



Reimagining Our Church

Public Ministry in the ELCIC

Approved by National Church Council, March 2019

Approved by delegates at 2019 National Convention, July 2019

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

Preface

Bishop Susan Johnson

March 2019

Dear members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,

Grace and peace to you.

I am delighted, and more than a bit excited, to write this preface for *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC*. I'm thankful to the members, past and present, of the Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee (FOD) of National Church Council (NCC) for their several years of careful work leading up to this moment. And I am thankful to the ELCIC diaconal community which inspired it.

In 2016, I wrote a similar preface for *To Love Our Neighbours as Ourselves: A Study of Orders of Ministry in the ELCIC* and again, in 2018, for *Public Ministry in the ELCIC: A preliminary Draft*. I am grateful to all who participated in the reflection which these documents required and for the great depth of response received by FOD. Every response was carefully considered in the creation of *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC*.

Where are we?

With this document, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is invited to live into a new and fresh vision for our church. This document comes with a number of enabling resolutions which, when passed, will formally initiate our journey of renewal.

“We are all, whether lay or consecrated or ordained, being invited to consider how best we might participate in God’s mission and together to imagine and build a church which is missional, diaconal and prophetic.”

—Bishop Susan Johnson

The truth is, however, that many of us are already embarked on such a journey. In this present endeavour, we are being invited to reclaim the ministry of laypeople, reimagine the ministry of deacons, and refocus the ministry of pastors.

This is an ambitious project which holds the promise of redefining who we are as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. We are all, whether lay or consecrated or ordained, being invited to consider how best we might participate in God’s mission and together to imagine and build a church which is missional, diaconal and prophetic.

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Reader's Guide

As *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC* makes its way from FOD to NCC and on into our 2019 ELCIC National Convention *Bulletin of Reports*, a companion *Readers' Guide* has been prepared to make the journey lighter. This piece is not a *study* guide although one may be prepared at a future date. Rather, it is designed to provide touchstones for those who are interested in the sociology, theology, history and all of the other foundational material contained in *Reimagining our Church*. At the same time, it will assist those who may wish to simply become conversant in the main ideas to move through the heavier, more technical material to Section 5, which is at the heart of the document. I hope you will find this *Reader's Guide* helpful.

Spiritual Renewal

Several years ago, I called our church into spiritual renewal as individually and in community we would pray, read, worship, study, serve, give and tell. I appreciate the way many in our church have invested themselves in this call.

I still feel the spirit moving in our church around this call but in a fresh and new way! You are invited to join me in *Living our Faith* and to continue your commitment to growing in discipleship as, together, we *Pray. Read. Worship. Love.*

Thank You

I want to thank everyone for your continuing partnership in this endeavour.

As a Reformation church we are compelled to rethink ourselves from generation to generation and to ensure that the way in which we organize ourselves affords God's people the best opportunity to boldly participate in God's mission in this present moment in history.

Pray for our Church

Finally, I ask you to continue to pray for our church as we embark upon this time of renewal: that the Spirit would guide us and enlighten us, and that in living into a renewed vision of the church we may all be strengthened for Christian ministry whether as laypeople, deacons, pastors or bishops.

Yours in Christ,



Susan C. Johnson,
National Bishop, ELCIC.

Introduction

Background

Welcome to *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC*.

In the months leading up to the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017, our church took advantage of the timely opportunity to think about how best we might participate in God’s mission in our contemporary context. We took some time to be a little introspective about how we are doing and how we might want to change or adapt to new realities. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*. The church is ever reforming.

The question of orders of ministry arose in the Faith, Order and Doctrine (FOD) Committee’s *Authorized Ministries* project in conversations among members of the FOD Committee, and between members of FOD and others including members of the ELCIC diaconal community. FOD proposed to study “orders of ministry” with particular attention to *diakonia* and diaconal ministry. This direction was approved by National Church Council (NCC), of which FOD is a standing committee, in March 2015. FOD would...

1. invite ELCIC scholars (and others) to reflect on orders of ministry (completed Winter, 2015–2016);
2. consult with diaconal ministers about orders of ministry (completed Spring, 2016);
3. engage the church in theological reflection about orders of ministry via a Study Guide (completed Fall, 2016) which came to be called *To Love Our Neighbours as Ourselves: A Study of Orders of Ministry in the ELCIC*;
4. provide NCC with a paper on Orders of Ministry (originally planned for Fall, 2017).

From the beginning, the project design included two stages: Stage 1—creation of a *Study Guide* for the whole church; and Stage 2—creation of a *paper* for NCC, a *first* draft of which was published in the spring of 2018 under the title *Public Ministry in the ELCIC: A Preliminary Draft*.

In the late spring of 2015, FOD decided on some project goals, as follows:

A: Create a study guide for the whole ELCIC

1. To encourage reflection on a theology of the mission of the church and a theology of the vocation of the baptized. (God’s mission; our ministry.)
2. To help our church understand why we set apart people to fulfill certain functions in the church (functional and liturgical approach; “good order”)
3. To clarify the functions of the various orders of ministry in the ELCIC and, in particular, that of diaconal ministers.
4. To promote an enthusiastic embrace of everyone’s role in the mission of the church.

B: Create a paper for NCC

1. To provide a theological basis for the practice and structuring of ordained/consecrated diaconal ministry in the ELCIC.
2. To reflect on the current state of diaconal ministry in the ELCIC.
3. To promote an enthusiastic embrace of everyone’s role in the mission of the church.

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Originally, it was hoped that this paper might be completed and available to NCC in the Fall of 2017 and that, at that point, FOD's work would be done. However, it was quickly realized that FOD needed more time to address the scope of material and complexity of interrelated issues and that rather than issue a single, final draft of a paper from FOD, it was felt that it would be helpful to receive additional input from the church during this second stage.

In this revised timeline, a preliminary draft of this paper was forwarded to NCC (March 2018) for circulation to the whole church for response. That first draft was called *Public Ministry in the ELCIC: A Preliminary Draft*. A second draft, taking account of this consultation, went to NCC early in 2019 with recommendations which could be taken to the national convention that summer. This revised timeline had been approved by NCC in September 2017. *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC* is the result of FOD's efforts.

The outline of this paper follows the same sort of direction offered in the ELCIC's *Statement on Sacramental Practices* (from theological foundations to principles and recommendations; ELCIC, 1991) and takes account of work completed in *Ministry in the ELCIC: Its Forms and Practice* (ELCIC, 1991); the *Evangelical Declaration* (ELCIC, 1997); *A Companion to the Waterloo Declaration: Commentary and Essays on Lutheran-Anglican Relations in Canada* (Anglican Book Centre, 1999); *Millennium Study* (ELCIC, 2005); *Study Guide on Word and Sacrament Ministry* (ELCIC, 2014) and related *Policy Regarding Authorized Lay Ministries* (ELCIC, 2015); the *Iona Report* (ACC, 2016); *Roles of Laypeople, Deacons, Pastors & Bishops for God's Mission in the World* (FOD internal document, April 2017); and *Foundational Principles* (FOD internal document, April 2017).

Our work also takes account of the evolving multi-faith context for ministry acknowledged in *Encountering People of Other Faiths: Interfaith Guidelines* (ELCIC, 2017).

This paper reflects the ethos and direction of the World Council of Churches' *Arusha Call to Discipleship* (March 2018; see Appendix). The *Arusha* document includes the following: "We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness." It is precisely to the journey of such a transforming discipleship that Bishop Johnson calls us and into which *Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC* invites us.

"We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness."

—*Arusha Call to Discipleship*.

Finally, this paper is remarkably in sync with the strategic directions elaborated in the ELCIC's current *National Church Strategic Plan 2018-2022* (March 2018). The four strategic goals are "courageous innovation", "reconciled relationships", "one body, working together" and "empowered discipleship". All of these goals are reflected, to a greater or lesser degree, in the pages that follow.

The Ordination of Deacons, Pastors and Bishops

In this project, FOD was asked to look at orders of ministry and to give particular attention to the role of deacons and to *diakonia*. To do this, we must necessarily reflect on the roles of pastors and laypeople to help frame the ministry of deacons. At the same time, we will not dwell much on the role of bishops. In fact,

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our church did substantial work on the role of bishops, work which yielded the decision to ordain—rather than install—bishops in moving toward Full Communion with the Anglican Church of Canada (2001). The first bishop to be ordained rather than installed was Gerhard Preibisch (2002). Thereafter, the ELCIC created its own *Rite for the Ordination of a Bishop* (2008).

With this paper, the ELCIC moves toward the three-fold ordination of pastors, bishops *and now deacons*. To implement this new understanding, FOD will call for the creation of a unified rite of ordination, having alternative and variable texts, appropriate for the ordination of deacons, pastors and bishops.

Public Ministry

This paper is entitled “*Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC*”. The term “public ministry” is one born in a Lutheran context. In Lutheran theology every Christian is ordained a priest at baptism, one who ministers to neighbours. However, the church may call certain of the baptized into “public ministry”.

What distinguishes public ministers is that they have a call from a particular community of baptized Christians to perform certain functions in public. These functions include, at a minimum, teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. From time to time, as the situation merits, the church may designate additional functions to persons called into public ministry. The church establishes criteria which persons must fulfill in order to be eligible for a call into public ministry. Public ministers serve under call with defined responsibility, accountability and support.

At present, the ELCIC maintains two rosters of those eligible for call to public ministry: the roster of pastors (which includes bishops) and the roster of diaconal ministers.

This paper includes 5 sections beyond this introduction. A brief description of each follows. The sections which detail a renewed vision for the ELCIC, and for our partnership in God’s mission, are sections 4 and 5.

Section 1

Aspects of the ELCIC in Context: The Situation as it Exists

As we begin to reflect on the nature and shape of public ministry in the ELCIC, it is helpful to describe some relevant aspects of the changing social and cultural context. This section looks at several important changes in Canadian society and identifies some of the challenges the ELCIC faces, especially regarding its public ministry.

Section 2

Theological Foundations: Tradition, History and Public Ministry

In order to formulate an informed response to our context and situation we will need to decide how our theological traditions can be brought to bear. The purpose of this section is to summarize what those traditions are so that we can then reflect on how a contemporary theology and practice might be developed.

Section 3

Theological Reflection: Toward a Theology of Organization, Mission and Ministry for our Present Moment

Theological reflection involves bringing the needs, necessities and characteristics of our context into creative dialogue with our theological tradition. The purpose is disciplined theological thought about, and constructive responses to, our current reality. The questions before us are the nature and shape of public ministry in the ELCIC and how our understanding and organizing of our forms of public ministry might better equip all of us to provide an effective witness to the truth of the gospel in contemporary Canada.

Section 4

Principles and Possibilities: An Emerging Vision for the Church in Mission and for its Public Ministers

Looking at the aspects of the ELCIC's changing context as presented in Section 1, at our Lutheran tradition and history as summarized in Section 2, and at the theological reflection of Section 3, we suggest an emerging vision for the ELCIC as a missional, diaconal and prophetic church. To begin to live into this vision, the ELCIC will require more widespread understanding of what it means to be in mission with others in the local context, a more robust laity, a nimbler structure, collaborative teams of leaders and stronger community partnerships. We ask: "What does this emerging vision suggest for the structure and practice of public ministry in the ELCIC?"

Section 5

A Vision for the ELCIC: Principles, Aspirations & Recommendations

Section 4 elaborated a vision of our church that is missional, prophetic and diaconal. Now, in Section 5, we set forth some statements that describe the envisioned church. These statements are aspirational, that is, they represent the hopes and expectations of the vision for the future church, one into which our communities might live and grow. Additionally, because of our rapidly changing social and cultural landscape, we propose how our church might begin to fulfill these aspirations. Finally, we make a series of recommendations responding to questions raised with FOD.

Section 1—Aspects of the ELCIC in Context: The Situation as It Exists

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Changes in the Place of Religion in Canadian Society

In the 1950's, almost all Canadians were assumed to be Christian. About 60% of Canadians worshiped weekly (*Resilient Gods*, Reginald Bibby). People of other faiths represented a very small, almost invisible minority in most Canadian communities. The surge of immigration from Northern Europe after World War II brought even more persons who identified as Christian to Canada. Canadian congregations grew rapidly. During this same period Canadian churches sent missionaries to other countries, mainly to convert people to Christianity—evangelism at home seemed unnecessary.

Sometime around 1960 things began to change. Belonging to a religion became less important in people's lives. Attendance at worship services began to decline. By 1975, only about 30% attended worship weekly, and by 2005, only 25% (*Resilient Gods*, Reginald Bibby). This dramatic drop-off was seen most acutely among Lutherans and other mainline Protestants, and the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. During the same period, an increasing number of Canadians claimed to have no religious affiliation at all—less than 1% in 1961; around 25% by 2011 (*A New Day*, Reginald Bibby). These are the individuals who show up in census data as the “nones”—none of the religions listed above in the census form. In the religious middle are the 45% who are neither embracing nor rejecting religion (*Resilient Gods*, Reginald Bibby). Some worship occasionally, or turn to the church for weddings, funerals and other rites. Or, they may identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious,” which commonly entails not belonging to religious organizations and/or attending traditional religious services. It appears that Baby Boomers, those born between approximately 1945 and 1965, are mainly responsible for these changes. Further, because many of the boomers do not attend church, most of their children and grandchildren are also not involved.

