



## Concordia Lutheran Church

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Rev. Dustin Parker, Pastor

### *Discussion Points regarding the LCMS on the topic of Deacons*

*Rev. Dustin Parker*

#### **Question: Is the SMP program simply a better version of the licensed deacon program?**

- Vocationally, not necessarily

I would use the illustration provided by the commissioned and non-commission officers of our armed forces.

- The first group of officers are those commissioned (ordained) in the regular manner by going to a service academy (either West Point, Annapolis, the Air Force Academy or one of the schools like Norwich, VMI, Citadel. These officers serve regular unending commissions, usually with combat arms. This would be equivalent to those trained in our two seminary's and the Concordia Irvine CMC program.
- The second group are products of various ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs. Some of them serve full careers, but as reserve officers in specific roles in support of combat officers. For example, supply, communications, logistics. They aren't usually used in combat units, unless as cannon fodder. They are however, full commissioned officers with the "command" responsibility. These would be the SMP trained and ordained pastors.
- The third group are non-commissioned officers, warrant officers, sergeants, corporals, These have authority and responsibility delegated to them by officers above. They have no authority or responsibility, save that which is delegated. They work with smaller specific groups to accomplish goals officers give them. They may, in certain battle situations, be tasked with more, or less. They serve as valued advisers to young officers, but again, do not have authority over them

- Education

I would again state here that the goal of the education is different, and has a different end. If the SMP and Residential Seminary programs are both academic and pragmatic as it would be at a military academy, the diaconate program is more like basic training and non-commissioned officer school

- SMP candidates are taught at a academic level, by seminary chosen professors. They are learning not just practical matters, but the theory behind it. If you compare their education to seminaries around the world, it is superior, and what has been learned in developing the program is being deployed at St. Louis Seminary.

- The diaconal training should be primarily pragmatic and often situational. They may get a little theory, but their focus is on a specific area of ministry that has been delegated to them.

Example – In a Caregiving (basic pastoral care) the SMP pastor will be given theories of grief, tools for analysis and care. The deacon's primary role will be understanding ministry of presence. The deacon is trained by pastors who are in the field, regularly assisting. The trainers are different, because the needs are different.

- Financial

- The deacon program is approximately ½ the cost of one course of the SMP. There are many who will take the deacon program, who then, at the churches request, go on to the SMP program or the CMP program. Of those I've taught, eight men have done this, either to the SMP or the Concordia Irvine program. If the option of the deacon program were dismissed, this would cut off the feed of those who gained interest through the program.



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***Historical/Theological Thoughts about the Diaconate:  
Research for the LCMS Synod in Convention to Consider.  
Rev. Dustin Parker***

*Note: I came across most of these references in doing a short research thesis during my colloquy. The entire thesis is accompanying this document, but this is by no means a complete study of the diaconate, yet it provides sufficient proof of the history and use of the office.*

Authority to Delegate Sacramental Work to Deacons:

Describing a bishop, who according to 1 Tim. 3:5 is to take care of the church [congregation] of God, Luther observes: “Now, these are the men who should supervise all offices, that the teachers tend to their office, are not negligent, that the deacons distribute the gifts fairly and are not remiss” (St. L. XII:338). Again: “To whom ever the office of preaching is committed, to him the highest office in Christendom is committed: he may then also baptize, celebrate Mass [the Lord’s Supper], and perform all the cure of souls [See/sorge]; or, if he prefers not to, he may tend only to the preaching and leave the baptizing and other auxiliary functions to others, as Christ did, and Paul, and all Apostles, Acts 6” (St. L. X: 1548).<sup>29</sup><sup>i</sup>

*Here is how Walther states it in Church and Ministry*

Paul and Barnabas took Mark with them as their assistant (Acts 13:5). But he was not merely to render them bodily service; he was to be entrusted with some functions of the ministry of the Word, as Paul states (Acts 15:38)<sup>ii</sup>

And a critical quote – as it places delegated ministry WITHIN the Office of Holy Ministry

