

Church And Ministry: An Exegetical Study of Several Key Passages With Reference To Some Contemporary Issues

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The assigned title of this paper was, "Church and Ministry: Exegesis of Key Passages." If one were to do justice to that title the result might well be a book of considerable size. A paper the size of this one could not possibly offer the exegesis of all the key passages involved in the doctrine of Church and Ministry. One might well take just one of the passages below and produce an exegetical paper. Several such papers have appeared in recent issues of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. This paper attempts to address specific questions posed by the steering committee of the Ohio Conference.

Defining terms: church

In the history of Christian doctrine, perhaps no single element has contributed to confusion more than the failure to properly define terms. Flacius and Strigel argued ferociously about original sin, though neither seemed to fully comprehend that the term *accidens* needed further definition and clarification. Among the treasures of the Formula of Concord is the sorting out of this whole controversy (Article 1).

Occasionally, at conferences such as this one, it can happen that two men talk right past one another due to a confusion of terms. Our Lord Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets" (Mt 7:15). Therefore, suspicion of how this or that term is being used can be a healthy pursuit. Only when we fully understand what is being said can we know how to respond properly. Often false teachers have hidden their poisonous leaven behind right-sounding terminology. Terms play a big role in any doctrine, including the doctrine of the church and her ministry.

When the Holy Ghost moved the holy men of God to use the term ἐκκλησία he was not inventing a new religious term. Occasionally, even in the New Testament, ἐκκλησία retains a secular nuance. In Acts 19:32,41, ἐκκλησία refers to the idolatrous mob stirred up by Demetrius, the Ephesian silversmith. No one with any feel for the English language would describe that idol-worshiping mob as a "church." In verse 39 of that same chapter, ἐκκλησία denotes a secular, governmental body. "Church" just would not seem right there either. The English word "church" is not a one-to-one equivalent of the Greek term ἐκκλησία, at least not in every case.

Luther never translated ἐκκλησία as "Kirche" (church). He believed "Kirche" was unclear, indefinite, and even "un-German." Professor August Pieper offered the following illustration: "Today the church in Corinth had church in its church and elected a churchman." There the word is used in four different senses. He explains that it would be better to say, "Today the Christians in Corinth held a worship service in their meetinghouse and called a pastor" (WLQ, Vol. 59, #2, pp 87,88).

Pieper was impressed by the fact that:

Luther used the word "church" only about fifteen times in the Old Testament, and then only to designate places or meetings where idolatry was practiced, never as a designation of the Old Testament believers and their gatherings. In the New Testament he uses the term only twice, and always in compound nouns: "feast of the dedication" (*Kirchweih*), John 10:22; and "robbers of churches" (*Kirchenraeuber*), Acts 19:37 (ibid., p.88).

Luther rendered ἐκκλησία exclusively with *Gemeine* (*Gemeinde*), i.e. "congregation." Pieper opined that "if we had continued to use this term strictly, we might have been spared from many an error" (ibid., p.88). The problems came when "congregation" was reserved exclusively for the organized local congregation.

An honest examination of the New Testament use of ἐκκλησία reveals Luther's correctness. We could use the English word "congregation" for the Ephesian mob and for a governmental body. Our word "congress" is not far from "congregation." It comes from the Latin "cum" (together) and "gradi" (walk). "Congress," at least according to its roots, means "walking together." Some have defined "synod" in a similar way from the Greek words σὺν and ὁδός. Technically, "synod" means "together (on the) path." With that in mind, some have defined "synod" as "walking together." At any rate, it is quite similar etymologically to "congregation" and ἐκκλησία.

What is the church?

The roots of ἐκκλησία are found in the verb ἐκκαλέω, which means "to call out." An ἐκκλησία is a group of people called out from somewhere or something to somewhere or something. We see this definition in 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who *called you out* of darkness into his wonderful light." God has called people out of the darkness of sin and death and unbelief into his wonderful light of salvation and faith. Each person for whom this can be said holds membership in God's ἐκκλησία—his congregation of people who are "called out" of the darkness of unbelief and into the marvelous light of faith.

Each member of this "congregation" of believers experiences Christ's gracious ruling activity in the heart. This kingship of God is invisible to our eyes (Lk 17:20-21). For that reason, we say that the ἐκκλησία, in the strict sense, is invisible. Nevertheless, we confess the reality of the holy Christian congregation, the communion of saints. What Scripture teaches is real, even if invisible. This congregation is singular in number because it has only one Head, Christ (Col 1:18). This congregation is holy, because Christ cleansed his Bride by the washing of water by the Word (Eph 5:25-27).

The keys belong to the church individually and collectively

The members of this congregation of believers possess the keys of the kingdom of heaven both individually and collectively. Matthew 16:16-19 emphasizes individual possession, without excluding Matthew 18:15-18 and John 20:23 which teach collective possession.

Matthew 16:16-19: Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Peter answered a question Jesus had posed to all of his disciples. We know Jesus was speaking to all of them, because the text says that he asked his "disciples," "them," and "you" [plural] (v. 13, μαθητὰς; v. 15, αὐτοῖς, ὑμεῖς...λέγετε). All are plural in subject and verb. But only one in that number of disciples answered. Jesus asked, "Who do you [disciples] say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus could have spoken to the group as a whole at that point. He did not. Otherwise, verse 17 would have an αὐτοῖς in the place of αὐτῶ. Clearly, he's talking to Peter when he says, "Blessed are you [singular], Simon son of Jonah." He tells Peter that what he has just said was revealed to him by the heavenly Father, and not by flesh and blood.

