharged by so few officers, as an indication that the Church's long-term memory remembered the Seven as the first deacons.⁶²

On account of its report that the Seven were selected to superintend the distribution of alms to the Hellenistic widows of the primitive Jerusalem church, Acts 6:1-6 is the prime source of the widely held belief that poor relief formed the chief duty of early Christian deacons. Such an understanding of the nature of the diaconate depends on the Seven's having actually been deacons in the later sense of the word. J. N. D. Kelly has succinctly expressed the case against this assumption:

The origin of a specific order of deacons in the primitive Church has been much discussed, but remains wrapped in obscurity. The traditional explanation, viz. that it is to be sought in the appointment of the Seven (they are nowhere actually termed 'deacons') in Acts vi, is almost certainly wrong. Stephen and his companions were not strictly ministers in any sense analogous to the deacons of the later apostolic and post-apostolic ages. They were *ad hoc* representatives of the interests of the Hellenists with the Twelve, and are depicted as evangelists disputing, teaching, and baptizing alongside them.⁶³

⁵⁷ Eusebius, *History of the Church* 5.20.6.

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homily 14* (on Acts 5:34); qtd Barnett 30.

⁵⁹ Lightfoot 10f.

⁶⁰ Lightfoot 11f.

⁶¹ "Thus the work primarily assigned to the deacons was the relief of the poor. Their office was essentially a 'serving of tables,' as distinguished from the higher function of preaching and instruction. ...St Paul, writing thirty years later, and stating the requirements of the diaconate, lays the stress mainly on those qualifications which would be most important in persons moving about from house to house and entrusted with the distribution of alms." Lightfoot 14f.

⁶² "The Roman Church some centuries later, though the presbytery had largely increased meanwhile, still restricted the number of deacons to seven, thus preserving the memory of the first institution of this office. And in like manner a canon of the Council of Neocaesarea (A.D. 315) enacted that there should be no more than seven deacons in any city however great, alleging the apostolic model. This rule, it is true, was only partially observed; but the tradition was at all events so far respected, that the creation of an order of subdeacons was found necessary in order to remedy the inconvenience arising from the limitation." Lightfoot 12f. See also Olson 37.

⁶³ Kelly 81.

Some scholars - for example, the idiosyncratic Anglican Austin Farrer⁶⁴ - have argued that the Seven were in fact presbyters. Haenchen has observed how "the exegetes so steadily endeavour to turn the Seven into elders!"⁶⁵

Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:8-13

Consideration of the two passages in which St. Paul unquestionably refers to deacons as permanent officebearers of local churches opens up a possible middle way between the opposite poles of affirming or denying the origin of the diaconate in the call of the Seven. The chief clue to the nature of the diaconate given in both these texts is the connection between this office and that of the presbyter-bishops.⁶⁶ J. N. D. Kelly has accordingly surmised that:

The rise of deacons as a regular order of ministers must have been closely connected with that of the *episkopoi* ...whose associates they were. If the *episkopoi* were the 'administrators' (lit. 'governments') mentioned by Paul in I Cor. xii.28, the deacons must have been the 'assistants' (lit. 'helps') to whom he refers in the same breath. Their subordinate, auxiliary role is brought out (a) by the absence of any suggestion that they were responsible for teaching or hospitality, and (b) by the hints that their preliminary scrutiny was, if anything, more rigorous than that of the overseers.⁶⁷

The sober guess that the earliest churches, whether acting alone or in concert with one another, established the office of deacon to supply assistance to the presbyter-bishops does not answer the question where the idea to institute such an auxiliary office came from. The only hint provided by Holy Scripture is that the call of the Seven in all likelihood supplied if not the actual source at any rate the model for the creation of the diaconate. Just as the Twelve were freed for the wholehearted discharge of their office by the complementary collaboration of the Seven, so likewise presbyter-bishops were and are to be positioned for untrammelled concentration on the mandates of their office by the assistance of deacons.

Whatever may have been the actual connection between the diaconate and the Seven, the office whose existence is attested in Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:8-15 was unquestionably a product of the apostolic age. Unlike the apostolic office itself which continues in the presbyterate (pastorate), the diaconate was not immediately established by the Lord Himself. This observation should not, however, become an excuse for any demeaning of the diaconal office. The diaconate is marked by the venerable qualities of apostolicity and antiquity. Whether or not the diaconate is explicitly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, its presence in the New Testament is an indication that its foundation belongs among those things which, as St. Luke implies (Acts 1:1), our Lord continued to do upon His glorification. The diaconate was founded by the apostles, who acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While the pastorate was established by Christ for the life (*esse*) of the Church, the diaconate was instituted at the prompting of the Holy Spirit for the wellbeing (*bene esse*) of the Church.

J. B. Lightfoot noted a hint given by St. Paul to the effect that, while the Church *must* see to the continuance of the pastorate for the ongoing transmission of the spoken and sacramental Gospel as the source and mainstay of her life, she *may* provide for the ordering and filling of the diaconate in order that the life flowing from the Gospel may flourish in our midst:

⁶⁴ A. M. Farrer, "The Ministry in the New Testament," in: *The Apostolic Ministry; Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) 140f.: "This section of Acts is to be interpreted as a little treatise on the eldership. In the person of St. Stephen it displays spiritual power and triumphs in martyrdom, to the accompaniment of a heavenly revelation. In the person of St. Philip it evangelizes Samaria, thereby preparing the way of the apostles, who follow up and bestow the Holy Ghost. There can be no reasonable doubt that a parallel is intended with the section in the gospel where the Seventy are appointed to evangelize every place in Samaria whither the Lord Himself will come. The conclusion ought to be drawn that St. Luke wanted to say with emphasis that the 'sending' of the elders is parallel to that of the apostles but does not carry the same commission. They are not simply to be received as Christ and as God. Like John Baptist, they go before the face of such as are thus commissioned, and baptize, like him, with water and not with Spirit." These sentences indicate Farrer's concern to detect a clear distinction between bishop and presbyter already in the New Testament.