Hence the highest office is that of the ministry of the Word, with which all other offices are also conferred at the same time. Every other public office in the church is part of the ministry of the Word or an auxiliary office that supports the ministry, whether it be the elders who do not labor in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17) or the rulers (Rom. 12:8) or the deacons (the office of service in a narrow sense) or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration. Therefore, the offices of Christian day school teachers, almoners, sextons, precentors at public worship, *and others are all to be regarded as ecclesiastical and sacred, for they take over a part of the one ministry of the Word and support the pastoral office.*<sup>iii</sup>

Regarding Differing Order and Responsibility

Finally, since one minister does not suffice for a large congregation or an entire city, it is the duty of the church administrators to ordain and appoint others as deacons, pastors, or fellow ministers.

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*where broken people find healing in Christ while helping others to heal*

Among these there should be a certain order or rank in order that, for the furtherance of the salvation of the believers and the strengthening of the kingdom of Christ, all things shall be done decently and in order ....<sup>iv</sup>

### Regarding Need

Here then we are again assured that a Christian does not only have the right and authority to teach the Word of God, but also that he is in duty bound to do so at the peril of losing his soul and God's grace. You may say: 'But how? If he has not been called to do so, as you yourself have often taught, he dare not preach.' To this I reply: Here you must place a Christian in two places. First, if he is where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than that he is a Christian, inwardly called by God and anointed. There he owes it to the erring heathen or non-Christian to preach and teach them the Gospel, moved by Christian love, even though no Christian has called him to do so. Thus St. Stephen did, as we are told in Acts 7:1–53; though the apostles had not entrusted him with the office of preaching, yet he preached and performed great miracles among the people (Acts 6:8). So also did Philip, the deacon, Stephen's partner (Acts 8:5), though also to him the ministry had not been entrusted. So also did Apollos (Acts 18:25–26). In such cases a Christian out of Christian love has compassion on the distress of the poor, perverted souls and does not wait until he receives a command or letter from a prince or bishop, for necessity ignores all laws and recognizes no law. Hence Christian love makes it one's duty to help, where otherwise there is no one who helps or should help.<sup>v</sup>

### Note that Walther recognizes the historical nature of the office

*Ignatius*: "I exhort you to seek to do all things in divine concord under the direction of the bishop, [who serves] in God's place, and of the elders, [who serve] in place of the apostolic council, and of the deacons, who are to me most precious as those to whom the ministry of Jesus Christ has been entrusted" (*Ep. ad Magnes* 6).

*The same*: "Which (the congregation at Philadelphia) is my everlasting and perpetual joy, especially if it agrees with the bishop, its elders, and its deacons, who have been appointed according to God's will" (*Ep. ad Philad.*, praef.).<sup>vi</sup>

Again, their ministry is considered distinct from the Presbytery/Bishop/Pastor – yet part of the office ministry

*Ignatius*: "For when you subject yourselves to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me as such who live not according to human judgment but according to Jesus Christ, to Him who died for your sakes in order that, trusting in His death, you may escape death. It is therefore necessary, whatever you do, that you undertake nothing without the bishop, but that you subject yourselves to the elders just as to the apostles of Christ, who is our Hope and in whom we desire to be found living. Again, it is the duty of the deacons, who are the mystery of Jesus Christ, in every way to please all. For they are not servants of food and drink but ministers of the church of God. Therefore, they are in duty bound to guard themselves against every cause of accusation as against fire. Similarly, all should show due reverence to the deacons as commanded by Jesus Christ and to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father; so also to the elders as to God's council and to the co-laborers of the apostles. Without these there is no church that deserves the name" (*Ep. ad Trall.* 2.3).<sup>vii</sup>

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*where broken people find healing in Christ while helping others to heal*

Ordination was similar – yet connection to the ministry and office.