Christ is still talking to Peter when he says in verse 18, "And I also say to you [singular] that you [singular] are Peter, and on this rock [πέτρα] I will build my church [ἐκκλησίαν], and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Ἐκκλησία refers to Christ's congregation of believers. But what does πέτρα refer to? Christ uses a wordplay. "Peter" [πέτρος] is masculine, while "rock" [πέτρα] is feminine. Peter is not the πέτρα. Πέτρα is a rock foundation, and refers not to Peter, but to the content of his confession. The foundation is what the heavenly Father revealed to Peter.

Letting Scripture interpret Scripture, we turn to Ephesians 2:20 for help. The congregation of believers is "built on the foundation [θεμελίω] of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone [ἀκρογωνιάου]." Though the word πέτρα is not used there, the doctrinal sense of a "foundation" is. In Matthew 7:24, Jesus speaks of the wise man who built his house on the πέτρα. Christ is the πέτρα of offense in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8. He was the spiritual πέτρα which followed the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:4). Many unbelievers stumble over Christ, the Rock of our faith, yet, thanks to God's grace, many others rely on him as the chief Cornerstone.

The πέτρα of Matthew 16:18 refers to what Peter said. His confession of faith revealed Christ's real identity, his faith in Christ, and the message to be believed and proclaimed. It revealed Christ himself—the congregation's one foundation.

Christ confers the keys on Peter, an individual believer and member of the group of the disciples. The keys are given implicitly to all who shared Peter's confession, as we will see.

Notice the singular number used in verse 19, "I will give you [singular] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you [singular] bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you [singular] loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven." (Note the rare usage of the future perfect tense in periphrasis: "will have been"). Grammatically, Christ is still talking to Peter. Christ says, "I will give" in the future tense. It seems that he is not yet turning anyone loose to administer the keys, because in verse 20 he speaks to the disciples as a group and commands them not to tell anyone yet that he is the Christ.

Christ explains that the church possesses the keys in Matthew 18:15-20:

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

The third step in brotherly discipline is to tell it to the ἐκκλησία. Clearly, here the visible manifestation of the ἐκκλησία is meant. It would be impossible to tell it to the invisible congregation of all true believers. How will we find the ἐκκλησία? Look to verse 20, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with [in the midst of] them." Jesus possesses the keys. He is present where there are two or three gathered in his name.

Jesus' name refers to everything we know about him from God's Word. We learn about Christ in the gospel. His saving work is conveyed to us through the spoken Word as well as through the visible Word. Look for the gathered group that proclaims the gospel and administers the sacraments as Christ instituted them. There is Christ. There is his congregation. The gathered group of believers collectively possesses the keys.

Jesus tells them, "Whatever you [plural] bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you [plural] loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18).

This group is to be notified about the unrepentant brother. This group is to use the keys responsibly. Christ "instituted" the ministry of the keys in John 20, after his resurrection. There the verbs are in the plural as well.

Manifestations of the church: forms

Scripture does not always refer to the *Una Sancta* as a whole. Often it refers to what we normally call "local congregations," the two or three gathered in Jesus' name. The New Testament uses plural forms of ἑκκλησία 35 times. 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 may serve as an example.

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the *congregations* of the saints, ³⁴women should remain silent in the *churches*. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.

Another 75 times we find ἑκκλησία in the singular. Often here, too, it is clear that the local group is in mind. Revelation 2:1 may serve as an example, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write..."

Acts 8:3 describes Saul as persecuting the ἑκκλησία, entering every οἶκος to put men and women in prison. We might refer to οἶκος as "house-churches." Ἐκκλησία refers to the larger group of Christians.

Most manuscripts of Acts 9:31 refer to the ἑκκλησία "throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria." The latest Concordia exposition of *Luther's Small Catechism* takes note of this and says, "A group of congregations is also called 'church' (Acts 9:31)" (Concordia, 1991, p.157). A number of manuscripts have ἑκκλησίαι (plural). The earliest witnesses to this reading include some Coptic-Bohairic manuscripts (third century), most Byzantine manuscripts and lectionaries, Georgian versions (fifth century), Old Latin versions (fifth), and the church fathers Chrysostom (d. 407) and Augustine (d. 430). The NIV follows the Alexandrian readings, "Then the *church* throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria . . .," while the King James and the New King James follow the so-called "Received Text" (Textus Receptus), "Then the *churches* throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria..."

Acts 15:22 describes the synod of Jerusalem as ἑκκλησία. In 2 Corinthians 8:18,19, the local congregations of Macedonia together called a man to be Paul's traveling companion. Clearly a synod can be called "church" and can call workers. It simply cannot be maintained that the local congregation is the only divinely instituted form of ἑκκλησία.

Where is the church?

Matthew 18:20 says, "Where [οὐ] two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." The church is where two or three are gathered together in Jesus' name. Wherever that is the situation, there the church is. The church doesn't have to meet in a cathedral, W.E.F. unit, temple, or house. The church can meet on a lawn, in the woods, by a lake, or wherever two or three gather in Jesus' name.

Acts 2:46 proves interesting in this regard. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." As the followers of the true fulfillment of the temple's meaning, the early church met at this familiar house of worship. Does this verse speak of worship services in the homes? It's possible. More likely this shows that they brought the joy of worship home with them. The breaking of bread in their homes may refer to ἄγία meals or just to eating at home in general.

Four verses earlier, "the breaking of bread" does refer to Holy Communion in a regular worship service. Acts 2:42 says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Literally, it says, "the breaking of the bread and the prayers." The definite article would seem to be reference to the consecrated bread of the Lord's Supper and the usual prayers of the service.

At any rate, the New Testament does not define the "where" of the church as only the Temple, only a local church building, or only a home. Anywhere two or three gather in Jesus' name, anywhere the marks of the church are present (the gospel in Word and sacraments), there the church is found.