⁶⁵ Haenchen 266.

⁶⁶ "One phrase in the prescript to Paul's letter to the Philippians is translated in many ways, from 'the bishops and deacons' (*RSV*) to 'church leaders and helpers' (*GN*), the first word being *episkopoi* and the second *diakonoi*; interestingly both words have an etymological connection with the English words 'bishop' and 'deacon.' Commentators are understandably [shades of F. C. Baur!] reluctant, however, to see in the people greeted by Paul in this young community of Philippi officials resembling the later familiar figures of church order. They do generally appreciate, nonetheless, that the only reliable guide to the meaning of *diakonoi* here is the fact that it is bracketed with the other word, called for convenience 'overseers.' They conclude that the word *diakonoi* points to the existence at Philippi of office bearers subordinate to the 'overseers.' This approach is supported by the present study, which suggests that in conjunction with a word meaning 'overseers' or something nearly equivalent *diakonoi* will indicate agents of these people; it also suggests that the term is an honorific, if not a technical, title." Collins 235f. On I Tim. 3:8-15 the same author writes that, "The most instructive fact would be that the passage about deacons follows one about the 'overseer;' even if this indicates little more than that the two offices are in some way coordinated, it would at least suggest that the deacon is the assistant of the other." Collins 237.

⁶⁷ Kelly 81.

...we find St Paul in the First Epistle to Timothy (about A.D. 66) giving express directions as to the qualifications of men-deacons and women-deacons alike. From the tenour of his language it seems clear that in the Christian communities of proconsular Asia at all events the institution was so common that ministerial organization would be considered incomplete without it. On the other hand we may perhaps infer from the instructions which he sends about the same time to Titus in Crete, that he did not consider it indispensable; for while he mentions having given direct orders to his delegate to appoint presbyters in every city, he is silent about a diaconate.⁶⁸

While the term deacon is not currently applied with official sanction to any professional church worker active in Lutheran Church-Canada, considerable evidence exists that a *de facto* diaconate is nevertheless already alive and at work in our midst. Several auxiliary offices have been established over the years to assist the pastoral office and to further the mission of the Church (e.g., parochial school teacher, deaconess, director of Christian education, director of Christian outreach, lay minister, parish assistant, director of parish services). God's blessing of the labours of dedicated men and women who pursue a variety of specialities as they hold these several offices is a testimony to the wealth of *charismata* which He continues to bestow on His Church for her welfare. Subsuming the professional exercise of these *charismata* under the umbrella of a revived diaconate would indicate Synod's intention to conform as closely as possible to New Testament patterns. In acting to revive the official diaconate, the pastors and people of Lutheran Church-Canada would signify their esteem for those now working in auxiliary offices; they would make provision for the trans-parochial pastoral care and supervision of these workers; and they would make it possible for these men and women to participate in the decision-making and governance of the Synod.

VI. THE DIACONATE IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

An office open to women

In I Tim. 3:1-8 St. Paul sets forth the personal qualifications which should be met by candidates for the diaconate, but declines to spell out the scope and nature of the duties proper to their office. Moreover, the evidence of these verses and of other relevant New Testament passages does not permit us to establish with certainty whether the apostles envisaged an all-male diaconate or a diaconate open to both men and women. The wide range of meanings found among the various New Testament uses of *diakonos* render it impossible for us to know for sure whether the Phoebe mentioned in Rom. 16:1 was simply an emissary of the church in Cenchræa or actually a deacon serving as an assistant to its bishop. I Tim. 3:11's mention of "women" (*gunaikas*, without the definite article) by way of parallel to "deacons" in vs. 8 has been explained with reference both to women who themselves hold the diaconal office⁶⁹ and also to deacons' wives. Mindfulness of the widespread seclusion of women in the first century (which would render female deacons indispensable agents of male pastors)⁷⁰ and of the unlikelihood of deacons' wives being singled out for apostolic scrutiny while bishops' wives are overlooked tips the balance in favour of supposing that in these verses St. Paul addresses the desired personal qualities of women deacons.

In face of the silence and ambiguity of Scripture, we must turn to evidence supplied by the early Fathers to determine both how the post-apostolic Church understood the role of the diaconate and also in what way it acknowledged a place for women in this office. The second of these enquiries can be answered by noting that, while the later Church never spoke of women as *diakonoi* (the masculine plural form of *diakonos*), in the Eastern half of the empire it certainly recognised a ministry of certain women as *diakonissai* (*diakonissa* = deaconess).⁷¹ An Orthodox writer has observed that "this ancient order" has

⁶⁸ Lightfoot 16f.