Churches are not the only institutions where participation and engagement has been declining. In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, published in 2000, Robert Putnam argues that participation in many of the organizations of communal life has been declining. He concludes that there have been changes in how people feel about joining and participating in organizations, whether civic, social, or religious.

This decline in participation in religious services has had a strong impact on the ELCIC throughout its 30-year existence. Every year of that 30-year span the ELCIC has faced shrinking attendance, resulting in decline in numbers and sizes of congregations. In 1986 there were approximately 650 congregations with about 210,000 members. Currently the ELCIC has about 525 congregations with approximately 114,000 baptized members. The absence of Baby Boomers, and their children and grandchildren, can be observed

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in many ELCIC congregations. Congregations have fewer and fewer members and the average age of members is increasing. And while the Lutheran church has historically gained membership through natural increase and immigration, current birth rates are relatively low and immigration has shifted from Northern Europe to countries with fewer people of Lutheran background.

A Multi-faith Country

While fewer Canadians are participating in Christian congregations, Canada is increasingly becoming a multi-faith country. In 1991, only about 4% of Canadians were people of other faiths. By 2011, people of other faiths had increased to about 8% of the population. Muslims represent our most numerous neighbours of another faith, followed by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jews in that order. The Canadian Muslim community grew from about 1% to slightly more than 3% of the population between 1991 and 2011. In our larger cities the number may be as high as 6% (Montreal) or 8% (Toronto) (*StatsCan 2011 Census*). As well more than two million people report “Aboriginal ancestry” and many of these are reclaiming their spiritual roots (*StatsCan 2016 Census*).

The ELCIC has responded by speaking out in support of our neighbours of other faiths. In 1995 the ELCIC issued a statement to the Jewish community in Canada, acknowledging with pain the anti-Semitic statements made by Martin Luther, the suffering inflicted on Jews during the Holocaust in countries where the Lutheran church is strongly represented, and the appropriation of Luther’s words by anti-Semites as part of their teaching of hatred of Jews and Judaism in our own day.

“The ELCIC has responded by speaking out in support of our neighbours of other faiths.”

In 2014 the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* to cooperate in humanitarian work. The agreement also included a commitment to address the faith-based needs of refugees. In Canada, both Canadian Lutheran World Relief and Islamic Relief Canada are members of the Humanitarian Coalition together with several other non-religious NGO’s.

In 2015, the ELCIC endorsed *Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders*, in which representatives of major faith groups created a code of conduct for faith leaders in welcoming migrants, refugees and other displaced persons. ELCIC congregations and individuals were encouraged to review it and sign the affirmations encouraging respect for strangers, welcoming them into the community and speaking out in favour of social justice for them, regardless of their faith. Recently, the ELCIC created the resource *Encountering People of Other Faiths: Interfaith Guidelines* which was adopted by the National Convention in 2017. At the same time the church issued a statement to the Muslim community in Canada affirming our respect for Islam and for Muslims. The ELCIC challenged members and congregations of the ELCIC to engage in developing respectful, meaningful and mutual relationships with Muslims, using as a guide the resource *Encountering People of Other Faiths: Interfaith Guidelines*.

Changes in Attitudes toward Institutions and Leadership

Beginning in the last half of the 20th century, there has been a shift in how Canadians view institutions and their leaders. Rather than respecting and trusting institutional leaders, whether corporate, political or religious, many are skeptical and/or distrustful of those leaders, not always without cause. People are less engaged in many of the organizations of communal life, as Putnam suggests above. Once again, the transition in values and attitudes appears to begin with the Baby Boomer generation.

The generations before the Baby Boomers, who are the oldest members of Canadian society today, were born before World War II and became the postwar builders and rebuilders of the institutions of our culture. They created the Canadian Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. They are “joiners”; most have belonged to and participated in a number of organizations and clubs. Generally, they value loyalty and doing their part. Most “follow the rules” and are respectful of authority, seniority and experience.

The Baby Boomers, born post-World War II, have different attitudes and values. Many are seekers, valuing individuality and what best meets their needs. They are inclined to skepticism and distrust of institutions and authority figures. Many participate in organizations only when doing so meets their needs or makes a difference to something that they care about. Most insist that they have a voice in the groups of which they are a part and expect their input to be valued based on its merit and creativity, not their age or seniority.

Those born between 1965 and 1980 are referred to as Gen X. They are independent, resourceful, adaptable, cynical, pragmatic, and skeptical of authority; they seek a work-life balance. Many in this generation might have participated in Sunday Church School and Confirmation and they may still have a memory of the church community of their parents or grandparents. Most do not now regularly attend worship.

The Millennials (or Gen Y), born in the last decades of the 20th century, have also been called the Boomerang Generation because of the propensity of some to leave home only to return, moving back in with their parents. They also demonstrate a tendency to delay marriage or start a career. Their community is more global; they are networked and often participate in social movements and small groups. They are generally regarded as being more open-minded, and more supportive of gay rights and equal rights for minorities.

Those born after 1995, and referred to as Gen Z, have always known mobile technology and social media, and because of this, have an expectation that everything be immediate and accessible. They are easily bored and like to multitask. Many are committed to social justice and to making a positive impact on their community. They tend to be frugal and worry about the debt incurred in their education. As teenagers, many are self-employed individuals.

Of course, these are broad generalizations and may not fit particular individuals. But these kinds of shifts in generational values and in attitudes towards leadership and institutions have had an effect on the ELCIC and its congregations. Many people participate less regularly in worship, and some simply do not understand the requirement to officially join a congregation. The rules of membership based on attendance and financial contributions, along with the organizational structures of most congregations, have been shaped by those who are now among the oldest generations. Few younger members are willing to join

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committees and councils. At the same time, existing leaders may be unwilling to invite younger people into leadership, or perhaps don't understand how to make it possible. Some younger members may push the congregation to spend its money on making a difference in the world, rather than maintaining the church building. Most expect their ideas to be respected and valued. Many are frustrated by the slowness of congregations to adapt to changes in the world.

Movements and Institutions

An institution is an organization or social structure which is founded for a specific purpose whether religious, educational, professional, financial, social, or the like. Institutions are relatively permanent; their existence can extend beyond any one person's lifetime. An institution has rules and can enforce rules of human behavior. The dominant model for institutions in Canada is the corporation. Its authority is organized through a hierarchy. It is controlled by its rules, regulations and by-laws. Our governments are also institutions, structured as representative democracies in which authority and decision-making are delegated to an elected assembly and executive.

Corporations and other institutions are being challenged to operate in increasingly complex and turbulent environments. To survive, some organizations have tried to become more flexible and responsive. They may be referred to as "nimble". Although they are institutions, they strive to be able to quickly and easily adapt to changing conditions. Creating smaller teams or task forces within the organization increases flexibility and promotes creativity. Some have innovation contests or create mini-startups within their organizations. Other characteristics of nimble organizations include quick and effective decision making, a marked degree of autonomy among the employees and managers, professional and technical competence among the employees, and an engaged workforce.

Movements are usually much more loosely organized than institutions. They might arise when people become motivated to do something about a particular issue or when a charismatic person inspires people to take up a cause. They are often characterized by common passion, common values, common issues and/or common experiences. Leaders arise through informal means, often the charisma of an individual, rather than through institutional authorization. While movements have been present in human societies from prehistoric times, there are distinctive features of movements in contemporary society brought about by the ubiquity of the internet. Movements often spread by "word of mouth" and today word of mouth is magnified by social media. People do not need to be geographically close to each other for their common interests to create a movement such as we see in *Idle No More*, *Black Lives Matter* or *#metoo*. Many current institutions began as movements which formalized over time.

Many younger people prefer movements to institutions. They can participate in a movement by choice, rather than by formally joining an organization or group. People are part of the movement because they are committed, at least for a time, to its focus. In most movements, there is no central leadership; leaders emerge according to their interests and gifts, and the needs of the movement. Social media play a very important role in shaping movements, positively and negatively, and movements can easily cross boundaries such as international borders. In many movements, leadership is fluid, changing as people come and go.

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Both movements and institutions have strengths and liabilities, but the desire of younger people to be a part of movements presents a challenge and perhaps an opportunity for churches. The ELCIC is an institution, defined by its constitutions, bylaws and structure. Leadership may appear to be overly hierarchical, with a national bishop and council, synods with bishops and councils, and congregations with pastors and councils all defined by constitutions and bylaws. Within the ELCIC, the dominant model of ministry continues to be the congregation, led by a pastor and council, and located in a church building. Often, in local consciousness, the church “is”, to a greater or lesser degree, the building. How might the church make room for movements of people sharing a common commitment and having little regard for hierarchy or interest in buildings?

In this institutional context, authorized leaders within the ELCIC are of three types: deacons, of whom there are about 30, with 15 active and 15 who are retired or on leave; pastors, of whom there are about 750 on the roster, with some 360 who are active and 390 who are retired or on leave; and bishops who number 16 in total, 6 of whom are active and 10 of whom are retired. Our rostered leadership is aging with half or more who are retired or on leave.

Important Issues for Public Ministry in the ELCIC

Several important challenges for the ELCIC arise from changes in its Canadian context as well as from its history.

The Dominant Model of Ministry

Historically, most of our congregations were built on a “pastor-centric” model of ministry. When people thought of ministry, they thought of pastors planning and leading worship, preaching, teaching and caring for the sick and elderly. Pastors were seen as the leaders and the only ones doing “real” ministry. Laypeople supported the pastor. Mission took place far away and evangelism was not seen as an important part of a congregation’s ministry. Today many congregational members still hold to this understanding. Seminaries continue to prepare pastors to serve alone in a particular congregation. Even if a pastor resists being the centre of the congregational universe, the expectations of the congregation can force the pastor into adopting a traditional role and style of leadership.

Many pastors focus their work heavily inside the congregation. Moreover, they can be expected to do things unrelated to their key functions, training or gifts. For example, the expectation is that pastors will teach confirmation classes regardless of their expertise in teaching or relating to teenagers. Pastors attend endless meetings; in many cases they perform administrative duties. Many functions within the congregation are carried out exclusively by pastors. Normally only the pastor preaches, baptizes, and presides at Holy Communion. Church weddings and funerals are performed by the pastor.

This traditional model of ministry may no longer be the most effective way for us to respond to the Gospel and participate in God’s mission in our changed and changing context. But there are very few examples in the ELCIC of other approaches to public ministry. Even if the “pastor-centric” model for ministry continues to be effective in some contexts, the number of congregations that can sustain it is declining. Congregations are shrinking, merging, and dying. As congregations face declining attendance and funding, fewer are able to engage full-time pastors. And there are fewer and fewer congregations.

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Shared ministry has been encouraged in recent years as an alternate way to provide leadership for ministry. Some initiatives have been successful, but most will simply yield a larger community experiencing the same rate of decline and length of “runway.” Merging two congregations with aging demographics creates a new one that still has the same aging demographic! In addition, shared ministries are often seen by congregations as a last resort. Many congregations choose to pour their funds into preserving their building, and often reduce the pastor’s salary and/or hours, before accepting the necessity of sharing rostered leaders or letting go of church buildings.

All of this means that there are fewer and fewer job prospects for pastors and virtually none for deacons in full-time employment. Part-time calls are becoming increasingly common. It’s likely in the foreseeable future that full-time, fully-funded positions will be the exception rather than the rule. Few people, however, can survive on a single part-time salary. Meanwhile, candidates for rostered ministry continue to have expectations that they will receive full-time calls and possibly a lifetime of employment.

One of the ELCIC’s forms of public ministers, that of deacons, is not well understood, appreciated or utilized. The ELCIC has not had a significant vision for the role of deacons. In addition, there is much confusion about the distinctive roles of pastors, deacons and laypeople. Smaller congregations with financial challenges will not likely call a deacon in addition to a pastor. In larger congregations, ministry areas and synods, there may be resources to call additional rostered people for various roles, but very often a pastor is called rather than a deacon. Pastors have also had first claim to positions outside of congregations, such as chaplaincies.

Disempowered Laity

The dominant “pastor-centric” model for ministry and the church’s emphasis on pastors as the only public ministers have also contributed to a diminished role for laypeople in serving God’s mission. The organizational structure, and the expectations and training of the ordained, together with the abdication of the role of laypeople, have contributed to the disempowerment of the laity. In the presence of educated professional clergy, many laypeople become dependent on the pastor’s expertise. This clericalism does not empower laypeople to live out their baptismal call as understood by Luther.

Within the congregation, there is often confusion about the distinctive roles of laypeople. For example, there are roles for laypeople to take in worship and its planning, such as the writing and praying of the prayers of the people. But many pastors have not encouraged people to take these roles, and laypeople have not insisted. Pastors and deacons do not always respect the abilities, experience and gifts of laypeople, and may not be good at empowering them or at collaborative leadership.

Particular laypeople may be recognized and/or honoured for the roles they carry out within the congregation and its programs. For example, council members, Sunday Church School teachers, ushers and

Deacon Brigitte McKenzie is called by the British Columbia Synod to be part of a leadership team to guide congregations and rostered ministers in mission renewal. Together they are learning and experimenting with new ways to be in mission. Deacon Brigitte is also involved with Greater Victoria Acting Together, a coalition which trains and empowers people to work together for the common good.

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those who prepare meals are often thanked publicly. This practice has the unintended effect of identifying the truly “committed” layperson as one who serves within the church but not one who might be immersed vocationally as a Christian in social and political life.