Synodical decrees?

One of the many topics assigned with this paper was a brief consideration of how doctrinal decisions made by a synod are to be received in local congregations. Can the larger group hand down binding decisions to local congregations? Let's go back in time to Acts 15. There was a question of false teaching.

Acts 15:1,2: Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers:

"Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

²This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

The apostles and elders met with the whole church. The location was Jerusalem. After much discussion, James concluded matters with this ruling: The Gentiles did not have to be circumcised. There were no legal conditions attached to the gospel. Nevertheless, these were delicate and strained times between the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles. Because of those weak Jewish Christians, the Gentiles would be taught to be careful not to offend.

Acts 15:19-21: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

²¹For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Acts 16:4 describes what Paul and others did after the synodical decision: "As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey." Acts 15:23 indicates that the information went out to "Antioch, Syria and Cilicia." Paul and Silas "delivered" (παρεδίδουσαν) the "decisions" (δόγματα). "Decree" (NKJV) is one possible translation of δόγματα, since this term was used for imperial decrees. The most famous such "decree" is recorded in Luke 2:1. Caesar Augustus issued a δόγμα that all the world should be registered. The decrees or decisions were for the people "to obey" (φυλάσσειν). Φυλάσσειν can mean observe, follow, obey, keep, or guard. This is the word used in Luke 11:28, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey [keep] it." The NIV uses "reached" to render κεκριμένα, which refers to making a decision, judgment, or verdict.

It proves interesting to note that Paul did not demand these same things of the Roman congregation. He gives a clear teaching on how to view adiaphorous practices in Romans 14. Eating food that happened to be grilled at an idol temple may be a matter of Christian liberty or a sin against conscience, depending on the circumstances and the individuals involved. The Jerusalem synod reached the decision that the Gentiles should abstain from "the meat of strangled animals and from blood" because these could easily be offensive to those who had for so long been taught to detest these things religiously. The Jerusalem synod applied the Word of God to the controversy at hand.

Our synod should apply the Word of God to controversies, situations, and people today. Our synod can lead the way in blasting out a clear trumpet call of God's Word to our world. It can, it should, it must, if we are to remain faithful to our Lord and his Word. Like the synod of Jerusalem, our synod can, should, and must deal with false teachers and false teachings. We may need to clear up the falsified, correct the incorrect, and explain what was false and why.

What our synod cannot do is make up new rules that are not prescribed by clear Bible passages. We need to carefully distinguish between *description* and *prescription* in the Bible. Simply because we find a *description* of apostles in Acts 15 does not give us a *prescription* to have the same today. Scripture does not allow us to designate leaders as "apostles" in the same sense in which Peter and Paul were apostles. If we are not careful with descriptive sections, we will climb Mt. Moriah to sacrifice our sons simply because Abraham did that. God prescribed that course of action to Abraham, not to us, just as the Lord prescribed the ceremonial laws to the Old Testament Israelites, not to us. Even descriptions of the greatest of believers need to be weighed carefully with the rest of Scripture. As we study the descriptions of the apostles we need to remember that, though these men were exemplary believers and divinely inspired to write the Bible without errors, they were sinners too (cf. Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 2:11).

We know that the three creeds had their necessary place in church history. False doctrine had to be opposed and the truth had to be confessed. Every Sunday we confess one of these creeds. We accept that it was necessary for the Lutherans to have a Book of Concord and sign it in 1580. We have all promised to teach and preach according to Scripture, as confessed in that Book of Concord. That is a binding statement in our midst. No pastor will be ordained in the WELS today without subscribing to the Book of Concord, because, not in so far as, it is a faithful exposition of the Scriptures.

But is that the end of the need for confessional statements? As we look around us today, we see Lutherans who can subscribe to the Book of Concord and yet differ from us significantly. We have sensed the need to produce clear statements on such doctrines as church and ministry, church fellowship, and the roles of men and women. These documents clearly confess what Scripture teaches on these points. Could a collection of such documents become the equivalent of the Book of Concord for future Lutherans?

If it happens, it should be due to the fact that each subscriber came to the same conclusions from Scripture. Confessional documents are most helpful when they are filled with Scripture references, so that each point may be checked in Berean style. Then confessions become fine instructional tools. Confessional documents are clearest when they teach the truth and reject falsehood in theses and antitheses. Synodical documents and confessional statements must be carefully based on God's Word or they become merely the will of the majority, as too often happens among "Lutherans" today.

When we carefully and clearly enunciate our scriptural position, it clarifies our lines of fellowship. Faith moves us to clearly exhibit what we believe so that those who are uninformed will learn our scriptural beliefs. Those who agree with us will be encouraged to join us, while those who firmly disagree will seek their fellowship elsewhere. Simple honesty requires this.

The Jerusalem synod dealt with a controversy about some ceremonial practices and whether they were necessary for salvation. Circumcision was not necessary for salvation but certain customs were nevertheless urged to prevent offense. From time to time, it may serve the overall unity of a synod to keep certain customs or practices in common. While common customs and practices, instituted by men, are not necessary for true unity (Augsburg Confession, VII, 3), they may prove helpful. It would be helpful if all of our congregations used the same book of worship, same edition and exposition of *Luther's Small Catechism*, and the same adult instruction course, though we aren't in that situation today. With commonality, the weak are less likely to be disturbed.

We learn four basic points from Acts 15-16:

- 1) Paul and Barnabas opposed divergent doctrine, and the church at Antioch appealed to the larger church grouping.
- 2) The larger church grouping and its leaders promptly considered the matter carefully in the light of God's revealed Word.
- 3) The "synod convention" reached a decision.
- 4) They published the decision and delivered it to those affected (Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia).