⁶⁹ [I Tim. 3:11] "contains a puzzle which will probably never be solved to everyone's satisfaction. Despite the translation *Women deacons similarly*, the original Greek has only *Women similarly* (no article before the noun). It is agreed on all hands that Paul cannot, in a passage concerned with special groups, be interjecting a reference to the women of the congregation in general. The words could, however, mean, 'Let their wives [i.e. of the deacons] similarly ...,' and many commentators prefer this rendering. But if this is the sense, (a) we should have expected the definite article before 'Women,' or at least the genitive pronoun after it, or some other turn bringing out that they were 'their wives;' (b) it is very strange that only deacons' wives are singled out for mention, since the overseers' wives occupied an even more influential position; (c) the adverb *similarly*, repeated from 8, leads us to expect a fresh category of officials, as does also the list of parallel, if not identical, qualities. For these reasons the translation *Women deacons* is likely to be the correct one." Kelly 83.

⁷⁰ Lightfoot 16: "The strict seclusion of the female sex in Greece and in some Oriental countries necessarily debarred them from the ministrations of men: and to meet the want thus felt, it was found necessary at an early date to admit women to the diaconate."

⁷¹ Olson 41.

"fallen into disuse" within the Eastern Church since the twelfth century, and indicated that a growing body of Orthodox opinion is committed to its restoration.⁷²

The work of the ancient diaconate

A Syrian church manual of the early third century known as the *Didascalia* affords us an extended glimpse into the doings of both the male and the female diaconate. Collins' preference for understanding "deacon" as "go-between" finds some support in the *Didascalia's* overall conception of the diaconate:

Bishop, get yourself workers to care for the poor, helpers who, with you, may lead (the people) to life. Choose those who are pleasing to you before all the people and make them deacons, a man to carry out the numerous tasks that are necessary, and also a woman for the service of the women.⁷³

The honour in which the churches represented by the *Didascalia* held deacons and deaconesses is made plain by the startling comparisons of these officers with the second and third Persons of the Trinity respectively: The deacon holds the place of Christ; you are to love him. The deaconess likewise is to be honored by you as the image of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴

At a time when converts were baptised naked by immersion and also received anointing both before and after their descent into the pool of rebirth, reasons of decency dictated that deaconesses be accorded an assisting liturgical role in addition to their everyday task of mediating between the bishop and the womenfolk of the congregation. We note that the *Didascalia* also acknowledged the deaconess as a teacher of Christian women:

For there are houses to which, because of the pagans, you cannot send a deacon to look after the women, but you can very well send a deaconess. In many other cases, too, it is necessary to employ a female deaconess. To begin with, when women descend into the water (to receive baptism), it is required that those who thus descend into the water be anointed by the deaconess with the oil of anointing. Where there is no woman, and especially no deaconess, the minister of baptism must himself be the one who anoints the woman being baptized. But if there is a woman present, and above all a deaconess, it is not fitting that the women (being baptized) be seen by men. In this case, give an anointing only on the head, at the time of the laying on of hands. This is the way in which formerly the kings and priests were anointed in Israel. This is the way in which you, similarly, at the laying on of hands, are to anoint the heads of those who receive baptism, whether they are men or women. ...When the baptized woman comes up out of the water, the deaconess is to receive her and instruct her in purity and holiness, (showing her) that the seal of baptism is unbreakable. This is the reason for our saying that the service of a woman, a deaconess, is required and necessary. For our Lord and Savior too was served by women deaconesses; these were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, the mother of Joseph, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, as well as other women.⁷⁵

⁷² Kallistos Ware, "Man, Woman and the Priesthood of Christ," in: *Women and the Priesthood* ed. Thomas Hopko (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983) 32.

⁷³ *Didascalia* 16; qtd in: Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy* 177.

⁷⁴ *Didascalia* 9; Deiss 174. The author of the *Didascalia* considers, to borrow a phrase from Wilhelm Loehe, that the Church already lives "a heavenly life on earth and an earthly life in heaven." The same chapter speaks thus of the laity: "Hear this, you the laity, the Church chosen by God. The (Jewish) people of old was called 'Church,' but you, you are the catholic Church, holy and perfect, you are a kingly priesthood, a holy community, the people adopted as his inheritance, the great Church, the Bride adorned for God the Lord ..." Of those supported by the alms of the faithful it is said, "Widows and orphans are to be revered like the altar." The bishop is compared with the high priest of the Old Testament and even with God the Father: "The bishop is the high priest. He is the servant of the word and mediator. After God, he teaches you: he is your father, who has begotten you by the water (of baptism). He is your leader and guide, the mighty king who leads you to the place of the Almighty." Of presbyters meanwhile we hear that, "Priests are to represent the apostles for you." Some of the comparisons used in the *Didascalia* first appeared in the letters of Ignatius the martyr bishop of Antioch (+ ca. A.D. 115), who is the first Christian writer to make a sharp distinction between bishop and presbyter. See, e.g., Ignatius' *Letter to the Trallians* 3: "In like manner let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of Apostles. Apart from these there is not even the name of a church [!]." *The Apostolic Fathers; Revised Greek Texts with Introductions and English Translations* ed. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (1891; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984) 147. Ignatius' predilection for the deacons is bound up with their representing the Servant Christ, a factor which should caution us against outright dismissal of the aspect of *diakonos* onesidedly emphasised by Beyer: "I advise you, be ye zealous to do all things in godly concord, the bishop presiding after the likeness of God and the presbyters after the likeness of the council of the Apostles, with the deacons also who are most dear to me, having been entrusted with the diaconate of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the worlds and appeared at the end of time." *Magnesian* 6; *Apostolic Fathers* 144.

⁷⁵ *Didascalia* 16; Deiss 177f.