One of the greatest insights of the Lutheran Reformation was the recognition of the vocation of every Christian in his or her worldly occupation. When we are baptized, we are baptized into God’s mission. If the baptized see their everyday occupations and roles as vocations and as opportunities to participate in what

“When we are baptized, we are baptized into God’s mission.”

God is doing in the world, God’s mission is being realized.

Unfortunately, very few laypeople understand that they are called in their baptism to participate in God’s mission, and many rostered leaders do not understand that one of the important tasks of their public ministries is to enable laypeople to exercise their vocations in

the world. In many congregations, people don’t seem to receive much support, affirmation or equipping to carry out such service. The church’s narrow understanding of ministry has not encouraged laypeople to recognize their ministries in the world. Recent missional formation work in several synods of the ELCIC is making some progress in helping congregational leaders to move away from more pastor-centric models for ministry.

The Church and the World

Historically, Christianity came to Canada with the earliest explorers and settlers. The Doctrine of Discovery endorsed the superiority and rights of European people regardless of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples already living in the land. Coupled with the understanding that the church’s mission was the conversion of people to Christianity, it was used to dehumanize, exploit and subjugate Indigenous Peoples and dispossess them of their most basic rights. Residential schools and other attempts at cultural destruction and genocide continue to have lasting effects on all Indigenous Peoples living within Canada.

Deacon Scott Knarr is Diaconal Minister of Music at Mount Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Waterloo, Ontario where he plays the organ, directs the choir and leads the people’s song. Deacon Scott extends Mount Zion’s music ministry through his involvement with “Music for the Spirit,” a program to teach guitar and keyboard to 9 to 14-year-olds on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

The ELCIC has publicly repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and is committed to promoting right relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples within Canada. Various expressions of the ELCIC have engaged with the KAIROS Blanket Exercise as a tool for education and awareness-building. Some ELCIC gatherings have invited local Indigenous speakers to share their vision for reconciliation. These first encounters require a posture of humility to encourage respectful truth-telling and truth-listening. Many ELCIC congregations, ministry areas and synods have taken first steps to discover the Indigenous neighbours on whose territory they reside, and to nurture and strengthen mutual bonds of peace and friendship.

Since World War II, theologians and practitioners of mission have tried to help us see that the mission of God is not about sending missionaries to some distant place and trying to convert the people there to Christianity. The mission of God is to form loving communities through which each and every part of God’s creation is loved and valued. And the *church’s* mission is to

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participate in *God's* mission. One way of expressing this is to say, "God's mission has a church." Mission is never an optional "add-on" to the church's ministry.

At the national level, the ELCIC has worked hard to live into its call to participate in God's mission in Canada and around the world. Our national bishop has spoken out about many current public issues, addressing the general public as well as our governments. At the same time, the ELCIC has expressed a commitment to work toward reconciliation and right relationship with Canada's Indigenous peoples, passed a resolution on peace in the Holy Land, and issued statements to our Jewish and Muslim neighbours.

Unfortunately, the church is not held in the same regard as it was in the past. Many people in Canadian society do not believe the church's voice to be credible or authentic. Often, negative images of churches and religion appear in the media, and the positive work of churches in our communities fails to overcome this bad press. On the other hand, some pastors have publicly offered views that are not seen as relevant or authentic or have said things that did not ring true. Many have been hurt by those who have preached a prosperity gospel or a gospel of exclusion.

All Christians are called to speak a prophetic word in and for the world, but many do not consider themselves able or equipped to do so. Many pastors and deacons also feel unprepared to speak and/or act prophetically. In addition, the prophetic message of the church may be a source of local conflict in our communities and our congregations. In theory, deacons are especially encouraged to bring life experience together with theological education to communicate the Gospel in the world and to bring the needs of the context to the church, but this happens in only a few situations.

"The mission of God is to form loving communities through which each and every part of God's creation is loved and valued. And the church's mission is to participate in God's mission."

In recent years the ELCIC has encouraged congregations to become missional, that is, to participate in God's mission in the places where they are. Many congregations have taken up the challenge, for example, by joining with the local mosque to sponsor refugees, working with the neighbouring high school to provide breakfast for students, or offering weekly community suppers where those who are fed participate in planning, serving and preparing the meal. Some congregations have become "green" congregations, adopting responsible practices to protect the environment. Some congregations are aware of the special needs and opportunities for mission in their particular contexts. But many congregations of the ELCIC still do not perceive their role in God's mission in the world. Many individuals still see mission as far-away evangelism, or as only the work of Canadian Lutheran World Relief. Missional thinking has not been a large part of education for laypeople, deacons, bishops or pastors.

The Holy Spirit calls every baptized person and every community of the baptized into a life of service in the world, sometimes referred to with the Greek word, *diakonia* (from which comes the word "diaconal"). Some deacons think *diakonia* is their work exclusively. But *diakonia* refers to the serving life of churches and congregations, indeed, of every disciple of Jesus. It involves responding to immediate needs such as sponsoring refugees and providing food for the hungry. It also includes being agents of change to transform the unjust structures and violence that marginalize people, and safeguarding the earth.

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Sadly, many people do not understand the connection between their everyday lives and the call to service by virtue of their baptisms. And while many people are already serving and helping others in their lives in various ways, many do not see what they are doing as part of God’s mission in the world. They are unable to express how their everyday lives and roles participate in God’s mission.

Discipleship

The congregation can be described as a community of forgiveness and reconciliation in which disciples are nurtured for a life of service in the world. Leaders in the ELCIC have observed that our church does not seem to be nurturing disciples very well. Young adults, youth, and children are notably absent in many congregations. Some people seem to view discipleship as simply participating in worship and contributing to the financial support of the church. Fewer have basic Bible knowledge and may not know much about Lutheranism or Christianity. Many have too little understanding of living faith in everyday life. It is increasingly difficult to identify future leaders for the church, whether clergy or lay.

At the same time, the ELCIC does not have a significant history of communicating the Gospel to those who are not already Christians or Lutherans. Evangelism has often been limited to making contact with people who are from Northern Europe, mainly white people who already have some kind of connection to the Lutheran church. Most Lutherans tend to be very reserved about witnessing to the Gospel. In fact many find it difficult to talk of their faith even within their own congregation or family. Most people rely on the

“[In an effort called] *Living Our Faith*, Bishop Susan invites us to pray, read, worship and love as we claim our baptismal calling in all aspects of life.”

organized church, the “professionals”, both to witness to others and to teach about faith to their own children and families. Most would agree that Sunday School and Confirmation alone have not proven effective in nurturing or “raising up” disciples.

In response to the needs of our Church and prompted by a longing to deepen our partnership in God’s mission, Bishop Susan Johnson encourages us to be engaged in a call to spiritual renewal and deeper discipleship within the ELCIC. Called *Living Our Faith*, we are invited to pray, read, worship and love as we claim our baptismal calling in all aspects of life.

Organization

Challenges in our current context press upon the ELCIC to become more nimble in order to respond in a timely way to the changes and needs in our society and the world. For example, many of the challenges and opportunities facing congregations are not well addressed within the current structures of committees. In addition, the church’s response continues to be thwarted by a strong, stubborn culture which favours the past over the present or future. Some people’s need for security and familiarity is understandable. Still, such a need should not determine the course of future action for all. An over-developed fear of failure hinders pursuit of possibilities and new directions.

In recent years, the ELCIC has made changes to its constitution and bylaws. The intent is to reduce the time needed for change to take place within our structure. Things which used to take two successive conventions to pass as “constitutional” matters have been moved to the bylaws which only require a single convention

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to pass. Continued efforts are needed to increase flexibility and timeliness in congregations as well. Many congregations still have the full council and committee structure mandated by their constitutions, although it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill the positions necessary for functioning. Often this structure limits the vision of the congregation's mission; only those ideas that fit within the existing structure are recognized. What might our church look like with fewer committees of indefinite mandate and more task groups having fewer people, a specific task, defined mission and an end-date?

The ELCIC officially maintains two rosters, one of pastors and bishops and one of deacons. The size of each roster affects the functioning of people. At present time the ELCIC has approximately 15 active deacons on the roster. The small number of active deacons means that many people are neither familiar with deacons and their gifts for public ministry, nor understand the roles they might play in congregations, ministry areas or synods. Some deacons and candidates are unclear about their own roles in the ELCIC. At the same time congregations have difficulty understanding and identifying potential roles and responsibilities for deacons.

Theological education for deacons is hampered in the ELCIC by the fact that we are a small church—a medium-sized church by global standards—with limited resources in a vast and diverse land. Because there are few diaconal candidates, it is difficult to find courses to meet diaconal candidacy requirements. Some diaconal candidates experience the current candidacy requirements as unclear. The Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry (PCLM) has standards for both pastors and deacons and has recently created competencies for them. Some deacons have expressed concern that their synods do not help them find calls.

Although collaboration is becoming a necessary skill for both deacons and pastors, this has not been recognized well in their education. In addition, if enabling laypeople to live out their vocations is an important part of the role of rostered leaders, many leaders need more training in helping laypeople discern their gifts for ministry, in equipping them with skills related to conflict resolution, theological reflection and more, and in recognizing and providing support for their ministries in the world. Many leaders are not trained to lead service-reflection/action-reflection learning, a key educational model for laypeople and public ministers serving in the community. Continuing education for rostered leaders is encouraged to some extent, but not evenly or consistently required. Instead, rostered leaders must often seek additional training and education on their own; many don't, for lack of time, money, or failure to see the need for doing so.

Deacons are consecrated. Pastors and bishops are ordained. There is some concern that this distinction suggests a hierarchical relationship between pastor and deacon. There is no ontological or essential difference between ordination and consecration. At the same time, we use a variety of terms for deacons including diaconal minister, deaconess and deacon. A single term might be helpful.

Public Ministers in Some Partner-Churches

The ecumenical context of the ELCIC has also changed significantly in recent years. Our full communion relationship with the Anglican Church of Canada has led to increased partnerships and to communities which share rostered or ordained ministers, worship, facilities and programs. Closer relationships and conversations with the Roman Catholic, United, Presbyterian and Mennonite churches in Canada are developing. The ELCIC works with other denominations through the Canadian Council of Churches, and through KAIROS, a joint venture ecumenical program for justice and peace.

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In light of closer ties to these Christian denominations, it is instructive to look at the variety of ways in which our partners structure their public ministry. In fact, many of our ecumenical partners are currently rethinking their practices of ministry, including recovering the role of deacons.

In its 1982 document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* the World Council of Churches acknowledged the wide variety of kinds of public minister across its member churches, but also heralded a convergence in the historic three-fold pattern of bishop, priest and deacon. It is to that pattern to which the ELCIC is moving. Recent work within the WCC notes that ecumenical *diakonia* begins in each Christian's discipleship in their faith community and in their daily life and finds expression in the activities of the local congregation where it is affirmed and strengthened in part through "professional diaconal agents." The term "ecumenical *diakonia*" is increasingly being used to refer to the serving work of churches around the world.

The churches of the Lutheran World Federation have a variety of kinds of public minister depending on their context. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon has pastors, catechists (teachers of the essentials of faith) and evangelists (traveling preachers). Others have a four-fold form of public ministry, including catechists, pastors, deacons and missionaries. Many other systems—too numerous to mention—exist across the churches of the LWF.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has three kinds of public ministers, namely, pastors (including bishops), deacons, and authorized lay leaders. The ELCA maintains two rosters, one of Ministry of Word and Sacrament and the newly-created roster of Ministry of Word and Service. Bishops and pastors constitute the first; deaconesses and diaconal ministers as well as trained lay leaders called "associates in ministry" the second.

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is familiar to many and includes bishops, priests and deacons. The Second Vatican Council opened the door to some new kinds of lay ministers. With the shortage of ordained priests in the parishes, a number of non-ordained people have begun ministry that formerly belonged only to the ordained. These non-ordained ministers include parish and catechetical staff, hospital and prison chaplains, campus ministers, and other diocesan leadership roles. These people are referred to as lay ecclesial ministers. They are prepared for professional ministry in the church and are paid for full- or part-time work. Lay ecclesial ministry opened roles for women in leadership in many parishes and beyond. For example, the Liturgical Director of the Diocese of Hamilton is, at time of writing, a woman.

Vatican II also restored the permanent diaconate to the Roman Catholic Church after 1,500 years. Permanent deacons are married or single men who are ordained and normally unpaid, although they may be hired to full- or part-time work within the church. The deacon serves the church and the diocese in a ministry of service and charity, in a hospital or prison, or other types of charitable outreach. In addition, the deacon is assigned to a parish, where he assists the priest in liturgical ministry; that may take the form of preaching, baptizing or presiding at weddings or funerals. He also helps church members to discover their participation in the ministry of Christ. The Diocese of Hamilton, as an example, currently has about 40 self-supporting deacons.

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Many larger Roman Catholic parishes today are served by a priest, one or more lay pastoral associates, a permanent deacon, and a staff of laypeople in specialized ministries. While many lay ministers volunteer their service, more and more are paid on a part-time or full-time basis. Continuity in the parish is provided by persons other than—or in addition to—the priest.

The Anglican Church of Canada has the same three orders of public ministers including bishops, priests and deacons. Prior to the 1980's the diaconate was simply a transitional order, part of the preparation for the priesthood. Even today, many existing deacons are in transition to the priesthood.