Defining terms: ministry

The NIV uses a great variation of English words in rendering the words that are formed from the root, "διακον—" (cf. appendix). The English language has not been consistent with respect to the words "minister" and "servant." Originally, the two were synonyms. The King James viewed them as such. Since that time, the English language has distinguished between the two. "Ministers" became those who serve publicly, as called/elected representatives of other people. The minister of a congregation was its called public minister or pastor. The prime minister was an elected public official. Matters seemed to work out in an orderly fashion. Everyone seemed to know who "the minister" was.

Then, a few writers attempted to return to the original lack of distinction between minister and servant. For example, Oscar Feucht published the book, *Everyone a Minister*. As a result of this trend, the use of these terms has been very confusing. I am not comfortable hearing, "Everyone's a minister," but is that a doctrinal point or a linguistic point? The important distinction between public ministry and individual service can become foggy.

Professor Brug writes, "The New Testament did not have a specialized technical term equivalent to the term 'minister' in recent English usage" (WLQ, Vol. 91, #1, p.31). The NIV may have led some to think that there was one. Not all Lutherans in America, and not even all WELS teachers, have always used the terms in the same ways.

We will not talk past one another if we carefully explain how we are using each term. Then, Lord willing, a consistent usage will eventually appear and become the new standard terminology. Which will win the terminology battle: *public* ministry or *representative* ministry? Either refers to those who are called by God through the congregation to serve in behalf of others (Augsburg Confession, XIV). The gospel ministry or the ministry of the Word most often refers to the wide use of ministry, which includes public and private use of God's Word (Augsburg Confession, V). The "everyone a minister" idea seems to be winning out in the sense that *ministry* is being used more and more for the private service of individual Christians as priests and kings under Christ. Consider, for example, the prayer in "The Service of the Word" in *Christian Worship*:

Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, *our ministries* and offerings, and use them to your glory (NPH, 1993, p.42).

This usage is certainly possible, according to the New Testament's original words, yet misunderstanding may well remain because many of us still define the English words *ministry* /*minister* as designations for divinely called public ministry. Check your dictionary for its definitions of these words. My dictionary defines *minister* as:

1. a person acting for another as his agent and carrying out his orders or designs...**2.** a) anyone authorized to carry out the spiritual functions of a church, usually Protestant, conduct worship, administer sacraments, preach, etc.; clergyman; pastor...(Webster's New World Dictionary, New York and Cleveland: World, 1970). [The 1994 edition has essentially the same definitions.]

Another more recent dictionary follows that same train of thought on *minister*:

1. A person authorized to perform religious functions in a church...**4.** One who serves as an agent for another (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, New York: Laurel/Dell, 1989).

Neither definition seems to describe *ministry* as simple *service* which every member of a church would do, but both point to called public ministry. Confusion may well result when the terms *ministry*/*minister* are used to substitute for *service*/*servant* in our language.

Not everyone has been limiting *public ministry* to those who are called to administer the Means of Grace. There may be warrant for this, as we shall see in Acts 6, but this usage may lead to more confusion.

Terminology beginning with "lay-" can be overdone. Technically, "lay people" is a redundancy (people people). Occasionally, staff ministers are called "lay public ministers," an oxymoron. Does "lay ministry" refer to the public ministry of called elders, or to private, individual work which any Christian does without a call?

The committee asked that this paper deal with the keys as they apply to "ministry." In this next section, we see the confusion that could result if we are not more careful with our use of the word "ministry."

The keys applied to ministry

Christ possesses the keys. He said so. Mark 2:10, "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Revelation 1:18, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Christ can give the keys to whomever he wishes. He gave them to Peter (Matthew 16:19 singular in number), but not to him alone, or even primarily. He gave them to the apostles (John 20:23, plural in number), though not to them alone. There seem to have been more than just the ten apostles in that room. (Thomas was not there.) Luke 24:33 seems to be the parallel account, and indicates that there were others gathered with them. Christ gave the keys to the Church (Matthew 18:19). Christ gave them freely to his believers, the "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Perhaps it is worth noting that there was a priesthood of all believers in the Old Testament too.

Exodus 19:6: "'You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

That priesthood was distinct from the public ministries of Moses, Aaron, and the Levitical priests. Every believer shares the priestly privilege of praying directly to God, as a child of God, a member of a holy nation of believers. God wanted his Old Testament believers to hear these words, and he wants us New Testament believers to hear these words: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests."

Since the keys belong to every believer, both individually and collectively, they belong to Christian women.

Galatians 3:26-28: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, "for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Since Christian women are members of the universal priesthood, they share in the individual "ministry" or personal use of the keys. If we simply printed the statement, "The ministry is also for Christian women," and left it hang there, great misunderstanding could result. Please, do not consider the above statement without the following words. Scripture does limit a Christian woman's activities in using the keys to a certain sphere (1 Tm 2:11,12; 1 Co 11:3; 14:34,35; 1 Pt 3:1-6 etc.). She is not to exercise authority over men.

This teaching of the individual use of the keys applying also to women, with the above qualifying statement in mind, is not abstract theological hair-splitting either, but carries important everyday implications. One legitimate application is when a Christian mother utilizes the keys with her children. Another practical use would be when a female Lutheran elementary school teacher assures a student of Christ's forgiveness for a sin committed at school.

We might be tempted to think of the ministry of the keys as just another doctrine in our Small Catechism and forget about the great treasure it is in everyday life. Yes, we administer the keys in public worship services. But do we encourage their private use too? Do we encourage a ministry of the keys brother to brother in our circuits? Pastor, to whom do you confess? True, we can confess directly to God, but we benefit greatly by hearing the words of absolution from a brother. *Christian Worship* includes an order for private confession on pages 154-155. Consider this as an encouragement to use that order.