Deacons as liturgical assistants

In all parts of the early Church male deacons were accorded the privilege of administering the chalice at Holy Communion. Remarkably, the first witness to the deacons' role at the celebration of the Blessed Sacrament, the lay theologian Justin Martyr (+ ca. A.D. 165), actually portrayed deacons as responsible for the administration to the laity of the consecrated elements of both bread and wine. According to Justin, deacons were also responsible for taking portions of the Sacrament to members absent from the celebration.⁷⁶ Certain scholars (e.g., the Swedish New Testament scholar Bo Reicke⁷⁷) have been prompted by the equation of *diakonos* with "waiter" to derive the diaconal office itself from the liturgical role of assisting the celebrant of the Eucharist at the distribution. This hypothesis is unnecessary, however, since the deacon's assisting role at the Holy Supper can easily be understood as flowing naturally from his office as the assistant of the bishop-presbyter.

Provision already exists for suitable laymen in our churches to perform the liturgical tasks that were assigned to the deacons in ancient times. In addition to the longstanding practice of congregational officers' assisting their pastors in the distribution of Holy Communion, the rubrics of the altar book, agenda, and pew edition of *Lutheran Worship* now distinguish between those sections of the Main and Minor Divine Services which are to be conducted by a pastor (P) and those which may be led by a non-ordained assistant (A). There is already therefore no barrier to the liturgical service of men active in our informal diaconate, should this be the wish of their local pastor and congregation.

As in the case of other laymen appointed to this service, bearers of auxiliary offices who discharge the task of liturgical deacons may vest in an alb or a cassock and surplice. Even after the envisaged revival of the official diaconate in our midst, however, it would be inappropriate for deacons of Lutheran Church-Canada to decide on their own initiative to wear stoles over their left shoulder and tied under their right arm. Although this ancient custom has already been reintroduced without official sanction by some professional church workers in North American Lutheranism, good order in the Church demands that such a practice only be put into effect by authorised synodical officials when they deem that consensus has been reached on this matter among our pastors and people. Since only district presidents or their appointed representatives have authority to invest pastors with a stole at their ordination, it is fitting that only district presidents or their appointed representatives would have authority to invest men placed into the diaconate with a crossed stole. The president's task force cannot at this stage dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s of the structuring and regulation of a diaconate yet to be restored in Lutheran Church-Canada. The manner in which male deacons might carry out the tasks of the traditional liturgical diaconate will therefore have to be determined at a future date by such synodical organs as the council of presidents.

It is fitting that only suitable lay men perform the service of liturgical deacon in our churches. Should they undergo seminary training and thereupon receive a Solemn Call/Appointment, such men are eligible to hold the pastoral office. However impressive her *charismata*, no woman may be a bearer of the pastoral office. A woman's assisting in the discharge of mandates given to the pastorate by serving as a liturgical deacon would send a mixed signal concerning Synod's stand on the burning issue of the ordination of women to the pastoral office. It is not envisaged, therefore, that deaconesses of Lutheran Church-Canada would be asked to assume a public liturgical role.

VII. AN OFFICIAL DIACONATE FOR LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA

The fortunes of the diaconate have waxed and waned as times have changed and as the glorious array of *charismata* have been bestowed on the baptised according to the good pleasure of the Holy Spirit. The periods of the Early Church and of the Inner Mission movement of 19th-century German Lutheranism stand out as past golden ages of the diaconate. It may be that, along with other parts of Christendom, Lutheran Church-Canada stands poised to be the beneficiary of another such epoch of blessing. Upon completion of training and acceptance of a Solemn Call/Appointment, the precedent of the Early Church suggests that deacons and deaconesses of Lutheran Church-Canada should be publicly invested with their office in the context of the Divine Service by prayer and the laying on of hands. No major theological reason can be found to forbid this rite's being known as ordination. In order to avoid confusion between diaconate and pastorate, however, and since Lutheran deaconesses have for the past century and more been "consecrated" into office, it is proposed that the rite of public admission to the diaconate be known as consecration.

The bottom-line definition of the mandates proper to the diaconate has to do with rendering assistance to the pastoral office. The diaconate is not charged with the mandate of "giving the Gospel and the Sacraments" (AC 5), but is rather called to occupy itself with those tasks and concerns which flow from this mandate, and to do so in such a way that pastors are freed to concentrate wholeheartedly on their proper work.

⁷⁶ Justin Martyr, *Apology* I: 65f.; Deiss 92: "When the president has finished his eucharist and the people have all signified their assent, those whom we call 'deacons' distribute the bread and the wine and water over which the eucharist has been spoken, to each of those present; they also carry them to those who are absent."

⁷⁷ See Bo Reike, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos, in Verbindung mit der altchristlichen Agapenfeier* Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift 1951:5 (Uppsala: Lundequistka Bokhandeln, 1951).

A large measure of continuity is thus envisaged between the ancient diaconate and that which may be restored in Lutheran Church-Canada. In his *Apostolic Tradition*, which probably bears witness to practices observed already in the sub-apostolic age, the sometime antipope Hippolytus of Rome (+ A.D. 235 or 236) stressed the deacon's role as assistant to the bishop.⁷⁸ The *Didascalia* offers a lengthy account of the service here envisaged:

Deacons are to imitate the bishop in their behavior. They are to give themselves up completely to their work, not to seek unjust advantages but to be full of enthusiasm for their service. Their number is to be proportionate to that of the people of the church, so that they can keep everyone in touch and obtain help for them. To old people who have lost their strength, to brothers and sisters who are afflicted with illness, they are to render willingly the services of which they stand in need. The woman (deaconess) must be zealous in the service of the women, and the man, the deacon, in the service of the men. He is to be ready to obey the orders of the bishop. Everywhere that he is sent to be of service and to carry a message, he is to be active and painstaking. For each must know his duty and apply himself to fulfilling it. Be also of one will, one spirit, one soul, even if you are two in body. Realize what the diaconate is, as our Lord and Savior has defined it in the Gospel: He from among you who wishes to be your master, let him be your servant. Thus the Son of man did not come to be ministered to but to minister and to give his life as a ransom for the many.⁷⁹

At least five areas suggest themselves as fitting spheres of activity for deacons and deaconesses serving in Lutheran Church-Canada:

(1) The Diaconate: an office of love

First, deacons and deaconesses may spearhead common efforts of one or more congregations to give concrete expression to the love that flows from faith. At a time when financially hard-pressed provincial governments are cutting back the range and intensity of publicly-provided social services, all Canadian churches are presented with the opportunity of bearing specific witness to the Gospel by caring for suffering members of society. The undertaking of such philanthropic work would place our deacons and deaconesses in the succession of the Seven, of St. Laurence of Rome (who is commemorated on 10 August of each year in the calendar of *Lutheran Worship*), and of the revived German Lutheran diaconates of the 19th century. It would also enable Lutherans to become more deeply involved in the caritative activities for which certain Roman Catholic religious orders are justly celebrated. Trained nurses who practise their profession under the auspices of a local congregation or Synodical agency may be invited to pursue admission to the diaconate.

(2) Deacons: Assistants in pastoral care

A striking phrase already quoted from the *Didascalia* indicates that male and female deacons may appropriately share the burden of pastoral care of the sheep of Christ: "helpers who, with you, may lead the people to life." Deaconesses would manifestly be placed to minister to those needs of women Christians which cannot be met by their pastors. Bearers of the diaconal office may extend pastoral care in such a way that the unity and cohesion of the Church is promoted and the laity receive assistance to fulfil their calling as this has been described by St. Peter: "Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (I Pet. 3:15 RSV).

Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord emphasise that the pastorate is an office of spiritual fatherhood (see, e.g., I Cor. 4:15; LC I, 158). Promotion of the office of deaconess in our churches may well cause spiritual motherhood to be exercised among us in ways not experienced hitherto. Even though pastors are in heavy demand for counselling services, counselling as such is not one of the mandates placed on their office. The Eastern Church has long recognised certain lay men and women as gifted with the *charisma* of counselling or "spiritual direction."⁸⁰ Not only female but also male parishioners may benefit in years to come from spiritual motherhood exercised towards them by deaconesses of Lutheran Church-Canada. Nor may we understand the prohibition of women's ministering at the altar and in the pulpit as involving the exclusion of trained women from all forms of service as theologians. It is hoped that deaconesses with scholarly gifts may make a valued contribution to theological research, teaching, and writing.

⁷⁸ "When a deacon is to be ordained, he is to be chosen in accordance with what was said earlier. Let the bishop alone lay hands on him, as we have prescribed. ...For a deacon is not ordained for the priesthood [presbyterate] but for the service of the bishop, that he may carry out the bishop's orders. He is not a member of the council of the clergy, but takes care (of the sick) and brings needs to the bishop's attention." Deiss 134.

⁷⁹ *Didascalia* 16; Deiss 178f.

⁸⁰ See the remarks by Kallistos Ware in Hopko 35.

(3) The diaconate: an office of catechesis

This study has hitherto avoided the question whether deacons and deaconesses properly belong to the clergy⁸¹ or the laity of the Church. Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism has moved beyond the exclusive use of the "transitional diaconate" whereby the deacon's office is held for a period of months by a graduating seminarian on his way to priest's orders. *Lumen Gentium*, the most significant of the conciliar documents, already spelled out the essence of the office of permanent deacon which was shortly thereafter restored by Pope Paul VI as consisting of "the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel, and of works of charity."⁸² The Roman Catholic conception of holy orders would appear to be that the office instituted by Christ exists in its fullness in the episcopate, in large measure in the presbyterate, and to a certain extent in the diaconate. Confessional Lutheranism, by way of contrast, makes a sharp distinction between the offices of presbyter and deacon, supposing the fullness of Dominically instituted office to be shared by all pastors (even though all pastors are not entrusted with equal amounts of *episkopee*) and the fulness of apostolically established office to be held by deacons (albeit with certain distinctions between deacons and deaconesses). Like the Gospel, the Dominically instituted pastoral office is a whole which cannot readily be broken down into parts. For this reason, deep study and close consultation with our sister Churches would be necessary before Lutheran Church-Canada acts to entrust the responsibility of preaching to her deacons. While we could not understand our deacons to belong to the clergy in the Roman Catholic sense, we could acknowledge the diaconate to be either an associate order of clergy or a body of laypeople charged with the execution of specific forms of *diakonia* and hence involved in "ministry."

As an intermediate order between pastorate and laity, deacons and deaconesses may find a fruitful field of activity in the area of catechesis. Should teachers in our parochial schools understand their office as acting not only *in loco parentis* under the fourth commandment but also as assisting the pastorate in the care of souls, the churchly dimension of their work might be clarified through the admission of such teachers to the diaconate.

(4) The diaconate: an office of ecclesiastical administration

Administrative tasks do not belong to the essence of the pastoral office, nor are many pastors particularly gifted in this area. Church administration may be an area which can in some measure be delegated to the diaconate.