In the last 30 years, Anglicans have moved to reclaim the permanent diaconate as a distinct order of ordained ministry. These deacons may function in ministries of liturgy, word, and service. They serve directly under the bishop of a diocese and help to carry out the bishop's ministry. Bishops normally assign deacons to special responsibility for mercy and justice. Dioceses usually require that prospective deacons are already serving in specialized ministries among the poor, sick, and oppressed. Once ordained, deacons exercise leadership among the faithful, encouraging, training, and organizing them for various ministries. Deacons are not ordinarily paid as they have other sources of income. But there is still wide variety in the use of the term "deacon" and in the roles of deacons across the 30 dioceses of the Anglican Church in Canada.

The United Church of Canada recognizes one order of public ministry in two expressions (with many variations): ordained and diaconal. Ordained ministers are formally called to word, sacrament, and pastoral care. Diaconal ministers are formally called to education, service, social justice, and pastoral care. Diaconal ministers may apply to their Conference for a license to administer the sacraments if doing so is part of their ministry. The church also has two kinds of designated lay ministers, one accountable to the presbytery, and one appointed by and accountable to congregations. These lay ministries include youth ministry, leadership in worship, pastoral visiting, and community and outreach ministries. There are also licensed lay worship leaders and sacramental elders.

Recently, the United Church took up a proposal for one order of ministry encompassing the present categories of recognized designated lay ministers, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers, with ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, education, service and pastoral care as the single rite of entry. The proposal was not adopted.

Section 2—Theological Foundations: Tradition, History and Public Ministry

In order to formulate an informed response to our context and situation we will need to decide how our theological traditions can be brought to bear. The purpose of this section is to summarize what those traditions are so that we can then reflect on how a contemporary theology and practice might be developed.

Public Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church

The traditions which the Jewish authors of the New Testament inherited included both charismatic and office-oriented approaches to public ministry leadership. The prophets and the earliest kings represented the more charismatic styles, and the priests and the later kings of Judah represented the more office-oriented or dynastic styles. The leadership and authority structures of the Roman Empire also influenced all of the authors of the New Testament. In this section we will examine three specific pictures of public ministry from the New Testament.

Commissioning the Disciples in the Gospels

The Synoptic Gospels do not really focus on questions of organization or ecclesiastical authority, but they do give several pictures of Jesus commissioning various numbers of disciples to go ahead of him to prepare people for his coming. These include the commissioning of the twelve in Matthew 10:5–15, Mark 6:6b–13, and Luke 9:1–6, and the commissioning of the seventy in Luke 10:1–12.

In each of these commissioning stories Jesus gives the sent disciples certain instructions for how they will carry out their work. One common theme in these instructions is that the disciples are to travel in teams, usually pairs. The task of their mission is not one that can be accomplished by individuals alone. It is a mission for teams of people who work together to prepare the countryside for Jesus' coming.

The second theme is that these teams are to travel light. As Mark puts it, the disciples are to “take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics” (Mark 6:8–9). Missionaries are not to carry excess baggage. In some cases, they are told to carry no baggage at all.

The third common theme is that the pairs of disciples are to accept hospitality. As Luke puts it in the story of the seventy, “Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide ...” (Luke 10:5). The assumption seems to be that the missionary team is to be dependent on the hospitality of those who receive the message.

The fourth common theme is the task of the mission: “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:7–8). In their words and actions, the disciples are to extend the ministry of Jesus, both proclaiming the nearness of the Reign of God and acting out the effects of that presence by healing and casting out demons.

The Pauline Churches

The epistles of Paul are the oldest records we have of the life and teachings of the earliest Christians and are the source of much Christian teaching. Since other issues were at the top of Paul's mind as he addressed these churches, he did not often address questions of "public ministry." What he did say can be confusing. Nonetheless, we can see something of how the churches founded by Paul and other apostles may have been organized and how the first generation of Christians probably understood ministry and leadership. That understanding was fluid and shifted according to the need and situation.

First of all, Paul's own presence in the Jesus movement raised questions about formal authorization for apostolic leadership. He had not been one of Jesus' initial twelve disciples. In fact, he had begun his career by persecuting the fledgling Jesus movement. The early leadership of the movement had not trusted him and had certainly not granted him any status or title. According to Paul himself he did not even meet with the Jerusalem leadership until after he had begun his work. As he put it, "... I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me ..." (Galatians 1:16b–17a). Paul maintained that his apostolic ministry and authority rested on a direct call from Jesus and was not mediated through any human authority structure. Such an assertion did not secure a firm foundation for claims to formal, institutional authority in any church which Paul founded. Paul's claim to the title and authority of an apostle was contested by those who opposed him, as we see from the polemics in Galatians and 2 Corinthians.

To be sure, Paul did use the three words which later became associated with officials of the institutional church:

episkopoi, *presbyteroi*, and *diakonoi*. These words are often translated "bishops," "priests," and "deacons," but these translations make Paul's words sound more like the kinds

of officials that came later than they would have denoted in Paul's day. Each of the words has a common meaning in Greek (overseers, elders, and messengers or servants) and it is most likely that Paul was simply using common Greek words in their common meanings rather than inventing technical ecclesiastical terms. Paul also used these words to refer to both women and men.

"Leadership was not thought of in terms of office but in terms of gifts. The one who had the gift used it for the benefit of all."

When Paul did specifically address the question of public ministry in the church in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Romans 12:3–8, he described leadership in a fluid and charismatic way. Leadership was not thought of in terms of office but in terms of gifts. The one who had the gift used it for the benefit of all. All worked together just as the parts of the body work together. Everything was for the common good and directed by the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit chose.

The Pastoral Epistles

The "Pastoral Epistles," 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, represent a time when the church had lasted a generation longer and become more settled in its life. Historians and sociologists tell us that groups of people evolve just as the universe and the earth evolve. A new movement often ignores social convention as to who can be included and who can exercise leadership. Leadership is exercised by whoever seems most gifted for the task. As the movement ages and pays more attention to organization, the patterns of membership and leadership change to reflect the socio-economic culture in which the evolving organization exists. The

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evidence of the Pastoral Epistles shows us that this sort of evolution happened in the early church by the end of the first century. These epistles show a much more settled church in which institutional leadership played a larger role than it had in the previous generation. How the Pastorals view the form(s) of public ministry reflected the general approach to office and leadership in the Roman Empire.

Part of the reason for this is that the expectation that Jesus would return very soon had been tempered by the passage of time. The second and third generations were in the process of deciding that the church needed to be ready for a much longer haul. That meant organization and stability became more important. Stability included both a settled doctrine and a settled structure for the exercise of authority.

In 1 Timothy the words “bishop” and “deacon” seem to indicate offices that entailed qualifications. The qualifications for bishops are set down in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. No other offices are mentioned. The metaphor that underlies the qualifications is the Roman household, with the bishop functioning as the “*pater familias*,” the patriarch of the household. Both the church and the bishop’s own family must also reflect the ideal Roman household.

The church’s theology and practice of public ministry and leadership in the church continued to evolve. While the Pastoral Epistles did not distinguish between “bishops” and “elders,” such a distinction developed soon after. The letter called 1 Clement, written from Rome to Corinth perhaps 15 or so years after the Pastorals, and the letters written by Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in Syria around 110-115 CE, indicate that in many Christian communities the bishop had become the singular leader in each community whose responsibility was to preserve correct teaching of the Gospel with elders/priests and/or deacons serving under the bishop. These trends continued through the second and third centuries. By the time Constantine recognized Christianity as a permitted religion, bishops had enough authority that they could take on municipal as well as ecclesiastical roles. Throughout these centuries the role of female leaders in the church continued to erode, especially after Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the established religion of the Roman Empire.

Public Ministry in the Reformation

Prelude to the Reformation

One of the sources of the energy that resulted in the Reformation was a general dissatisfaction in western Europe with the authority and ministry structures of the church. These structures had resulted from general social and political degeneration as the western Roman Empire weakened and fell in the fifth and sixth centuries. In some localities, including the city of Rome itself, the bishops were the last surviving officers who represented the old culture or, indeed, order of any kind. As kings, higher nobles, and eventually Holy Roman Emperors asserted their authority and restored order in later centuries, bishops played an important role in those efforts. As a result, these secular authorities took upon themselves the authority to appoint bishops. The same authorities often used the office of bishop as a reward for loyal soldiers and others whose primary attributes were not scholarship or piety. When corruption in the church became very bad in the ninth century, reformers looked to the Bishop of Rome as the most likely office to bring necessary change. Thus, a variety of reform movements in the Middle Ages worked to centralize authority and power in the church in Rome. This led to several centuries of conflict between popes on the one side and emperors and kings on the other. By the high Middle Ages various compromises had been worked out so that church and state could work together to some extent, though tensions never ceased altogether.

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The increase in papal power and centralization gave impetus to the forces which eventually led to the Reformation. Popes made significant claims to having authority superior to secular rulers. The pope was also the ruler of central Italy, a wealthy territory desired by many other rulers, including both the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France. In the early fourteenth century France invaded Italy, captured Rome, and imprisoned the pope. This led to a period when the papacy was resident in Avignon in southern France under French influence, a period known as “The Babylonian Captivity” of the church. A number of reformers worked hard to return the papacy to Rome, but these efforts only resulted in the existence of two popes and two papal courts and structures, one in Avignon and one in Rome, a period known as “The Great Western Schism.” The schism divided Europe and led to a period of spiritual dislocation which coincided with the aftermath of the Black Death. Papal power receded, and prominent church leaders called a series of councils to solve the problem.

The Council of Constance ended the schism and re-established the papacy in Rome, but the papacy became the province of wealthy Italian families such as the Medicis and the Borgias, who used it as a way to gain even more wealth and power. Church structures were used primarily as a conduit to transfer wealth from all over Europe to Rome. Many local bishops emulated the corruption in Rome and by the end of the fifteenth century dissatisfaction was intense and widespread. This was the ecclesiastical context in which the Reformation broke out.

Luther’s Theology of Ministry

The issue around which the Reformation began was the sacrament of penance, especially the practice of selling indulgences; but controversy soon spread to arguments about the authority of the papacy and bishops in general. Martin Luther, whose theses on indulgences had been the spark to light the conflagration, questioned the authority of the pope publicly at a debate in Leipzig in 1519. The next year he published a treatise, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which questioned the entire sacramental system of the medieval church. In this treatise Luther raised questions both about the sacramental status of the clergy as secured by ordination and the right of the clergy to control the sacraments. He followed *Babylonian Captivity* with a treatise entitled *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* in which he called upon the nobles to take a hand in the reformation of the church. In order to make this appeal Luther had to make the argument that prominent laypeople had as much authority in the church as the clergy. This further eroded the authority of pope, bishops, and priests and legitimized lay rulers taking authority over the church in their territories.

Luther’s own views on the authority of clergy varied depending on the circumstances. In 1523 when supporting the claim of congregations to call evangelical preachers over the objection of conservatives who held the right of appointments in the parish, Luther argued that the lay leaders of the congregation had the right to examine the doctrine of the preachers and to determine what should be preached. After 1525, when supporting evangelical preachers who were being resisted by their congregations (who often wanted the preacher to be more radical), Luther argued that the laity should submit to the authority of the right-thinking clergy. As a result, it is almost impossible to draw any consistent theology of public ministry from Luther’s writings on the subject. All we can really say is that the purpose of the clergy is to preach the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone, and it is the responsibility of the laity to assure that the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone is being preached.

Luther was far less contradictory when writing about the vocation of a Christian person. In his polemic against the medieval idea of priesthood, Luther maintained that every Christian was made a priest in baptism. By that Luther meant that every Christian had the right and the duty to intercede for his or her neighbour, approach God directly in prayer, forgive her or his neighbour, and speak the Gospel when an individual

“For Luther vocation meant that each baptized person has a specific calling from God to exercise one’s talents, experience and education in activities which benefit the community.”

needed to hear such words. Each Christian was free from worrying about his or her own justification and free to dedicate energy to the welfare of the community. This was the concept of the priesthood of all believers and it was part of Luther’s idea of vocation. The word “vocation” had been previously used to refer only to the call to

the monastery or convent. For Luther vocation meant that each baptized person has a specific calling from God to exercise one’s talents, experience and education in activities which benefit the community. Thus, a Christian vocation is not restricted to work inside the church, but can be any work—secular or churchly—which contributes in some way, no matter how large or small, to the welfare of the community.

Public Ministry in the Lutheran Confessions

The Lutheran confessions now collected in *The Book of Concord* were formulated during the Reformation to address issues under discussion at the time or, in the case of the two catechisms, to teach evangelical doctrine to clergy and laity. As a result, they often do not discuss public ministry directly unless the issue is papal and episcopal authority. This is not to say that the confessions have no bearing on the discussion, but that what bearing they do have is often found in things said when addressing another issue.

The most direct statements are found in the Augsburg Confession, presented to the Emperor at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 as a statement of the basic teachings of the Lutheran churches. It begins with three articles affirming that the Lutheran churches adhere to the teachings of the ancient church as embodied in the decisions of the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. Article four then states the fundamental Lutheran claim that God justifies sinners by grace alone through faith alone. Article five moves directly to ministry: “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments...” It is from this article that Lutheran churches have placed great importance on having persons who are called by the church to preach the Gospel and celebrate the sacraments publicly. The Holy Spirit uses these means to create faith in the hearts of those who hear, are washed, and consume the consecrated elements.