Truly, we ought to praise God for giving such authority to us, authority that is really his very own! Matthew 9:8 records the response of the crowd to Jesus' authority to heal and forgive sins, "They were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men." That authority and power is given to us. What a great and sacred trust! Those who are given such a trust must prove faithful.

Public ministry: a divine institution

The Lord is orderly and desires order in the church (1 Co 14:40). The Lord has ordained the public ministry. While we have always confessed this fact, we have not always agreed on what the proof passage should be which teaches this truth. When we examine the passages put forward, we realize that an explicit statement in which God ordains the public ministry seems to be lacking. Yet, that doesn't mean the Lord has not established the public ministry. God made it clear that he instituted the public ministry:

1. By promising public ministers to the church (Jr 3:15; 23:4; Jl 2:23);
2. By calling public ministers (Ro 10:15);
3. By giving public ministers (1 Co 12:28; 2 Co 5:18; Ep 4:11);
4. By describing their qualifications (1 Pe 5:3; 1 Tim 3:2-7);
5. By describing their tasks (Tt 1:9-11; 1 Tim 3:5; Ac 20:28,21; 1 Pe 5; He 13:17 etc);
6. By distinguishing between public ministers and all other believers (1 Co 12:28-29);
7. By giving honor to public ministers (He 13:7; 1 Co 4:1; 1 Tim 5:17; 2 Co 3-5; 1 Th 5:12);
8. By commanding that public ministers be supported (1 Co 9:7-14).

This public ministry is to be distinguished from individual service/ ministry.

Personal/private ministry

Can we legitimately speak of "ministry" which is done by Christians without any call other than the Lord's call to faith? The New Testament Scriptures do use the *δῖσκον*— terms in that sense. In 1 Peter 4:10, 11 the NIV translates with "serve(s)," while the King James and New King James use "minister(s)."

As each one has received a gift, *minister* it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone *ministers*, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever (NKJV).

We call this letter the first of the Catholic/General Epistles. Peter is writing to Christians in general. Each Christian has some spiritual gift from the Lord to be used in service for the rest of God's people. This passage supports the idea of personal service/ministry. If you are going to talk, talk according to God's Word, and consider the authority of his Word. If you are going to serve/minister, do your best with the gifts and abilities the Lord has entrusted you with (cf. Romans 12:6-8).

One gospel, one ministry

The Holy Bible proclaims only one Savior, only one way of salvation. That one gospel message is a sacred trust. We, as individual Christians and as called public ministers, are to communicate that saving message to other people. That is ministry of the Word of God in the wide sense.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20: Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry [τὴν διακονίαν] of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the Word of reconciliation [τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς]. ²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (NKJV).

God has given to us τὴν διακονίαν...τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. The ministry of the Word of reconciliation is a very definite concept. Note the definite articles. This is not just "a ministry," this is "the ministry." It is defined by "the Word of the reconciliation," and not just any "word of reconciliation." The ambassadors of Christ proclaim that God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself by not imputing their trespasses to them. Jesus' atoning death paid the price and won the peace. His resurrection proclaims the verdict, "Forgiven!" For he was delivered over to death because we had sinned, but was raised to life because he had justified us. That singular, definite gospel message has been entrusted to mere mortals, sinful mortals like us.

The call into the public ministry

Since it is God's will that there be public ministers who proclaim that one gospel to and on behalf of his congregation, he calls men to serve in that capacity. Christ called the apostles directly. Today the Lord of the church issues calls mediately through his church. Public ministers and congregations need to be reminded that the call into the public ministry is a divine call. St. Paul told the elders of Ephesus who had really called them.

Acts 20:28: Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Like most really important things, the calling process is a matter of faith. Are we naive to conclude that God still calls men to serve where he wills? No, we believe what the Scriptures say. God controls the calling process. He has the matter firmly in hand. He had a good reason for calling you to your present place.

Those Ephesian elders may have been tempted to think that they were only elected by people (cf. Acts 14:23: χειροτονήσαντες, "choose, elect by raising hands" BAGD, p.881; "to vote by stretching out the hand" Thayer, p. 668; "Raising the hand expresses agreement,...to vote for" Kittel abridged, p.1312); but the apostle reminds them that they were placed as overseers and elders and pastors of the flock by the Holy Spirit. The next time we are tempted to complain about our present calling, may we remember who placed us. What an honor it is to be selected and placed, not by some worldly "head-hunter," but by our loving, omniscient God.

Different forms of ministry

There is one public ministry of the gospel, because there is only one gospel. There are no New Testament prescriptions as to what particular form that ministry must take. A seminary professor, a parish pastor, a foreign missionary, as well as a teacher in the grade school classroom, each has a call into the public ministry of the gospel.

In that sense, there are different ministries. The New Testament does use the term διακονία that way in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are *differences of ministries*, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all (NKJV).

Yes, there does appear to be a reference to the Trinity in these three verses. According to the dogmatic principle "opera ad extra sunt indivisa" (the Triune God's works to the outside are indivisible) all three persons participate in gifts, ministries, and activities.

Diversity of gift distribution leads to "differences [διαίρεσις] of ministries [δικονιῶν]." Yes, ministries is in the plural. Not all Christians receive the same gift or set of gifts from the Spirit. Not all serve in the same place or in the same way, but all proclaim and trust and serve the same Lord Jesus Christ. Not all carry out the same activities, but all truly Christian activities are worked by God. The Lord utilizes a great range of variety in his creations. Not all Christians come out of the same cookie cutter. Not all have the same personality, interests, or situation. The Lord distributes differently, and uniquely, to each individual Christian. 1 Peter 4:10, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its *various forms*."