(5) The diaconate: an office for church musicians

The immense importance of music in the worship of our Church suggests the possibility of certain church musicians (e.g., organists, instrumentalists, and singers) offering their distinctive service in the context of the diaconate.

⁸¹ On the application of the term *kleeros* to ministerial officeholders, see Lightfoot 101-105. Lightfoot begins by relating how LXX usage would countenance the description of the entire people of God as "clergy": "The word is not used of the Aaronic priesthood in any special sense which would explain its transference to the Christian ministry. It is indeed said of the Levites, that they have no 'clerus' in the land, the Lord Himself being their 'clerus' [Deut. x. 9, xviii. 1, 2; comp. Num. xxvi. 62, Deut. xii. 12, xiv. 27, 29, Josh. xiv. 3]. But the Jewish priesthood is never described conversely as the special 'clerus' of Jehovah: while on the other hand the metaphor thus inverted is more than once applied to the whole Israelite people [Deut. iv. 20 ...comp. ix. 29]. Up to this point therefore the analogy of Old Testament usage would have suggested 'clerus' as a name rather for the entire body of the faithful than for the ministry specially or exclusively" (101f.). Lightfoot finds the origin of later churchly parlance in Acts 1: "And the record of the earliest appointment made by the Christian Church after the Ascension of the Lord seems to supply the clue. Exhorting the assembled brethren to elect a successor in place of Judas, St Peter tells them that the traitor 'had been numbered among them and had received the *lot* (*kleeron*) of the ministry': while in the account of the subsequent proceedings it is recorded that the Apostles 'distributed *lots*' to the brethren, and that 'the *lot* fell on Matthias and he was added to the eleven Apostles.' The following therefore seems to be the sequence of meanings, by which the word *kleeros* arrived at this peculiar sense: (1) the lot by which the office was assigned; (2) the office thus assigned by lot; (3) the body of persons holding the office. The first two senses are illustrated by the passages quoted from the Acts; and from the second to the third the transition is easy and natural" (103). "If this account of the application of 'clerus' to the Christian ministry be correct, we should expect to find it illustrated by a corresponding progress in the actual usage of the word. And this is in fact the case. The sense 'clerical appointment or office' chronologically precedes the sense 'clergy.' The former meaning occurs several times in Irenaeus. He speaks of Hyginus as 'holding the ninth clerus of the episcopal succession from the Apostles'; and of Eleutherus in like manner he says, 'He now occupies the clerus of the episcopate in the tenth place from the Apostles.' On the other hand, the earliest instance of 'clerus,' meaning clergy, seems to occur in Tertullian, who belongs to the next generation" (104f.).

⁸² para. 29, in: *Vatican Council II* 387. Under the first two headings, an extensive range of ministry is envisaged for the permanent deacon: "It pertains to the office of a deacon, in so far as may be assigned to him by the competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to be custodian and distributor of the Eucharist, in the name of the Church, to assist at and to bless marriages, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the sacred scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services."

**A PROPOSAL FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION OF
A DIACONAL MINISTRY IN LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA**

As Adopted by the Task Force on the Diaconal Ministry January 14, 1995

At the request of President Edwin Lehman, the Task Force on the Diaconal Ministry in Lutheran Church-Canada has addressed the question of a diaconate from a scriptural, theological, and historical basis with the general conclusion that the diaconate has been variously defined and practiced in the church since the time of the Apostles. It is evident from Paul's words in 1 Tim. 3:8ff. that the Apostolic church established the office of deacon under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹ The history of the church has also shown that the diaconate has been found in various forms and settings in a variety of times and places, in response to needs in the church and for the church's good.

It is the opinion of the task force that establishing a diaconate² in Lutheran Church-Canada would be desirable at this time for several reasons. First of all, even though the diaconate as such has never been officially established either in Lutheran Church-Canada or in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, offices and functions which correspond with what could generally be called diaconate have definitely been in place. Examples would be deaconesses, lay ministers, and teachers, among others. It would, therefore, seem wise to introduce the usage of a term which has both scriptural and historical precedent. Secondly, there is a growing need in LCC at this time for a variety of workers to serve an increasingly complex church and society. Thirdly, confusion exists over the variety of categories of professional church workers that have grown up in our Synod over the years.

The recommendation of the task force, then, is that one new office or order of Diaconate be established, which would encompass and include all of the categories of workers which now exist in LCC, and which would include certified and rostered teachers.

The reasons for this recommendation are listed in the task force minutes under the following points:

- to bring order, prevent confusion
- to meet current needs in the church
- because ours is a "new" church, we need to look to future circumstances
- to administer church workers nationally with common minimum standards
- to resolve the issue of terminology
- to meet future societal needs, e.g., health care, education
- because scripture makes use of such an office to respond to needs
- we have people already in this role; we recognize those with various gifts working in various capacities that parallel what was going on in the early church
- to acknowledge their distinctive place in the structure of LCC³

This paper will attempt to address some of the issues involved in the establishment and administration of a diaconate in Lutheran Church-Canada. The specific training and educational requirements will have to be more carefully worked out, as will the details of call/appointment, roster, supervision, and the questions relating to synodical membership. What is here presented will be more in the form of general recommendations than a detailed working model.

I. WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

There seems to be growing interest in the diaconate today in a goodly number of church bodies. A few examples from other Lutheran bodies will illustrate. Our sister church body in Germany, SELK (Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church), has recently adopted the office of *Pfarrdiakon* (Parish Deacon). This is a part-time, unpaid position, conferred on men who have long experience in service in a local congregation. No formal training is required and they work under the direct supervision of the pastor.