The seventh article reinforces the central importance of the public preaching of the Gospel and celebration of the sacraments to the existence of the church: “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.” In Luther’s view this definition is so simple that anyone who has reached the age of discretion can understand it. The one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is the community where the Gospel is heard and sacramentally enacted as good news for troubled consciences. It is not a specific institution which upholds certain rules and imposes certain structures.

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The fact that the true Church cannot be identified with any institution does not mean that there is to be no church structure. There must be some way to insure that people are called to stand up publicly and speak the Gospel aloud as the word of God's promise, and the communication of the Gospel in human society requires some sort of organization. Such organizations, called churches, are necessary for our human need for order but are also prone to the consequences of our human imperfections. The true Church is not equivalent to any human organization. The true Church is always hidden in, with, and under the institutional churches.

In part because of the primacy of the Gospel and in part because the Lutheran movement took organizational shape in a number of different settings and circumstances, the Lutheran confessions recognize that the unity of the church does not rest in uniformity of organizational structures. This is stated first of all in the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession, "It is not necessary for the true unity of the church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere." This is reinforced in the *Formula of Concord* where the concept of "adiaphora" is set forth. "Adiaphora" refers to those practices of the church, such as liturgy or polity, in which each church is free to establish its own practices as long as these do not contradict the Gospel. Requiring any church to accept a particular human practice is itself contradictory to the Gospel and is to be resisted. The result of this principle is that various Lutheran churches have adopted forms of public ministry that seem to that church to suit its context best. Almost all Lutheran churches have office holders designated to preach and administer the sacraments, those whom we call "pastors," and most Lutheran churches have some form of regional organization. Beyond that there is significant variety according to local conditions.

Historical Developments Following the Reformation

Church organization and the practice of public ministry in Lutheran churches following the Reformation were also affected by historical events. The laws of the Holy Roman Empire made it impossible for a bishop to join the Reformation and retain his episcopal office, so no bishops in Germany joined the Lutheran movement. As a result, leadership of the movement was taken up by the secular authorities and Lutheran churches were organized by governments. Thus, what emerged from the Reformation in Lutheran territories were state churches. Kings, dukes, counts and city councils each organized the church in the territory which they governed according to what each thought was appropriate. This was reinforced by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which instituted the policy of *cuius regio, eius religio* or "whose region, his religion". The organizations of these churches reflected quite closely the organization of the kingdoms, principalities and cities of northern Europe, so the spectrum of practices was quite broad. On one end the Church of Sweden retained the historic episcopate (with the king exercising ultimate authority) and on the other end most of the Free Imperial Cities instituted consistories (church councils) of senior clergy and leading laypersons to govern the church in the city under the authority of the city council.

The religiously oriented wars, especially the Thirty Years War between 1618 and 1648, devastated Germany and left many people skeptical of religion. Though the suffering of the era saw the writing of some of Lutheranism's most powerful hymns, it also left church life in disarray. Territories where the wars had been most active suffered from disease, death and moral collapse. In many places clergy were in short supply. At the same time, as the laity became better educated, many were dissatisfied with the centralized, clergy-dominated structure of most state churches. All of these tendencies came together in the Pietist movement

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of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Germany, which spread to Scandinavia in the latter part of the eighteenth century and then beyond in the nineteenth century. Pietism emphasized personal commitment, lay study of scripture and expression of religious emotion. Pietism also called for changes in the way that clergy related to laity and de-centralization of church structures. The Pietist vision was a church in which an active laity had equal rights and responsibilities. This version of “the priesthood of all believers,” with which most of us are familiar, became characteristic of those Lutherans most influenced by Pietism. German Pietists still maintained a more clergy-centered approach to public ministry. In Norway the connection between Pietism and nationalism resulted in more lay-led movements and occasionally even anti-clericalism.

It happened that the height of the Pietist movements in Europe coincided with the beginning of significant Lutheran migration to North America. In the eighteenth century German Pietists came in large numbers. As a result, German Pietist ideas of church and ministry were influential in forming the ideals and expectations of Lutherans in what became the United States and Canada. Immigration of Scandinavian Pietists came in the nineteenth century, so Scandinavian, especially Norwegian, Pietism influenced North American Lutheranism as well. At times of clergy shortages in North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was the Pietist educational institutions and mission societies of Europe which supplied necessary clergy for the North American churches.

The North American situation was quite different from the European situation in at least three significant ways. The first difference was that Lutheranism in North America could never be the state church as it was in Europe. Even in the British colonies where there was a state church heritage, Lutherans were known as “foreign Protestants” and were never in the running to be the established church. Rather than resisting this label, they embraced it. As more and more Lutherans came from Europe, they saw themselves as the church for Germans (or Finns or Norwegians, etc.), and did not see themselves as reaching out beyond their own culture or language. Once the United States and Canada came into existence there could be no state church. Thus, Lutherans from the beginning in North America had either to join one of the more established British Protestant churches, which many did, or develop their own forms of congregational leadership and church organization. During the first half of the 20th century, being German created anxiety and the desire to escape notice became part of the DNA of some Lutheran churches.

Today’s Lutheran churches in Canada and the United States are either adaptations of the synodical model (generally followed by the predecessor bodies of the Lutheran Church in America) or based on a more congregational model (generally followed by predecessor bodies of the American Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada). The mergers of the 1980s brought together these two models into one church. We are still trying to work out the implications of this compromise. At the same time, we still carry with us old habits of establishment; that is we see ourselves as adjuncts of the establishment rather than followers of the Jesus who was crucified by the political and religious establishment. This is not appropriate in our context.

The second difference was the fact of the frontier. The earliest Lutherans along the Atlantic Seaboard were moving into unknown wilderness and many of the nineteenth century Lutherans were sent into forests and prairies where they had to create towns and farms from scratch. There was no established church structure. In the early years of settlement, two widely separated communities might share a pastor who lived six

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months in one and six months in the other. And in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the prairies were being settled, one pastor might serve several congregations many miles apart. Thus, Lutherans often had to learn how to do church without a resident pastor. Some congregations adapted better than others, but in all situations lay leaders exercised more initiative and leadership than their European counterparts.

The third difference was the democratic nature of governance in North America. Certainly, in the United States after the American Revolution and increasingly in Canada through the nineteenth century, all people expected to be governed democratically. Self-governance, which was a necessity for Lutherans early on, became also the most desired form of organization even after synods were organized and clergy became less rare. Democratic forms, which were almost unknown among Lutherans in Europe, were the norm. Even the selection of pastors, which was carried out by the authorities in Europe, was a democratic process in North America. Laypeople often expected to be involved at every level in the organization of Lutheran churches. Many clergy, especially those educated in Europe, sometimes had difficulty dealing constructively with these expectations, and many of the recent immigrants continued to hold a more European notion of the authority of pastors, so there were many congregations where laity willingly acceded to the desires of clergy.

These factors formed the way Lutherans perceived public ministry and the organization of the church in Canada and they persisted into the twentieth century. Even as smaller, ethnic churches merged into continent-wide organizations and then into national churches, many people expected that the church would be democratic and attuned to contextual expectations for leadership, while others continued to prefer a more clergy-centered church. Some laypeople expected to be included in all decisions and expected clergy to respect the abilities and aptitudes of laypeople. In other settings the pastor was expected to lead and the laity expected to follow.

Development of a Theology of Mission

In addition to sending pastors to migrants in North America, the Pietist leaders at the University of Halle were the first to send Protestant missionaries outside Europe when Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau were sent to India. This eventually led to a flood of missionaries sent around the world from every Protestant church. Roman Catholics had been sending out missionaries for many centuries. By the latter half of the nineteenth century some of these missionaries, and leaders of churches which had resulted from their work, began to realize that there were flaws both in the methods used up to that point and in the theology which had motivated these methods. This realization grew significantly following World War II, as Europe's former colonies in Africa and Asia worked and fought for independence. The move for national independence closely corresponded to efforts toward churchly independence from European and North American church bodies.

The theology of mission which arose from this context revolutionized how all Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant leaders thought about the mission of the church. The newer theology of mission included rethinking of central doctrines such as the nature of God and God's relationship with creation. The understanding of the church became more relational, and more related to the concept of "communion" than to "hierarchy." There emerged a strong emphasis on the concept of sending: The Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit, Jesus sends the church in the power of the Spirit.

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This resulted in an understanding of the church which stresses the congregation as a community of forgiveness and reconciliation, and a community within which disciples are nurtured for a life of service in the world, sometimes referred to with the Greek word, *diakonia*. In Greek the word carries connotations of one who has been delegated to represent someone in authority. The kind of service referred to here is “representative service” or delegated service to the world which represents and witnesses to Christ, the one in authority. Thus, there is a concern for maintaining a careful balance between speaking the Gospel aloud in a contextually appropriate manner and being agents of change, transforming unjust structures and challenging violence in the world.

“The church in mission is called to work to safeguard the life of the earth.”

In recent times, as environmental crises such as climate change threaten the integrity of God’s creation, the role of the church as safeguard of the whole earth has also come to the fore. The church in mission is called to work to safeguard

the life of the earth. We humans have put the world at risk. Whether with nuclear weapons or human-caused climate change, we have the capability to destroy the earth. The mission of God is to thwart these possibilities and to create new possibilities. The church is a witness to God’s future and the missional congregation will express this witness in its day-to-day activities.

The church’s mission in the world has come to be seen in four aspects: prophetic preaching of the Word which both points out the injustices of the world and offers God’s unconditional promise to the world; prophetic service which responds to the needs of the whole creation, especially the needs of the most despised; prophetic accompaniment which embodies the solidarity of faithfully walking alongside and learning from the oppressed; and prophetic social change which directly encounters the world’s structures of injustice on behalf of and along with those who are the focus of injustice.

Deacon Canon Nancy Ford

is “Deacon to the City” of Victoria, British Columbia. She serves as an agent of Christ Church Cathedral, working alongside marginalized people and taking action with them to address issues of affordable housing and substance use. Deacon Nancy works with a variety of community leaders to build a vision of a positive future through careful analysis of structural and systemic barriers.

The thinking of theology of mission extends to the lives of individual Christians, where it is identified as “discipleship.” Disciples are persons who serve God by serving God’s creation and who live in God’s unconditional promise of destiny and purpose in Christ; discipleship is a way of life. Every baptized person and every community of baptized persons is called into a life of *diakonia*, delegated service, which is rooted in the gospel promise and not in duty to the Law. This way of life makes the gospel available to all in a variety of forms. Disciples of Jesus speak words of prophetic hope to the world and make hope present in the world as they live in the gospel.

While this theology of mission and a “missional” way of thinking has come to dominate in international organizations and theological faculties, it has not always penetrated to the grass roots of the church. Many clergy and laypeople still think of “mission” as something which happens far away and is carried out by specialists. Much work remains to be done if the whole church is to think of itself as being in mission with others in the local context.

Section 3 - Theological Reflection: Toward a Theology of Organization, Mission and Ministry for our Present Moment

Theological reflection involves bringing the needs, necessities, characteristics, assets, and opportunities of our context into creative dialogue with our theological tradition. The purpose is disciplined theological thought about, and constructive responses to, our current reality. The questions before us are the nature and shape of public ministry in the ELCIC and how our understanding and organizing of our forms of public ministry might better equip all of us to provide an effective witness to the truth of the gospel in contemporary Canada.

Christian Movement and Church Organization

We have seen how the historical evolution from the earlier, less organized stage to the later, more organized stage occurred in early Christianity. While the Christian movement is not unique in this progression, we need to be mindful of its consequences for Christian theology and practice. In particular the theology and practice of public ministry are central to the tensions between *movement* and *institution* because ordered public ministry is one of the central features of church institutions.

A built-in tension between movement and institution in Christianity can hardly be denied. The parable of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke’s gospel is illustrative. Those who passed by the robbery victim are all representatives of the religious institution. The one who was the true neighbour had no institutional affiliation; he is only identified as a member of a distrusted minority. In addition, Jesus’ arrest and execution are carried out by the highest representatives of the religious institutions and of the government of the day. Governmental institutions—which in Roman times cannot be separated from the official religion—persecuted the first generations of Christians. The marks of this early history have been carried forward within Christianity down to the present.

It is also true that Christianity developed organization and took on an institutional form early in its history. Being a loosely organized movement has its strengths, but it also has its weaknesses. The more people that join the movement, the more obvious these weaknesses become, and so members of the movement perceive at least some organization as a necessity.

Organization and institutionalization come with other problems and other risks. One obvious risk that Christianity fell victim to in the fourth century is approval by the political authorities. Certainly, being tolerated is better on many levels than being persecuted, and the church’s involvement with secular authority was often positive for both church and people. At the same time governments have their own agendas and these agendas are not always the same agendas as the Holy Spirit’s movement to bring wholeness to creation. Involvement with the state has often blunted and compromised the church’s witness, as the church often identified with aspects of state policy which were very harmful to people.

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Perhaps one of the most difficult risks to deal with in our context is that institutions can become so taken up with their own survival that they lose sight of their original purpose. Church history is full of examples of this problem from early centuries to the present day. Lutheranism itself is the product of concern over the loss of evangelical purpose in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but Lutheranism is not free of instances of the very problem it was founded to solve. The most serious consequence of such institutionalism is that the basics of Christian faith and life are redefined to suit the perceived needs of the institution. Theology emphasizes institutional loyalty rather than the gospel; Christian life is defined as going along with the dictates of leaders and as following some set of rules.