Not every minister is the same. Not every calling is the same. The Lord, in infinite wisdom, sees to it that ministers are matched with the proper opportunities. Congregations that have been served by more than one pastor can see the diversities of gifts among their called workers. Though all must proclaim the same Triune God, the same gospel of Jesus Christ, the same biblical message and practice, our individual styles may differ. Our emphases may differ. Our strengths and our weaknesses do differ.

Is public ministry always ministry of the Word?

Let's examine Acts 6:1-6 for the answer.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the *daily distribution* [δικονία] of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect *the ministry of [not in Gk] the word of God in order to wait on* [δικονεῖν] tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and *the ministry* [τῆ δικονία] of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

In verse 1, "distribution" is δικονία. The NIV is rather misleading in verse 2, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables." We might assume that δικονία comes before "word of God" and doesn't come before tables. Actually, it's just the opposite. In verse two, δικονεῖν is used for the "waiting on tables" type of service, and not the public ministry of the Gospel.

Verse 4 shows us the interesting diversity of the δικον- words in Greek, for there it does refer to ministry of the Word. In fact, verse 4 would make a great sermon text for a pastors' conference, "[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

This dual use of the δικον- terms may give warrant to the idea that public ministry may not always refer to ministry of the Word of God. Seven men were called to serve publicly as deacons. The calling process included qualifications and the laying on of hands. They were commissioned to distribute food to widows.

We wish we knew more details. Did this, perhaps, include the distribution of the Word with the food? We can't say for sure. We do know that Philip became an evangelist (Acts 8 and 21:8), and Stephen did miracles (6:8). Stephen defended himself by speaking (6:10). The charge brought against him had to do with supposedly "blasphemous words." Was teaching part of his call? Was he proclaiming on behalf of the congregation or as an individual witness? We just can't say for sure.

Philip may well have received another call to serve as the evangelist of Acts 8. The "deacon" call of Acts 6 appears to speak of activity among widows located in Jerusalem. Perhaps his call to outside evangelism

work came around the time of fierce persecution mentioned in Acts 8:1: "At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

What we have learned is that the Greek terms beginning with " δῖακον—" were broad enough to include serving bread or the Bread of Life, but is our English term "minister" equally malleable? The dictionaries quoted above do seem to support the view that "minister" may refer to any agent authorized to represent others, though many of us still define public ministry in terms of the means of grace.

Who does the "work of ministry" in Ephesians 4:12?

Professor Kurt Marquart offers a rather rare view of Ephesians 4:12 in his assessment of Church Growth ("*Church Growth*" As Mission Paradigm, pp. 61,62). Does the public minister equip *the saints* to do the work of ministry, or does *the pastor* do the work of ministry? Marquart contends the latter on the basis of the King James Version. Almost every modern translation seems to say the former. Professor Schuetze said "both" (WLQ, vol. 74, no. 1).

The NIV puts it this way:

Eph 4:11,12: It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

In this translation, as in almost every modern English version, verse 12 appears to have only two phrases:

- 1) to prepare God's people for works of service;
- 2) so that the body of Christ may be built up.

But there are three phrases in the Greek text:

- 1) πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων
- 2) εἰς ἔργον διακονίας
- 3) εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ

The NIV renders "works of service" as a plural, but the original phrase is εἰς ἔργον διακονίας ("work of ministry").

The King James Version sees three coordinate phrases in verse 12:

¹¹And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

According to this version, the called workers are the ones who perfect the saints, do the work of ministry, and edify the body of Christ.

The old American Standard Version seems to agree:

¹¹And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.

Professor Marquart cites *The Treatise Against the Power and Primacy of the Pope* in the Lutheran Confessions to support his position, "[Paul] enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Church pastors and teachers, and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Triglot, p.523, #67). This appears to support the KJV/Marquart view. If Melanchthon, the Greek scholar, had lazily used the Vulgate, or Luther's German translation for that matter, he would have been in the two phrase category:

Vulgate: "...ad consummationem sanctorum in opus ministerii, in aedificationem corporis Christi..."

Luther: "...dasz die Heiligen zugerichtet werden zum Werk des Amts..."

Weighing in against Marquart and the KJV are a very large army: nearly every modern English Bible, Luther's German translation, and most commentators. Yet, all these could err. We don't solve such questions by seeing who has greater authorities to back him up. What does the Greek text say?

The three prepositions used are πρὸς, εἰς, and εἰς. They are not the same, though they are often identical in meaning (Moulton, III, p.256). The first phrase begins with the definite article, while phrases two and three do not have the definite article (anarthrous).

The context of verse 16 may help answer the question. The NIV renders this very complex Greek sentence, "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." The body is building itself up, and all the members play a role in this work, though Christ is the source of this power ("From him").

Professor Kuske deals with this section in greater depth (WLQ, vol 91, no. 3, pp. 209-212). He calls the KJV translation "faulty" because the Greek words do not indicate that the three phrases in verse 12 are coordinate, nor does the original text place a definite article before ministry. Kuske states that the three consecutive phrases must be either appositional, or expand on each previous one. He summarizes the appositional view in which "each successive phrase would be parallel to the preceding one":

According to this analysis, Paul would be saying that Christ gave various kinds of spiritual leaders to the church so that they could equip the saints, thus performing a service that builds up the body of Christ spiritually (p.210).

Professor Kuske inclines toward the second view, that the phrases expand on each preceding phrase.

Christ gave spiritual leaders to his church so that they would equip the saints. Christ wanted the saints to be equipped so that they would be at work performing service for others. Christ wanted the saints to be at work performing service for others so that his body might be built up spiritually (p. 211).