The apostles observed this rule also when appointing deacons, not only bishops and pastors. The election of deacons was done carefully and cautiously by the whole assembled congregation in order that someone unworthy might not be consecrated to the ministry of the altar and the office of a pastor; for unworthy persons are ordained according to human presumption and not according to God's will.<sup>viii</sup>

Ordination included deacons – yet they aren't the same

*Apology*: "If they wanted to call the sacrament of holy orders [*des Ordens*] a sacrament of the ministry and Gospel, we would not object to calling ordination a sacrament. For God has instituted and commanded the ministry, and it has His glorious promise (Rom. 1:16; Is. 55:11). If they wanted to understand the sacrament of holy orders in this way, we might also call the laying on of hands a sacrament. For the church has God's command to appoint ministers and deacons. Since then it is very comforting to know that God desires to preach and work through men and those elected by men, it is well for us to praise and honor this election very highly, especially against the satanic Anabaptists, who despise and revile it as well as the ministry and the outward [*leiblichen*] Word" (Art. XIII [VII], par. 9–13; German text, *Triglot*, p. 310).<sup>ix</sup>

And Again Walther finds Patristics included deacons, not just pastors

The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 resolved: "No one should be absolutely ordained as a presbyter or a deacon or in general as an incumbent of any ecclesiastical office if the person to be ordained has not specially been designated for a congregation in a city or village or for the chapel of a martyr or for a monastery. The holy synod has decreed regarding such absolutely ordained persons to declare the laying on of hands as invalid and, to the shame of the ordained person, as absolutely ineffective" (Mansi, *Nov. et ampl. coll. sacr. conc.*, 7:361 [Dr. Walther's translation]).<sup>x</sup>

A Deacon, under Luther's Authority with the Office of the Keys

Because the prefect<sup>263</sup> in his arrogance had ridiculed God, the ministers of the Word, the university, and the civil authorities, had tried to do many things in opposition to these, and had often been reprimanded in a fraternal way by Martin Luther, once again on October 15<sup>264</sup> Martin Luther sent two deacons<sup>265</sup> to him with a note, written in his own hand, as follows:

"This is to inform the prefect, first, that the absolution given him the preceding Sunday<sup>266</sup> by the deacon, Master Fröschel, is null and void because he did not examine himself inwardly. Second, that responsibility for receiving the sacrament in his sins, unrepentant, must be borne by him, not by me!" (These are hard words!) "Third, if he wants to be a Christian he must first reconcile himself with us preachers, pastors, the university, and the town" (because he had offended all of these by his tyranny). "So Christ said, 'If you are offering your gift at the altar [and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,' Matt. 5:23, 24]. If he will not do this humbly, I shall be content, in place of the pastor,<sup>267</sup> to let him seek salvation elsewhere, for I will not tolerate his wickedness, nor will I be damned on account of his sins. Let this be the second admonition according to Matthew 18 [15–17], 'If your brother sins,' " etc.<sup>xi</sup>

Luther Notes this as well:

16. To prove our point we have examples from the ancient fathers, of whom Cyprian is probably the most exacting observer of ecclesiastical censures and disciplines. In his Letter 17, Book III,<sup>14</sup> he bids us give peace to those who are exposed to the danger of death, so they may come to the Lord in peace after they have made confession either to the presbyter or the deacon, as he says in the same passage. This giving of peace, however, is nothing more than that which is now called “plenary remission,” as anyone can see who has given any thought to this work.<sup>xii</sup>

Morlin was a deacon preaching under Luther

Today Master Mörlin<sup>81</sup> pleased me very much [when he preached]. He instructed the common people about the duties of wives and maidservants<sup>xiii</sup>

See the Footnote regarding what Walther agreed to – that deacons would do sacramental work

A question was put to the doctor [Martin Luther]. “There is a chaplain<sup>124</sup> who can’t baptize because his left hand is shaky or because he can’t use it for other reasons.” He [Luther] was asked whether the chaplain could have the verger hold the child and pour water with the other hand, which he could use. Luther replied, “If the chaplain preaches well and the congregation hears him gladly, this may be done, especially if the common people are not offended by it. If they approve of it, it’s permissible.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Again, a deacon doing the examination of conscience/Confession and Absolution

At present we have instituted no other ban than that those who live in public sins<sup>18</sup> and do not desist are not admitted to the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood. This can be accomplished because no one among us receives the holy sacrament unless he has first been examined by the pastor or deacon. Further, we do not see how at this time another ban could be introduced, for many matters occur for which a preliminary investigation<sup>19</sup> would be necessary<sup>xv</sup>

