



To Address Questions Re Service of Licensed Lay Deacons

RESOLUTION 4-06A



Overtures 4-22, 4-29–45, L4-74 (CW, pp. 172–173, 176–184; TB p. 35)

WHEREAS, All of our congregations and all of our pastors unanimously confess the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession as a true and clear exposition of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states: “Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call”; and

WHEREAS, Article V of the same states: “So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given (John 20:22)”; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions clearly distinguish between believers who are all priests before God to offer their spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5) and those whom Christ has called into a specific office with specific responsibilities to His Bride (Eph. 4:11–16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 4:1, 12:28; 2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Tim. 4:12–16; Heb. 5:4, etc.) in such texts as:

Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of the keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:21–23).” [AC XXVIII 5]

According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian congregation the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. All this is to be done not by human power but by God’s Word alone. 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.” [AC XXVIII 21]

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. [Apology VII 28]

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. [Power and Primacy of the Pope 61]

Chairperson: The Rev. Larry Vogel, Staff of the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)

Task force Membership:

Jason Kiefer, Licensed Lay Deacon, New Jersey District

The Rev. Dr. Herb Mueller, LCMS First Vice-President

The Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President, Mid-South District

The Rev. Russ Sommerfeld, President, Nebraska District

The Rev. Dr. James Voelz, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

The Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and member of the LCMS CTCR

For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers. This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. [ibid 67]

And

WHEREAS, There continue to be issues of concern and controversy regarding the Office of the Holy Ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That in faithfulness to God’s Word and Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession regarding the Office of the Holy Ministry, the President of Synod would direct the CTCR to develop resources for use on the congregational, district, and Synod levels concerning this issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod, who has the responsibility “to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Constitution, Art. XI B 3), be encouraged to use all means at his disposal to promote study and discussion of this vital issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod establish a task force consisting of members from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Council of Presidents, the Praesidium, and seminary faculties to develop a plan anchored in the Word, in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them, to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with the Word and Sacraments of Christ; and be it finally

Resolved, That the plan and its proposed implementation be reported to the Synod one year before the 2016 convention.

Action: Adopted (8)

(During initial discussion of Res. 4-06A in Session 4, an amendment to replace the wording of the second-last resolve paragraph with “Resolved, That the President of the Synod establish a task force consisting of members from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Council of Presidents, the Praesidium, and seminary faculties to develop a plan anchored in the Word in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them to ensure that by a date certain all who are administering the Word and Sacraments of Christ in the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be rightly called (prepared, examined, called, and ordained); and be it further” was defeated [Yes: 337; No: 641]. When discussion resumed during Session 8, an amendment to insert the words “those district presidents currently utilizing licensed lay deacons” in place of “Council of Presidents” in the third resolve paragraph was also defeated [Yes: 252; No: 769]. A motion to amend the final resolve paragraph by replacing the words “one year before the 2016 convention” with the words “before the 2015 district conventions” also failed [Yes: 351; No: 658]. After debate was ended, Res. 4-06A was adopted as presented [Yes: 920; No: 100].)