He explains why verse 12 does not describe three different types of work performed by public ministers:

That [idea of three coordinate phrases], would more likely be expressed by the conjunction καί or δέ coordinating the three phrases as independent members of a series as was done in verse 11. Koine Greek regularly expresses coordination by using conjunctions, and if Paul would have meant these phrases to be coordinate, he could easily have made that clear by the use of several conjunctions. Without any conjunction, the three consecutive phrases in verse 12 express one purpose with each successive phrase adding to the description of that one purpose (WLQ, vol. 91, no. 3, p. 210).

Marquart, citing two scholars, also takes issue with the translation of καταρτισμὸν and argues that it should not mean "equip." This term from a familiar root is a hapax legomenon in this particular noun form. Thayer believes it is equal to κατάρτισις which is also a hapax in 2 Corinthians 13:9, "Our prayer is for your perfection" (κατάρτισις). The verb καταρτίζω is used thirteen times in the New Testament. The most notable use may be Romans 9:22, which speaks of objects of wrath "fit" or "suitable" for destruction. We prefer not to translate with "prepared" or "equipped" in that context, or else the outcome may be the horrible doctrine of double predestination. One word that works in almost every case is "confirm(ation)." We can make sense of a "confirmation" of the saints. Paul may have prayed for their "confirmation." The vessels of wrath led God to judge their wickedness and unbelief by confirming them for destruction.

Though some may not prefer "equip" as the translation in Ephesians 4:12, it does make sense in places, and does have extra-biblical support. To dislike the translation is one thing, but to say the translation is wrong or impossible is quite another matter.

Honor for public ministers

1 Timothy 5:17: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine (NKJV).

The question was asked, "Does this passage support the idea of two groups of elders: those who rule/administer and those who preach/teach?" That can't be, since "those who labor in the word and doctrine" are part of the group of "elders who rule well" (see also 1 Tim 3:4-5). All of the elders mentioned "rule well" but some are "especially" noted for their "labor in the word and doctrine" (for "especially" see Ac 25:26). Does this mean that one can say for certain that there were some elders who did not preach or teach at all?

One view of this verse concludes that among the elders who ruled well only some preached or taught, while the others did not. Although this view is grammatically tenable according to this verse, it may present difficulties with what we know about elders from the rest of Scripture, as mentioned below.

A second view sees emphasis on the verbal idea of κοπιᾶω "labor/ toil" and concludes that among the elders who rule well some are "especially" noteworthy in that they really work hard at their preaching and teaching (for κοπιᾶω "work hard to the point of exhaustion," see 2 Tim 2:6; Lk 5:5; Ro 16:6; Jn 4:6). This second view maintains that all of the elders preach and teach, but some are especially noted for their hard work. This view finds support in the "able to teach" qualification for overseers (1 Tim 3:2). Elders (πρεσβύτεροι) and overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) appear to be the same men with the same calls (see these terms in Ac 20:17, 28; Tt 1:6-7; 1 Pe 5:1-2; also see Peters, WLQ, 1955, p.193). If elders (πρεσβύτεροι) and overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) are essentially the same men with the same calls, Titus 1:9 should be decisive, "He [i.e., the elder/overseer] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."

Lenski and Hendriksen are advocates of the second view. Hendriksen writes, "The term *overseer* is used when the emphasis is on their *work* (1 Tim 3:1), the term *elder* when the emphasis is on the *honor* that is their due (1 Tim 5:17)" (p.179). Perhaps the thought behind the Greek terms was that an *elder's qualifications* were marked by spiritual maturity and experience, whereas his called *responsibility* of watching over God's flock designated him an *overseer*. Lenski concludes:

"Especially those toiling in connection with Word and teaching" does not mean that some elders did not teach, for all were required to have (and thus to use) this ability (3:2). Naturally, however, some would manifest especial zeal in this part of the work, actually toil in it to the point of fatigue and weariness. These richly deserve the twofold honor (pp. 681,682).

Hendriksen offers a plausible answer to the question at hand:

All rule, and to a certain extent all teach, but some (in addition to ruling) labor in preaching (expounding the Word to the assembled congregation), and teaching...They specialize in it, working hard at it. It requires much of their time and effort: preaching, teaching, and preparing for it (p. 180).

One expanded translation might catch the thought: "Let the well-ruling elders be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard [to the point of exhaustion] in word and doctrine."

One can easily teach this interpretation from the New King James translation above by stressing the term "labor" (NASB: "work hard"). It is slightly more difficult, though possible, to come to this understanding through the NIV paraphrase. There one needs to remember that "well" does not modify "worthy," while "work" needs some amplification, and "preaching" is literally "Word."

Someone might ask if "honor" in this verse is the equivalent of "honorarium." While that is not the case, one way that a congregation may show honor is by giving a respectable salary to its called worker. That this type of honor is in order, and in mind, is seen in the very next verse:

1 Tim 5:18, 19: For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." ¹⁹Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (NKJV).

"Worthy" is repeated from verse 17. Here the laborer is shown worthy of wages. However, wages are not the only honor. Respect is another. Verse 19 shows that a called worker's name is not to be frivolously dragged through the mud. There must be good evidence by two or three witnesses.

When the Corinthians played favorites, the inspired Paul wrote, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Co. 4:1, "he who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16).

How sad it is that many called workers are not praised or encouraged until they leave or die. Then the man who could seem to do no right suddenly becomes the man who did no wrong. The very man who went home frustrated is pointed to as a saint and model pastor. The very man who could have used a little encouragement in his preaching, but received little or none, now is mentioned in the same sentence with Luther. The man who received no flowers through a lifetime of ministry receives many dozens on his grave. If that is the state of affairs at a given place, it is not right. Yet this instruction is often missed because of the selflessness and modesty of the workers. Perhaps circuit pastors can keep this in mind.