Some have said Luther saw deacons as assisting pastors – therefore part of what had been known as priests, yet, this article says they are neither fish nor fowl

I pray you now to learn along with me from this that in John 6 Christ commands the administration of the sacrament in one kind, yet in such a way that his commanding means leaving it to the decision of the church; and further that Christ is speaking in this same chapter only of the laity and not of the priests. For to the latter the living bread of heaven, that is the sacrament in one kind, does not belong, but perhaps the bread of death from hell! But what is to be done with the deacons and subdeacons,<sup>18</sup> who are neither laymen nor priests? According to this distinguished writer they ought to use neither the one kind nor both kinds! You see, my dear Tulich, what a novel and “Observant” method of treating Scripture this is.<sup>xvi</sup>

The same is shown here, where deacons and laymen are indicated as different

The duty of a priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a picture of a man is a man. Does ordaining such babbling priests make one a bishop? Or blessing churches and bells? Or confirming children? Certainly not. Any deacon or layman could do as much. It is the ministry of the Word that makes the priest and the bishop.<sup>xvii</sup>

Another quote showing deacons are in the Office of Holy Ministry, yet not the same as pastors 7. *If service, in our serving*. In Greek it reads διακονίαν, ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, that is, “in ministering.” “Ministers” are all those who serve in ecclesiastical offices, such as the priest, the deacon, the subdeacon, and all who have to do with sacred rites except the administration of the Word of God, and also those who assist a teacher, as the apostle often speaks of his helpers.<sup>xviii</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cp. Walther on “The Ministry the Highest Office in the Church, from Which All Other Offices in the Church Stem,” *K. u. A.*, p. 342 f. [*Walther and the Church*, p. 78 f.].

<sup>i</sup> Pieper, F. (1953). *Christian Dogmatics* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 462). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>ii</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., p. 297). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>iii</sup> Walther, C. *Church and Ministry : Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*. electronic ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1987.

<sup>iv</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., p. 60). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>v</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., pp. 163–164). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>vi</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., pp. 189–190). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>vii</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., p. 196). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>viii</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., p. 245). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>ix</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., pp. 248–249). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>x</sup> Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed., p. 267). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>263</sup> Hans Metzsch. On his earlier troubles, see No. 1646.

<sup>264</sup> The text mistakenly reads November 15.

<sup>265</sup> Anthony Lauterbach, recorder of this entry, and Sebastian Fröschel were the two deacons.

<sup>266</sup> The text reads: “the next Sunday.” The reference is to confession and absolution.

<sup>267</sup> Luther was serving as pastor in Wittenberg during the absence of John Bugenhagen.

<sup>xi</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 54: Table Talk*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 54, pp. 315–316). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>14</sup> This letter of Cyprian was addressed to the presbyters and deacons informing them of the action they should take in re-admitting the lapsed into the church.

<sup>xii</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 31, p. 112). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>81</sup> Joachim Mörlin (Mörlein). The “today” suggests that this conversation took place on a Sunday, perhaps June 6. Mörlin (1514–1571) was deacon in the city church in Wittenberg.

<sup>xiii</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 54: Table Talk*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 54, p. 383). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

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<sup>124</sup> The administration of the sacraments was often left to the deacons or chaplains, who were assistants of pastors or rectors.

<sup>xiv</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 54: Table Talk*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 54, p. 460). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>18</sup> I.e., people of whom it is publicly known that they live in vice. See also p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> The text reads *cognitio*.

<sup>xv</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 50: Letters III*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 50, p. 64). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>18</sup> These are the sixth and fifth of the seven grades through which elegy advanced to the priesthood. Some then-contemporary Catholic theologians (e.g., Gajetan and Durandus) doubted whether the Sacrament of Order was actually received by deacons. They were later overruled by the Council of Trent which decided that it was. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (15 vols.), IV, 650.

<sup>xvi</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 36, p. 15). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>xvii</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 36, p. 115). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>xviii</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 25, p. 446). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.