Loss of focus can take many forms and exist on different levels. The most fundamental loss of focus is when the institution as a whole loses sight of the reason for its existence. The point of Christianity is to communicate the good news that God's ultimate relationship to creation is the unconditional promise made in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Institutions live by constitutions and by-laws. It is too easy to lose the unconditional promise of the gospel amongst the rules, regulations and precedents. Perhaps less obvious than the fall into "legalism" is the tendency of some educated professionals who serve in the church to use their expertise to make others needy and dependent on them. That can be a subtle killer of vital mission. It may serve the professionals' need to be needed, but people who have been taught to see themselves as not capable are less likely or able to witness to the gospel wherever they find themselves. Without any conscious intent, the fundamental witness of Christianity is truncated. What is often called "clericalism" results: that is, a church that has become identified with the professionals, not with people empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**"The gospel is Spirit-infused anarchy." ...
"The anarchic Word is proclaimed by an
organized institution."**

For Lutheranism the tension between "movement" and "institution" is particularly stark. On the one hand, we claim that our central doctrine is "by grace alone." This is the claim that sinners are justified by grace alone through faith in the unconditional

promise of God in Christ. Sinners are not in any way justified by keeping the law and following rules and regulations. No message could be as threatening to law and order as the gospel of God's free and undeserved grace. The gospel is Spirit-infused anarchy. On the other hand, the way that we have access to this gospel is through the community which preaches it and celebrates it in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. While Article VII of the Augsburg Confession requires a community which speaks and sacramentally enacts the Word, it is hard to imagine a human community without some form of organization. We humans normally think in terms of and expect a church which provides a public ministry. Such a group will be like all human gatherings, *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously saint and sinner). The anarchic Word is proclaimed by an organized institution.

The paradox of "gospel and institution" is intensified when a church is committed to Luther's "Theology of the Cross," which was formulated at least partially in response to the medieval church's emphasis on the power and glory of the institution. Luther maintained that the crucifixion of Jesus is the paradigm through which the theology and practice of the church are to be evaluated. Since God so often works under the sign of a divine opposite, the true power and glory of God are seen in the weakness and humiliation of the crucifixion.

The ultimate revelation of God is in a profound act of solidarity with the despised. God comes among us as an executed criminal. This is the filter through which the church must be evaluated. Do our actions as church correspond to the crucifixion? Does the church take the shape of the cross, not just architecturally, but in its actual life? These questions are difficult because our culture offers no examples of a cruciform (cross-shaped) institution for us to follow. Conventional notions of “leadership,” formed entirely by a cultural “theology of glory,” give no help to a public ministry called into being by an executed criminal who claims to be risen from the dead and vindicated beyond the grave.

In light of the tension between movement and institution, a challenge to every church is how to organize in a way that offers the least threat to the central message of the movement. Can we develop an approach to organization that encourages focus on that central message? Can we use our organization to minimize the constant refrain of our own needs for stability and recognition, our own desire to be God, in such a way that we become more effective channels for the Spirit of the crucified Christ to move through the world?

The Church Is Mission

One way to keep “organization” oriented to “movement” is to examine the focus of our organizations. Clearly the gospel must be the vital centre of any church that claims to be Lutheran. The question for us is how we express that evangelical centre. In this

“Is the focus of how we organize ourselves the mission of the movement?”

we need to move beyond the world imagined in the Lutheran Confessions, because they were written in a time when almost everyone was considered to be a Christian and a member of the church. The world we live in is quite different. So today we speak about the focus of the church in a parallel but newer way. We ask the question, “Is the focus of how we organize ourselves the mission of the movement?” The centre of the church is the mission of God, who sent Jesus into the world to embody (incarnate) God’s unconditional promise of a destiny that is good for all of creation. The balance of “institution” and “movement” exists in a mission which revolves around the centre of the mission of God.

That mission is rooted deep in the Trinitarian nature of God. In the church we often confuse unity with uniformity, but God’s own nature shows that unity in mission is nothing like uniformity. As Trinity, God is both unity in diversity and diversity in unity, equally and at the same time; God’s unity respects and values uniqueness. The missional church, therefore, is not about a desire for uniformity disguised with talk about unity. The Trinitarian God created a wonderfully diverse creation, and so the missional church is also a wonderful and wondrous diversity which is used by the Spirit as one tool among many to move creation toward its ultimate wholeness in God.

Mission is about dealing with what Christianity has traditionally called the consequences of sin. The doctrine of sin at its core means that something has gone awry with creation, something that interferes with God’s intentions. God’s reciprocal relationship with creation has been damaged by humanity’s unwillingness to let God be God; so the mission of God focuses on reconciliation and restoration of the relationship. The trajectory of creation toward God has been interrupted and must be restored. The means God has chosen to effect reconciliation is the life and ministry of Jesus which resulted in Jesus’ arrest, trial and execution at the hands of the religious and political authorities of Roman Judea. Jesus’ subsequent resurrection reveals

both the futility of human attempts to find a scapegoat to blame and the power of God's gracious and unconditional promise. The Spirit of God sends the message of reconciliation and promise in Christ into the world so that people can hear and follow.

Three Missional Questions for the Church

This restoration of the trajectory of creation toward its Creator is the mission of God. Since the church has been called to be the agent of God's reconciliation and promise in the world, it is also the mission of the church. Any ecclesiastical organization or institution is evaluated on the basis of its ability and willingness to be consumed by this mission. The first priority of the church is mission, and so the church is to be organized to be an effective agent of mission. In this light, the first question is: "Does the way we structure and practice our public ministry focus our church on the mission of God?"

"This restoration of the trajectory of creation toward its Creator is the mission of God."

In carrying out this mission the church is empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of God moves as it sees fit. The biblical metaphor for the Holy Spirit is the wind, and, like the wind, the Spirit blows where it wills and cannot be controlled by

human rules and regulations. The incessant desire of the Spirit is to conform the church to the crucifixion of Jesus. The church in mission is evaluated not just on the criterion of effective organization, but also on the criterion of openness to the sometimes less-than-well-organized freedom of movement of the Spirit. The second question is "Does the way we structure and practice our public ministry allow the free movement of the Holy Spirit in our practice of mission?"

Both a focus on mission and the freedom of the Spirit are expressed through the life of delegated service of each and every Christian and each and every Christian community, a service in which Christ is recognized as the ultimate author of the action. This is what the wider church has come to call *diakonia*. *Diakonia* is each Christian and each community hearing the call to serve the world by speaking and living the gospel promise. *Diakonia* takes us back to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The questioner asks, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus answers, "Whoever needs you, no matter who you are and no matter who the one in need is." In acting as the neighbour, the Samaritan practices *diakonia* and reveals the call to each one called by the Spirit to hear the gospel. The third question is, "Does the way we structure and practice our public ministry facilitate *diakonia* for each person and each community connected to our church?"

Public Ministry in the Mission of God

Because of the history of the Lutheran church as a state church in Europe, our traditions of the structure and practice of public ministry do not focus on empowering the people. We still live with what we might call "habits of establishment." When we conclude that we don't really need to practice gospel-centred stewardship or any sort of evangelism in our congregations, we are living out the habits of establishment. If we believe that the Holy Spirit calls every baptized person and every community of the baptized into a life of *diakonia*, a life of delegated service, and if we believe that the church's primary being is found in the mission of God, and if we believe that the crucifixion of Jesus is the paradigm for all that we say and do as church, then we need to move beyond and perhaps even overcome our traditions of public ministry. We need to break the habits of establishment that hang on even after over two hundred years in North America.

Deacon Dr. Maylanne

Maybee is Interim Principal of the United Church of Canada's United Theological College in Montréal, Québec. Deacon Maylanne has advocated alongside marginalized communities of urban Toronto, challenged the upper echelons of church hierarchy, and modeled a servant ministry which speaks truthfully and prophetically and which includes voices which often go unnoticed or are difficult to hear.

In our current cultural context this will not be easy. The most dominant model for organizations in North America is the corporation, in which there is a top and bottom—a hierarchy—and those at the top receive a much higher salary than those at the bottom and make all of the important decisions. Our governments are structured as representative democracies in which the average citizen delegates authority and decision-making to an elected assembly and executive. Neither of these models fits the needs of the mission of God nor a life of discipleship; neither is appropriate for public ministry in the church. Our reality is that these are the only models we know well, with the result that our vision of what public ministry can be under the inspiration of the Spirit of the gospel is skewed and truncated.

The focus of public ministry in a reformed and reforming church is communicating the gospel so that the whole church is equipped and empowered to live out discipleship in mission. The structure and practice of public ministry should reflect this focus. The purpose of public ministry is to be a channel for the work of the Spirit through the gospel, not to provide “leaders”

for the church. The first task of each person who is called as a public minister is to make sure that the gospel is heard as good news for the precise people in the precise situation in which the community finds itself. For this reason, persons called as public ministers will need to be theologically astute and attuned to the features of the community—the context—in which they are situated.

The second task of public ministry is to use the gospel to find those who have been called by the Holy Spirit and given unique gifts to carry out God's mission in the community's context. The people and the gifts needed will vary depending on the needs of the context—recognizing that most people are actually far more gifted than they may appear to be or feel themselves to be. No one person is sufficient for what is needed. So public ministers will seek and pray for the desire and ability to put themselves on the margins of the congregation and help create space where those with the necessary gifts can use them to their fullest potential.

“The focus of public ministry in a reformed and reforming church is communicating the gospel so that the whole church is equipped and empowered to live out discipleship in mission.”

In all of this one needs to keep in mind the paradoxical position of those called to public ministry. In North American anglophone culture, our temptation is to see those who exercise public ministry as either the “CEO” of the congregation or the employee of the congregation. Both of these analogies are mistaken. The public minister is a servant both of the gospel and of the community, and neither of these takes priority over the other. Every person called to public ministry lives in this tension. Part of the call to public ministry is to embody this tension, not as a “representative” of Christ, but as one who fully participates in the multifaceted reality of our “simultaneously saint and sinner” existence. Insofar as all the baptized are justified

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sinner who hear the good news of God's grace in Christ, the public minister serves the community of justified sinners and seekers who hunger to hear. Insofar as all the baptized are normal, flawed human beings, the public minister is pressed back to complete reliance on the good news of God's grace in Christ as one's only foothold on reality, even when the community refuses to hear. Both of these are fully true simultaneously, and that is the tension in which the disciple community lives.

The confessional concept of *adiaphora* affirms the conclusion that the church's practice of public ministry should reflect the church's theology of mission. While Lutherans have an unbreakable confessional commitment to the gospel *content* of public ministry, we do not have a confessional commitment to any particular *form* of public ministry that will effectively communicate the gospel. At the same time our history and traditions of public ministry have limited our imagination for what might be possible. In the present moment in the history of the ELCIC we need to scrutinize those limits and allow ourselves to imagine any number of possibilities that might serve the needs of our church and of our world. One important question we must ask ourselves is, "How do our current forms inhibit the communication of the gospel?" The next is, "What forms can we imagine which might speak to contemporary Canada?"

The Presence of Radical Grace in the World

The goal of an empowered church is the constant presence of the heard gospel in the world. Hearing the gospel is different from hearing other speech communication. The word of the gospel is neither an indicative word, nor is it an imperative word. In other words, it neither describes nor commands. It is the Word of promise, a prophetic Word which accomplishes what it promises. Hearing the gospel creates a radically new situation, a new existence, in which God's promise of the destiny of creation makes disciples from all

**"The mission of God is our purpose
and the gospel is our goal."**

peoples. The point of having a community where the gospel is heard and where *diakonia* is lived out as a result of hearing is that the world hears the good news that God's relationship with creation is fully

expressed in the unconditional promise made by God in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. The purpose of public ministry is not the survival of the church as an organization, but the continued presence of the gospel. When the gospel is heard as good news for a specific people at a specific moment in time at a specific place, our purpose is fulfilled.

The purpose of the church is a message of hope, for Jesus has promised that the gospel-speaking and hearing community will remain until he returns to bring creation to its goal. We can trust God to fulfill this promise. The continued existence of the church is not dependent on our institutional caution. Jesus' promise is also a message of humility, for Jesus' promise is not that our particular organizational form of church will last forever. We are here for the moment to do what we are called to do, so that the gospel is heard by the people of our particular time and place. Survival is neither our purpose nor our goal. The mission of God is our purpose and the gospel is our goal.

Section 4—Principles and Possibilities: An Emerging Vision for the Church in Mission and for its Public Ministers

The ELCIC and Living into God’s Mission

The theological reflection of Section 3 clearly highlights the fundamental tension between movement and institution in the church. In light of that tension, how might the ELCIC organize itself in a way that offers the least threat to the central Gospel message of the movement? If the first priority of the church is to be an effective agent of God’s mission, how might we structure our organization to more effectively focus on the mission of God? The church in mission is evaluated not just on the criterion of effective organization, but also on the criterion of openness to the movement of the Spirit. What changes to our church would allow the Holy Spirit to move more freely through us?

Recognizing that contemporary Canada is quite different from the time and place in which many of the ELCIC’s structures were created, what changes in the ELCIC might enable the church to better speak to our current context? Both a focus on mission and the freedom of the Spirit are expressed through the life of delegated service of each and every Christian and each and every Christian community. Could the ELCIC better facilitate *diakonia* for each person and each community connected to our church?