In late December of 1992, former WELS President Carl Mischke delivered a paper to the Ministry Symposium in Watertown, which dealt with this issue in a winning way. Why does the ministry seem less desirable and less honorable today?

The reason is that the influence of the world has rubbed off on the church, an influence that often causes us to forget that the dignity of the public gospel ministry is still where it was in Isaiah's day, where it was in Paul's day, where it's always been, in the message. The reason the dignity of the public ministry is suffering is because the world and the church that lives and works in the world has become lukewarm in its love for the message (WELS Ministry Compendium, "How Beautiful the Feet: The Dignity of Public Gospel Ministry," p. 826).

The congregations and the individuals that most value the message will treat the messenger with the most honor. The congregations that least value the message will give a man fits and little honor. But called public ministers do not serve for human honor.

What does it mean to minister?

Jesus had the answer. His disciples saw the glory of it all. Christ the Lord told them how things were going to be in Matthew 20:25-28:

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served (διακονηθηναι), but to serve (διακονησαι), and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The KJV renders verse 28, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Choose the word you want to use for "ministry" here, but every minister must grapple with how this passage answers the question printed above. What does it mean to minister? It means to give your life for many others. It means to serve, not be served. It means selflessness. It means not looking for honor, and not complaining when you don't get any. It means serving Christ who served us first. It means ministering in the name of the Lord who ministered to us first. It means proclaiming that the Son of Man gave his life as the ransom for the whole world's sins.

Ministry begins with faith in the Son of Man and the good news of our redemption. He has redeemed us lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and his innocent sufferings and death, that we should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom (not ours!) and serve him (not ourselves!) in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, even as he has risen from death and lives and reigns to all eternity. This must most certainly be true in your heart if you want to be his man, his servant, his minister to his people.

2 Timothy 4:2: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

This is our task: "κήρυξον τὸν λόγον" (Preach the Word). Our Lord wants us to preach the Word. Our congregations want us to preach the Word. But how do people today take correction or a rebuke? We live in an era that shows little appreciation for words like "correct" or "rebuke." Then again, many of the biblical prophets experienced similar reactions. Nevertheless, "Preach the Word!" "Correct" and "rebuke" with the law. "Encourage" with the gospel. We are to do this exhausting work "with all longsuffering and teaching" (NKJV). The NIV's paraphrase reminds us that it takes more than just any old patience. Public ministry takes great patience—something to pray for.

We live in an era which demands all sorts of things of pastors. If we were to follow the breezes of contemporary thinking, we would be more social workers than theologians. May we never get away from "careful instruction." How much preparation does it take to say that you taught carefully? There should be some time between pushing paper, sorting mail, and driving around to study thoroughly. If there isn't time, perhaps accumulated stacks of paper and mail might be evidence of a need for some secretarial assistance.

This type of study means more than just cranking out a weekly sermon, working through two Bible class preparations, and reading through the weekly lessons. How can we be ready "in season and out of season" unless we are studying more than what is demanded in our weekly schedules?

What does it mean to be a pastor?

1 Peter 5:1-4: To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those

entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Pastors, by God's grace, are shepherds under Christ. God's Word says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (v. 2). May we serve willingly! Lord, make us shepherds and examples. Strengthen us to emulate the Chief Shepherd. The motivation to meet the demands of the ministry can only come from the very same gospel we proclaim. Only by hearing the words that declare us forgiven in God's sight for Christ's sake through faith will we be willing, eager, and exemplary shepherds of God's flock. On the Last Day, our Lord Jesus will appear and give us the crown of glory that does not fade away. Even so, Lord, quickly come!

Appendix

| NIV Translations of διακον– and ἐκκλησία (The NIV Exhaustive Concordance) Number of uses marked in parentheses. | | | |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| διακονέω (appears 37 times) | διακονία (34 times) | διάκονος (29 times) | |
| serves | (6)ministry | (14)servant | (13) |
| wait on | (6)service | (9)servants | (7) |
| served | (4)serve | (3)minister | (3) |
| serve | (3)distribution | (1)deacons | (2) |
| administer | (2)help | (1)attendants | (1) |
| attended | (2)mission | (1)deacon | (1) |
| help | (2)preparations | ministers | (1) |
| helped | (2)to be made | (1)promotes sin | (1) |
| care for | (1)service that | | |
| do the work | (1)you perform | (1)ἐκκλησία | |
| helpers | (1)serving | (1)(114 times) | |
| helping | (1)task | (1)church | (74) |
| helping to | work | (1)churches | (34) |
| support | (1) | assembly | (4) |
| in the service | | congregation | (1) |
| of | (1) | congregations | (1) |
| ministry | (1) | | |
| serve as | | | |
| deacons | (1) | | |
| serving | (1) | | |
| KJV Translations of διακον– and ἐκκλησία (Young's Analytical Concordance) Number of uses in parentheses. Words used most are placed first, rather than alphabetically. | | | |
| διακονέω | διακονία | διάκονος | |
| minister unto | (15)ministry | (16)minister | (20) |
| serve | (10)ministration | (6)servant | (7) |
| minister | (7)ministering | (3)deacon | (2) |
| administer | (2)administration | (2) | |
| use the office | service | (2)ἐκκλησία | |
| of deacon | (2)office | (1)church | (112) |
| minister to | (1)relief | (1)assembly | (3) |

| | |
|------------|-----|
| serving | (1) |
| do service | (1) |
| minister | (1) |

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