The Lutheran Church in Australia (LCA) is currently studying the issue. They categorize their non-clergy full time church workers as lay church workers.

¹ Further discussion of this point is found in the document, "Scriptural, Dogmatic, and Historical Perspectives on the Re-Establishment of [a] Diaconal Office[s] in Lutheran Church-Canada," adopted by the President's Task Force and Submitted to President Edwin Lehman, 13 January 1995.

² The term "diaconate" has been chosen as the proposed designation for this office. Wherever the term "deacon" is used, it is inclusive of both male and female, unless otherwise clearly limited.

³ Minutes of the Task Force on Diaconate Ministry, July 7-9, 1994, page 2.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) now has a category of workers they call Staff Ministers. This category includes positions of Minister of Family and Youth, Minister of Evangelism, Minister of Administration, Deaconess, but not Teacher. Other positions may be added as the need arises.

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) instituted a diaconal ministry by adopting a bylaw which states,

This church shall establish and maintain a lay roster of diaconal ministers who shall be called by this church to positions that exemplify the servant life and that seek to equip and motivate others to live it. Such diaconal ministers shall seek in a great variety of ways to empower, equip, and support all the baptized people of God in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the mission of God in the world.

Diaconal ministers are seen as ministers of the Word of God in service and witness, as distinct from the pastorate where the Word of God preached and celebrated sacramentally is primary. Interestingly enough, ELCA deaconesses are not included in this category.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) has adopted in principle the establishment of a diaconal ministry and is at present working out the details and guidelines for presentation to the church in 1995. It appears that this step would provide for a diaconal ministry essentially the same as that adopted in the ELCA.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has long had deaconesses, as well as the rather sizeable number of other so-called professional church workers. They are currently studying the nomenclature of these various categories, with the intent of establishing some kind of order and consistency, but there is no work going on specifically toward the establishment of a diaconate. Following the Wichita Convention (1989), however, the LCMS began the practice of licensing lay ministers and calling them deacons.

II. SCOPE AND NOMENCLATURE

It is recommended that Lutheran Church—Canada establish the office of Diaconate, to include all current categories of what we are in the habit of calling "professional church workers." The office would be open to both male and female, and the holders of the office could appropriately be referred to as Deacon/Deaconess.

Currently the church recognizes Teachers and Directors of Christian Education and grants them membership in the Synod. In addition we have inherited from the LCMS such professions as Parish Assistant, Director of Christian Outreach (formerly Director of Evangelism), Parish Worker, Lay Minister, and Deaconess. Most of these are included as rostered workers in the LCMS, some having been given status as Ministers of Religion—Commissioned. LCC has now established the Director of Parish Services programme at Concordia College, Edmonton, which is designed to prepare workers in the church with a variety of specialties. Currently in LCC only teachers and DCEs are rostered. Within this one office there would be room for specialization in areas now covered by these professions. Each speciality would be a sub-category of the Diaconate. Thus, for example, you might have a Deaconess—Teacher or a Deacon—Director of Christian Outreach.

It will be helpful to indicate various areas of service which have historically belonged to the diaconate and which would appear to be appropriate for today in LCC. The document adopted by the task force on 13 January 1995, identified the following:

1. **The Diaconate: An Office of Love.** This would give concrete expression to the love that flows from faith. The diaconate would be active not only in carrying out these acts of love, but would direct and encourage the baptized to be more actively involved in such service. One could also envision specialties in the area of nursing, including the rather recent parish nurse concept.
2. **Assisting With Pastoral Care.** Both deacons and deaconesses could find vast scope for service in a calling and caring ministry and in assisting the laity to "fulfil their calling as this has been described by St. Peter, 'Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.'" (I Pet. 3:15)
3. **Catechesis.** The instruction of the baptized can properly be included in the diaconate. It is the proposal of this paper that the current office of teacher/DCE would fit appropriately under this rubric.
4. **Church Administration.** It might be added here that WELS includes Minister of Administration as one of its Staff Ministry positions.
5. **Parish Musician.** Music has long been recognized as highly important in the church, witness Luther's oft-quoted remark to the effect that music is next to theology.

Identifying such professions as diaconal would add a recognition and status to the office which is sometimes felt to be lacking in the current structure.

Care needs to be taken to maintain the distinction between the pastorate as the office which was clearly instituted and mandated by our Lord, and the diaconate, which the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in freedom has established.

Careful study and consultation with our sister churches would be essential before LCC would assign the function of preaching to the diaconate.

Since the functions of the various types of diaconate cannot always be clearly distinguished from each other, the particular responsibilities in each case would have to be clearly established by and delineated in the call/appointment. For example, it might be possible for the same deacon to be both the parish musician and the director of Christian outreach, even if certification were in the area of music.

III. ADMISSION TO THE OFFICE OF DIACONATE

Standards for admission to the office of the diaconate would be established and implemented by the LCC Board for Higher Education. The question of educational requirements and admission by colloquy will be addressed briefly later in this paper.

The laying on of hands is the scriptural and traditional way of setting aside those called for service in the church. It is proposed that LCC adopt the term "consecration" for the initial setting aside of those called into its diaconate, and that this consecration include the laying on of hands. Consecration would be contingent upon the candidate having been certified and having received a proper call/appointment. Subsequent calls/appointments would be recognized by the accepted practice of "installation."

The same confessional subscription would be required of the diaconate as is required of the pastorate.