The vision for the church that emerges from reflection on these questions is one in which every Christian and every community of Christians participates in God’s mission in the world. Each Christian recognizes their baptismal call to serve the world by speaking and living the gospel promise. Every baptized person and every community of baptized persons is called into a life of *diakonia*, or delegated service, which is rooted in the gospel promise and not in duty to the Law. Working with other Christians, people of other faiths, and other people of goodwill, the ELCIC and its people are aware of the current Canadian social and cultural times, and work to challenge the roots of injustice, to speak and act prophetically, and to accompany those on the margins of our society and to advocate alongside them.

“Every baptized person and every community of baptized persons is called into a life of *diakonia*, or delegated service.”

This emerging vision describes a *missional, diaconal* and *prophetic* church for the current Canadian context of the ELCIC. The church that is envisioned recognizes its call to be an agent of God’s reconciliation and promise in the world; mission is its first priority. The whole church embraces the responsibility of bringing the gospel to our world in concrete ways which alleviate human and environmental suffering. Open to the free movement of the Holy Spirit, it embraces new opportunities, risks failure, and encourages the diversity of organization required by different contexts.

The challenges that face the ELCIC as it moves to embrace this vision include:

- Communicating a new understanding of God’s mission
- Shaping a more robust laity
- Becoming more nimble
- Encouraging collaborative leadership
- Nurturing intentional partnerships

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Communicating a New Understanding of God's Mission

In recent years the ELCIC has attempted to focus the church on its part in God's mission in the world. The church is called to be the agent of God's reconciliation and promise in the world; mission is the first priority of the church. Reconciliation is especially needed with Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2 people, those who live in poverty, are homeless, or experience racial discrimination. At its best, the whole church embraces the responsibility of bringing the gospel to our world in concrete ways which alleviate human and environmental suffering.

While this theology of mission and a "missional" way of thinking has come to dominate in international organizations and theological faculties, it has not always penetrated to the grass roots of the church. Many clergy and laypeople still think of "mission" as something which happens far away and is carried out by specialists. And some still understand the Christian mission as the conversion of all people to Christianity, citing Matthew 28:18-20. Much work remains to be done if the whole church is to think of itself as being in mission with others in the local context.

Shaping a More Robust Laity

One of the things that the ELCIC will require to live into this vision of a missional, diaconal and prophetic church is a more robust laity. When laypeople clearly understand their baptismal call, are aware of their gifts for ministry, and feel equipped and motivated to live out their vocation in the world, God's mission is being realized. The stories in Session Two of the study *To Love Our Neighbours As Ourselves* spoke clearly of the joy, meaning and purpose people find in their lives when they know they are serving God's mission in their everyday lives.

The vision for a church that shapes a more vital and robust laity is one of a community where the baptized continually hear the gospel promise preached and see it enacted for their own lives, and for the world around them. In a faith community of forgiveness and reconciliation, usually a congregation, the baptized are nurtured in their faith by hearing the Word preached, by receiving the Sacraments, and by being part of a supportive and challenging community; they learn to be disciples, seekers who follow the way of Jesus. Through worship, prayer, and study in small groups, they come to understand that they are called in their baptisms to participate in God's mission in the world, in response to God's grace. In the congregation and through the wider church, they are helped to discern their own gifts for ministry and equipped with what they need to carry out their ministries. With others in the congregation, disciples learn to serve those on the margins of our society, reflecting theologically on those experiences, challenging the roots of injustice, and accompanying others. In smaller groups within the congregation, disciples begin to tell their own stories of God's presence in their lives and to share the good news with others. The congregation or faith community provides support, affirmation, and accountability for the ministries of all people.

In order to encourage a stronger laity, the ELCIC will need to consider how it might better empower and equip all the baptized for their mission in the world. Leaders will need to know how to help laypeople identify their gifts and how to equip, encourage and empower them to use their gifts in serving the world.

Becoming More Nimble

In order to live more fully into the vision of a missional, diaconal and prophetic church, the structure and organization of the ELCIC needs to become more nimble, able to act more quickly and with greater flexibility. A nimble church is a church that is risky, proactive, liminal, resourceful, creative and lean. As

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highlighted in Section 2, the Lutheran Confessions recognize that the unity of the church does not rest in uniformity of organizational structures. Indeed, the diversity of our current context may demand radically different ways of doing public ministry in different settings within the ELCIC. At the very least, less internal structure, such as committees, and more use of task groups or small teams in congregations would increase flexibility, help to define tasks, and promote creativity. Another aspirational characteristic would be quick and effective decision-making.

In recent years the ELCIC has made changes to its constitution and bylaws. The intent is to reduce the time needed for change to take place within its structure. Continued efforts are needed to increase flexibility and timeliness in congregations as well. Many congregations still have the full council and committee structure mandated by their constitutions, although it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill the positions necessary for functioning. The committee structure, for example, often limits the vision and implementation of the congregation's mission; only those ideas that fit within the existing structure are recognized.

In Section 1 it was noted that many people are motivated by something that they think needs to be improved or changed, something they feel passionate about. A group of people emerges that is not necessarily geographically close, but rather connected by their interest or passion. This was described as the creation of a movement. The early Christian church was a movement, and so was the Reformation church. In response to the changed attitudes and preference of many in Canada today, the ELCIC, its synods, congregations, and other communities might consider how movements may be an opportunity to better serve others within our current context.

Each baptized person is connected to a network of people who are their families, friends, work colleagues, and acquaintances. This network is no longer mainly comprised of people who are Christian. The church needs to become nimble enough to encourage the development of movements within these existing networks. These movements would gather those with a passion for an action or concern and be focused on actively participating in God's mission in the world.

A nimbler structure will possibly mean a shift from property-rich institutions to movements with a tenuous relationship to property and organizational charts, as the ELCIC actively seeks out non-traditional opportunities for mission. For example, the *Fresh Expressions* initiatives of the Church of England are new forms of church that emerge within contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who don't 'go to church'. The church of the future might contain both traditional congregations, of which there will be significantly fewer, and focused ministries designed to serve particular local needs, of which there will be an increasing number. These new forms of public ministries will be an important part of the church's *diakonia*. What kind of a church might meet the needs of immigrants and refugees? What is the shape of church formed by and for faithful and respectful conversation with our Indigenous neighbours and people of other faiths? Such a church will be not only nimble but humble.

Encouraging Collaborative Leadership

Another important contribution to the vision of a missional, diaconal and prophetic church could be made by encouraging collaborative leadership. The church has sometimes been overly concerned about the boundaries between itself and the world, and between various classes of ministers; the vision is for a church in which those boundaries are more permeable. A model of collaborative leadership teams mobilizes the strengths of each individual to make the sum of the whole greater than the individual parts.

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Non-traditional ministries are, by nature and necessity, team-led. They tend to be relatively small, highly mobile, and flexibly structured. They need ordained and lay leadership that can work in a team fashion. They also require connections to traditionally-structured congregations, ministry areas or synods that are prepared to work with them in a team fashion. Lutherans and their ecumenical partners can work together to create the teams for these kinds of ministries and collaborate in supporting them.

If bishops, pastors, deacons and laypeople were trained to work collegially and collaboratively, teams of leaders, possibly including our ecumenical partners, might provide local leadership in faith communities and non-traditional ministries. Some of the leaders might be part-time, self-supporting or volunteers. The expertise and skills of laypeople could be valued to extend ministry in a variety of contexts. In addition to identifying particular gifts, establishing clear roles and responsibilities for each team member would enhance communication and provide for complementary skill sets and interests rather than one person assuming all roles.

Where ministry is taking place at the edge places (or margins) of the church and society, both lay and rostered leaders bring the gospel to the centre of church life and to the margins of society. Laypeople, who are at the front lines of mission, speak and act a word of radical grace where God has called them to be.

Nurturing Intentional Partnerships

Nurturing intentional partnerships with other congregations, specialized ministries, and church bodies, as well as ecumenical partners, other faith communities and groups within the local area will greatly enhance the church's effectiveness in carrying out its mission. This is an important part of the vision of a missional, diaconal and prophetic church. Collaboration with others brings together multiple leaders, perhaps with different areas of responsibility and giftedness. Allowing leaders to use the strengths which they each bring to ministry magnifies the work of the whole. "Thinking outside the box" could be much more highly valued

and lifted up in our church culture. The national church and synods play a crucial role in encouraging creative and non-traditional ministries and activities. To promote creativity, everyone needs to recognize that some initiatives may fail, and that this reality is an essential part of the creative process.

Deacon Dr. Faith Nostbakken

is called by the Synod of Alberta and the Territories as Spiritual Director and was appointed Ecumenical Officer. She is self-supporting through various endeavours, including her ministry of Spiritual Direction at the Providence Renewal Centre in Edmonton. In her preaching, writing and relationships she draws together diverse communities and conversation partners.

Shared ministries are arrangements between ELCIC congregations and sometimes including those of our ecumenical partners, to share leadership for carrying out mission and ministry in local areas. Other possibilities include sharing leaders within ministry areas, within the synods, and with specialized or non-traditional ministries.

During the recent need for refugee sponsorship, partnerships were formed between congregations of various denominations, community organizations, and interfaith partners in response to a communal need. Partnering with neighbours of other denominations, those of other faiths, and other people of goodwill is an important way to participate in meeting the needs of our communities and serving. Someone recently remarked

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that the global challenges our world faces are so large, that it will take all of us working together for the good of all to make an impact. The ELCIC is committed to a process of reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples; intentional partnerships to build relationships and listen will be important, and deacons may have special suitability for this role.

Partnerships between synods, with specialized ministries, seminaries, universities and camps can also enhance the church's mission. For example, *Inshallah* is a choir of more than 130 voices based out of Martin Luther University College. It gathers people from across campus and from throughout the Region of Waterloo, singing songs of praise and prayer, of joy and lament, from around the world. It is a community where multifaith and multicultural diversity are explored through music at rehearsals, public gatherings and workshops.

Another example of a helpful partnership is Lutheran Theological Seminary's (LTS) *Lay Academy*, a collaborative program of LTS and the four Western Synods of the ELCIC. The program seeks to provide continuing education opportunities for lay people in the church and for those being prepared for lay leadership.

Many ELCIC congregations already support mission and service activities in a variety of ways. One way to extend our part in God's mission in the world could be to take note of organizations through which congregational members are already active in the local community. A nimble church could build on a single individual's action beyond the immediate faith community for the common good. Encouraging partnerships with other congregations, denominations, and community organizations could strengthen and expand the ministry possibilities and resources of all partners. Mutually beneficial partnerships would increase the potential to speak a word of encouragement to those who need to hear it most, and radiate a hopeful presence in marginalized and difficult-to-enter communities.

Called Public Ministers in a Missional, Diaconal and Prophetic Church

As described in the Introduction, public ministers are those who are called by a particular community of baptized Christians to perform certain functions in public.

It is appropriate to ask whether any of the challenges facing the ELCIC might be better met by changing the traditional structure we have inherited. If the changing context of the ELCIC requires it, the church may designate additional and/or different functions to persons called into public ministry. Additional types of called public ministers might also be designated to carry out some functions on behalf of the church, for example, catechists (teachers of the essentials of faith) or evangelists (traveling preachers). As the church evolves in the contemporary world, it is not entirely clear what the appropriate structures for public ministry in the ELCIC should be. The need for change is clear, but the direction is not. As a result, it seems best for the moment to continue with the structures we have inherited.

No matter what the structure, there are characteristics to which a called public minister might aspire and which form an approach to ministry appropriate to a missional church with a robust laity. In such a church, public ministers will be (among other things):

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- Disciples - Seekers who are following the way of Jesus; pledged to participate in God's mission; understand *diakonia* as the vocation of all the baptized
- Active - Seeking to live justice for and with neighbour; willing to participate in the lives of others
- Gracious - Seeking to embody the free gift of God's grace
- Loving - Seeking to live out unconditional and extravagant love
- Humble - Open to hearing and being changed by others, with a posture of vulnerability
- Educated - Equipped with what they need to carry out their ministry
- Formed - Nurtured in the church community for ministry
- Informed - Aware of current, contemporary realities
- Collegial - Willing to work with other pastors, deacons, bishops, and laypeople
- Enabling - Valuing, identifying and enabling the gifts of others
- Adaptive - Constantly open to new possibilities and opportunities
- Inclusive - Seeking to open the church community to all people
- Ecumenical - Willing to work with other Christians
- Interfaith - Willing to be in conversation with and work with people of other faiths, of no faith, or who are seeking or questioning
- Reconciling - Working to restore relationships through humble listening; working toward healing
- Prayerful - Seeking to discern God's call and direction

The first task of each person who is called as a public minister is to make sure that the gospel is heard as good news for the precise people in the precise situation in which the community finds itself. The second task of public ministry is to use the gospel to find those who have been called by the Holy Spirit and given unique gifts to carry out God's mission in the community's context. The focus of public ministry in a reformed and reforming church is communicating the gospel so that the whole church is equipped and empowered to live out discipleship in mission. The structure and practice of public ministry should reflect this focus.

To assist all of the baptized in living out their vocations, public ministers may require new training and skills for this present time. Reading the "signs of the times" is one such important skill and discipline for all public ministers. Understanding what is happening in the world, in Canadian society, and in their local communities will undergird the prophetic dimension of their ministries and enable them to speak and act prophetically.

Regardless of whether public ministers will be working within a congregation, in a specialized ministry, in a group in the community, in a group of congregations or in an institution, they need to understand how communities work. In a rapidly changing context, public ministers may be a crucial link between communities of people, both mainstream and marginalized. The church is particularly well located in the social and political landscape to bring together diverse segments of the local community. Community development training and an understanding of how community members come together to take collective action will be important in helping communities participate in God's mission.