IV. SUPERVISION OF THE OFFICE

Deacons (male and female) would have the status of rostered workers in Lutheran Church-Canada. They would be placed on the roster through a procedure similar to the current procedure for rostered pastors and teachers. This would include the following elements:

1. Certification for the diaconate by the appropriate entity. If the current practice were to be adopted, this would mean certification by the educational institution or by a colloquy committee.
2. Placement on the basis of an initial call/appointment would be by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments.
3. Authorization for consecration and installation would be by the District President.
4. Such rite of consecration and installation would place the candidate on the roster of the Synod.
5. The roster would be maintained by the LCC President's Office.

As is currently the case with pastors and teachers, supervision of the doctrine, life and official administration of the diaconate would be the responsibility of the District President. Retention on or removal from the roster would also be the District President's responsibility.

Deacons and deaconesses serving in a local parish would naturally be under the spiritual oversight of the called pastor.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Educational requirements for certification for the diaconate would have to be worked out in detail by the Board for Higher Education in conjunction with the educational institutions. Certification would require as a minimum a bachelor's degree, and, if necessary, any additional courses pertinent to the particular specialty. A core theological component would be common to all. In addition, an internship in an appropriate congregation or institutional setting would be required.

Standards of admission to the office commonly agreed upon by the Board for Higher Education and the Council of Presidents would be established. It is proposed that those currently certified for one of the professional church worker categories be certified for the diaconate on the basis of their training and their current status. If they do not have the bachelor's degree, as is the case with some current lay ministers, they would be certified on the basis of their original training plus their years of experience in the church (perhaps 10 years would be an appropriate time requirement).

The current Director of Parish Services Programme at Concordia College, Edmonton, with appropriate additions, would be the normal course of studies for candidates for this office. As long as there is no college in the East, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, could be asked to provide the theological core and some specialty curriculum for those already in possession of the bachelor's degree.

VI. TRANSFERRING BETWEEN LCMS AND LCC

It would be highly desirable, given the close relationship that exists between Lutheran Church-Canada and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, that provision be made for the ready transfer of church workers from one body to the other. This paper proposes that provision be made for the reception into the LCC diaconate of those who have received training and

certification for one of the appropriate professions in the LCMS. It appears, from catalogues of the various LCMS educational institutions, that all church work professions, including the lay ministry, now require the bachelor's degree, as well as the core theological components and specialized training. This would make it relatively easy for their training and certification to be recognized by the Council of Presidents so that workers called to LCC entities would be placed on the Diaconate roster with a minimum of fuss and bother.

As is currently provided for by the Protocol Document regarding pastoral training, mutual monitoring of training programmes would lend continued confidence in the standards of preparation across synodical lines.

As far as the transferring of LCC trained members of the diaconate to the LCMS is concerned, consultation would have to take place between the two church bodies. It would seem plausible, for example, that those certified as diaconal teachers by LCC could be transferred to the LCMS Commissioned Ministers-Teachers roster. The same might hold true for those whose training prepares them for service similar to that of any of the other LCMS professions. This is an area, however, where more work will be needed.

VII. SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

As noted above, deacons would be members of the Synod, in the same way that pastors and teachers/DCEs currently hold membership.

The question of voting rights at conventions, however, is one which has been a cause for concern on the part of those currently rostered as teachers, who do not have the vote even though they are members of the Synod, as well as other professionals who do not have membership status.

Membership in an organization normally implies the right to vote and to hold office. Membership in the Synod would seem to imply that same right. There ought not to be two classes of members. This paper proposes, therefore, that deacons be granted the right to vote at conventions. Of course, this would immediately raise the question of the right to vote by advisory pastors, those on the clergy roster who are not the pastors of congregations and who do not currently have voting rights. One of the key reasons for this arrangement has been the principle of equal numbers of lay and clergy delegates, a principle which, presumably, could be maintained by increasing the number of voting delegates from parishes which have more than one full time worker, or by some other means. But, then, that is a matter to be addressed by someone other than this task force, most likely the Task Force on the Nature and Structure of the Synod which is currently at work.

A somewhat related issue is the intriguing question of whether deacons would be a part of the clergy or the laity. Helpful in the task force's approach to this question was a presentation by St. Catharines Seminary President Jonathan Grothe. He pointed out that etymologically the term laity simply means "the people," and that therefore all baptized Christians, including those in the pastoral ministry, are a part of the laity. Clergy, on the other hand, has its roots in the Greek term *kleeros*, meaning one who has a particular lot or calling. Deacons, therefore, would certainly be a part of the laity, and yet would have a special lot or calling, although it might not be expedient to assign them to the clergy as we normally use that term.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The time would appear to be ripe for this young church to introduce the office of the diaconate. A step towards that goal has already been taken in the introduction by Concordia College, Edmonton, of the Director of Parish Services Programme, which provides for the training of non-ordained workers for a variety of callings in the church, but all under the same nomenclature.

Many churches, both within and outside our fellowship, are engaging additional workers who provide a variety of services, or "ministries." The choice of the diaconate model has advantages in that it builds on both the witness of the New Testament and the lessons of church history. Reclaiming the ancient title of the diaconate can also well serve as an impetus to renewed commitment to the ministry of love and service that is so necessary in the current society. Reaching out in love to those around will undoubtedly sow seeds for evangelism, the telling of the good news, which, more than anything else, must be the task of the Christian church as she reaches out to the world at the turn of the millennium.

Above all, whatever results from these proposals, it is sincerely hoped that the good of the church will be served and our Lord will be glorified in and through his people in Lutheran Church-Canada.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!