One of the important tasks of public ministers is to enable lay people to exercise their vocations in the world. Using the authority of their position well, public ministers can create spaces where the wisdom of all is valued and received. Leaders are no longer mainly givers of information, but rather those who can create space for important conversation and discernment. They need to be able to work collaboratively. Called public ministers could help to identify needs in the local community, but discerning needs, taking action to address those needs, and reflecting on them theologically is not a task limited to public ministers. In addition

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to themselves being theologically trained, called public ministers need to be able to teach theological thinking and reflection to others. They need to be skilled in helping lay people discern their gifts and experience for ministry, including identifying leadership gifts and/or appropriate gifts for public ministries. They may also help lay people find opportunities to use and explore their gifts in living out their vocations.

Pastors, deacons and bishops are ordained for different public functions. This does not mean that there is always complete clarity about the boundaries of each function or the roles of each kind of public minister. But it is still helpful to describe the intended focus of each, while recognizing there may be exceptions.

Reimagining the Public Ministry of Deacons

The present challenges facing the ELCIC and the renewed emphasis on its part in God's mission provide an opportunity to reimagine the public ministry of deacons. In a missional, diaconal and prophetic church, *diakonia* is the call of every baptized person and every community of the baptized. A reimagined and more visible roster of deacons could stimulate the whole church to live more fully into its mission and public witness.

In a missional, diaconal, prophetic church, deacons are called to a public ministry that offers leadership to laypeople and communities in participating in God's mission in the world. They can help laypeople identify their gifts for ministry and help equip them to serve. As the faith community seeks to carry out its mission in the world, deacons may become living bridges, creating pathways for communities of the baptized to live out their calls to serve in their local environment or setting. Deacons should speak of the needs of the world God loves to the church, as well as reach out to the excluded and marginalized, taking the gospel to those in need through the actions of God's people, whether individually or collectively.

Deacons organize people to be public witnesses to God's love in the world. If the ELCIC had more deacons working in varied contexts and linking back to their local congregations, it might help to build relationships between congregational members and those on the margins, and to break down social, political and religious barriers. Deacons may discover existing communities and/or gather communities in the edge places of society, that is, among marginalized people, whether inside or outside the faith community. They can identify opportunities for the community of the baptized to take action and become a vehicle for God's love and justice. Deacons accompany the marginalized, bringing together partners who make the most impact in a particular setting, and advocating alongside those who are unable to speak on their own behalf. People at the margins can also embody strength, courage, hope and promise, and in these edge places, both the marginalized and those who walk with them can be transformed.

“Deacons organize people to be public witnesses to God's love in the world.”

Deacons are grounded and formed in community with other deacons, committed to a common calling. This diaconal community serves as a reminder and model for building community in all ministry settings. Collaboration and community partnerships are a part of their identity. Deacons serve as catalysts and initiators, modeling the service they encourage in others. Deacons bring the stories of those in need and those who are on the margins to the attention of the congregation and the wider church. Their relationships with those on the edges help inform and shape the response of the church.

Deacon Michèle Barr is called by the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod to serve as chaplain at Pembina Place Mennonite Personal Care Home. Deacon Michèle has also been appointed Honorary Deacon Assistant at St. Saviour's Anglican Church in Winnipeg. Weaving together her gifts of music and spiritual care she connects Lutheran, Mennonite and Anglican denominational settings.

Deacons are educated theologically, and each deacon also has a specialized area of expertise and competency which they bring to and which undergirds their public ministry and which may provide financial support. As noted above, deacons need to be skilled in reading the signs of the times, in community development, in helping others discern their gifts for ministry and in leading and teaching theological reflection. If they are required by their call to preach, deacons should be trained in preaching. In addition to the church's seminaries, there are two ecumenical study centres which offer specialized training for deacons.

The ministry of deacons has often been described as a ministry of Word and Service. This is put forward to parallel the Confessional ministry of Word and Sacrament of pastors. But the use of the word "service" is limiting. In a missional, diaconal, prophetic church, the vocation of deacons includes much more than individual service; deacons help others serve, identify

needs in the local context, build relationships and partnerships with other groups in the community, and accompany and advocate for those on the margins of our society. A limited understanding of the ministry of deacons has, in some cases, led to deacons being called to fulfill pastoral vacancies, and in other cases, to frustration over the lack of calls for deacons. Calling a deacon into a parish setting is a call to the community to enter deeply into *diakonia* and mission. It's not just about individual service.

"Calling a deacon into a parish setting is a call to the community to enter deeply into *diakonia* and mission. It's not just about individual service."

In the past it was assumed that deacons would be called by a congregation, institution or synodical council. But most congregations in the ELCIC do not have the resources to call and pay both a pastor and a deacon. Groupings of congregations and other ministries might intentionally seek to call

a public minister with specific gifts to reach into communities that are not easily accessible. Could deacons be called by clusters of congregations to bring interested baptized members together to respond to an emerging aspect of a social condition in their local context?

Refocusing the Public Ministry of Pastors

According to the Augsburg Confession, pastors are to be called to the public teaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments. The actual job description of pastors has always exceeded these two duties and has evolved over time. For most of Lutheran history another central expectation of pastors has been pastoral care, visiting the sick and dying, and listening to those whose souls were burdened. Pastors are also responsible for certain aspects of parish administration and expected to be the evangelist for the congregation. Various kinds of service to the wider church have also been included. With all of these duties the pastor is required to be a generalist and do many things well.

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The present situation of the church in contemporary society requires consideration of further changes in the role of pastors. The mission of God requires an increasingly diaconal vision, that is, a vision which emphasizes the church as a servant of Jesus Christ that is delegated to move into the world to serve those who are most in need. In this current context, pastors are called to communicate the Gospel at the margins of Canadian society.

The pastor may be the person in the congregation with the most education in theology and more time than most others to think theologically about the world, the community, and the congregation. This helps the pastor to preach effectively and to help others think theologically about current issues. But for many of the other tasks expected of the pastor, there is often someone in the congregation who is more skilled or better educated for the task than the pastor. To move away from the pastor-centric model in congregations, pastors need to practice discernment, discovering those most gifted for the task at hand and helping them to use those gifts for the good of all. In a missional, diaconal, and prophetic church, pastors must recognize that one of their important tasks is to enable laity to exercise their vocations both in the congregation and in the world. The pastor becomes a supporting player in the missional church.

“The effective pastor will be one who understands and can communicate the role of the baptized in the context at hand.”

Given that the pastor will remain the primary theologian of the community and the one called to public speaking of the Gospel, pastors will need to be skilled at reading the signs of the times, properly distinguishing Law and Gospel, and helping people to see their call in the midst of the reality that the community faces. The exact form that the pastor’s ministry will take in any given situation will be determined by the context. The effective pastor will be one who understands and can communicate the role of the baptized in the context at hand. Pastors may well be called to such a public ministry without the benefit of full-time work in the church. In instances where a congregation or community has only one called minister, pastors may have to take on some of the functions of both pastor and deacon. In such settings where only a pastor is available, the pastor will need to be conscious of the needs and opportunities which emerge through a diaconal approach to community development.

What will not change is the necessity that pastors truly care for the people of the congregation and be able to communicate that caring. Exercising the gift of discernment, pastors are increasingly being called to facilitate communities of forgiveness and reconciliation whose members know how to care in ways that communicate the love of God in Christ.

Bishops

For the purposes of this assignment, FOD did not undertake a study of the role of the office of bishop in a missional, diaconal and prophetic church. Such a study is certainly important, but that was not FOD’s mandate.

It must be said, though, that bishops, both national and synodical, play a pivotal role in this vision. Bishops and synod councils play a significant role in guiding and inspiring a missional vision in congregations and among public ministers. Bishops see a bigger picture and are involved in an ecumenical world. As bishops seek to walk with pastors, deacons, congregations, and specialized ministries, they are in a good position to raise up and encourage leaders, to provide resources, and to encourage imagination and experimentation,

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even if these should lead to failure. Bishops can identify and encourage areas of potential collaboration and partnership. They will be helpful in encouraging conversations about a more nimble, collaborative church.

Conclusion

To serve God's mission to restore the world to its creator's intentions, the church has historically identified ways in which its public ministry can be organized to focus us on primary tasks. In this section, we have taken some time to reflect on how we might better participate in God's mission in our contemporary context.

In many areas of the ELCIC part-time calls are becoming the new norm. Public ministers may be called to serve a congregation, institution or synod part-time and juggle another ministry or job at the same time. Tentmaking refers to the situation where a public minister, while dedicating her or himself to the ministry of the gospel, receives little or no pay for church work, but performs other jobs to provide support for themselves. Like the apostle Paul, their work in the world may enable them to carry out a part-time call to the church. This may be the new reality for bishops, pastors and deacons in the ELCIC.

The challenge for the church is to adapt to this new reality in ways that enable the church to continue to work to share the gospel. The ELCIC has shown some adaptive imagination in the construction of *Authorized Lay Ministries*, collaborative teams of laypeople that provide sacramental ministry in remote areas where a pastor is unavailable. The church is reformed and always reforming. Where else might our imaginations take us as we seek to participate in God's unfolding mission?

Section 5—A Vision for the ELCIC: Principles, Aspirations & Recommendations

The study presented in Sections 1 to 4 elaborated a vision of our church that is missional, diaconal and prophetic. Now, in Section 5, we adopt a form of expression with which the ELCIC is familiar from our *Statement on Sacramental Practices* (1991). In *Sacramental Practices* we set forth “practical principles” for the ELCIC. These practical principles were *aspirational* in character. They afforded our church a *vision* into which we might live.

The statements below are aspirational, that is, they represent the hopes and expectations of the vision for the future church, one into which our communities might live and grow.

In the following paragraphs, we set forth principles and affirmations concerning the ministry of laypeople and of public ministers in our church. Additionally, because of our rapidly changing social and cultural landscape, we also propose how our church—and a nimbler church—might help to fulfill these aspirations. Finally, we make a series of recommendations responding to questions raised with FOD.

Our objective is, as it has been throughout this process, to think about how best we might participate in God’s mission in our contemporary context and to offer a vision of our church which is missional, diaconal and prophetic.

Principles and Aspirations

Laypeople

1. All the baptized are called to participate in God’s mission: to care for others and the world God made and to work for justice and peace.

“All the baptized are called to participate in God’s mission: to care for others and the world God made and to work for justice and peace.”

2. Laypeople understand that they are sent into their families, communities, and workplaces to participate in God’s mission.
3. Laypeople are motivated, equipped, recognized and supported by their congregation to live out their vocation in the world. They function as light, salt, and leaven in their context.
4. Congregations regularly use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship’s* “Affirmation of Christian Vocation,” page 84, and other resources which affirm and commission laypeople for Christian vocation.
5. In the congregation and through the wider church, laypeople are helped to discern their gifts for ministry. The congregation is a place where laypeople learn to reflect theologically, practice telling their stories, and are sent out to embrace their ministries.

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6. With others in the congregation, laypeople learn to serve those on the margins of our society. They work to challenge injustice, and to accompany and advocate for others.
7. The leadership of gifted laypeople is welcomed and valued as part of collaborative teams in faith communities and other ministries.
8. Communities of our church understand and embrace the roles of laypeople in worship, for example, preparing and leading the prayers of intercession and serving as assisting ministers, as envisioned in both *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

Public Ministers (Deacons, Pastors & Bishops)

1. As it is for the entire Christian life, the model and paradigm for public ministry is the Gospel, the message of God's unconditional promise in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. Public ministers continually ask themselves: "Is my ministry consistent with the Crucified God, the God who is always and everywhere in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in need of liberation?" and "Does my ministry express and embody the unconditional promise of God in Christ for all creation?"
2. Public ministers serve under call with defined responsibility, defined accountability and defined support according to the policies of the ELCIC. Such ministry may be stipendiary or self-supporting, full-time or part-time. **"Public ministers serve under call with defined responsibility, defined accountability and defined support according to the policies of the ELCIC."**
3. Public ministers have sufficient knowledge and skill to present the gospel in context.
4. Public ministers express their ministry in a variety of ways which advance the mission of God in a particular context. Within this variety, public ministers focus their ministry on empowering and enabling laypeople to exercise their baptismal vocation as participants in the mission of God.
5. Public ministers work collegially and collaboratively with laypeople, deacons, pastors and bishops.
6. Public ministers honour the pastoral dimension of the call to public ministry. Public ministers communicate God's care for all people and all of creation; care about the people of their community and communicate that they care about the people of their community; and respect and encourage the leadership of laypeople in worship, as envisioned in both *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.
7. Public ministers honour the prophetic dimension of the call to public ministry. Public ministers are adept at "reading the signs of the times"; see, understand and analyze the features of the particular context within which they are called; and understand the historical and cultural context of the contemporary church.

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8. Public ministers honour the diaconal dimension of the call to public ministry. They model the *diakonia* they encourage in others; create pathways whereby the baptized participate in the mission of God in the world; are skilled in helping others discern their gifts for ministry; and are skilled in leading action-reflection learning in the experiences and actions of mission.
9. Public ministers receive an education and formation appropriate to their ministry. The ELCIC assesses the prior learning of all candidates for public ministry to determine individual learning needs. Public ministers regularly seek continuing education to enhance and maintain necessary knowledge and skills. The ELCIC values and makes resources available for continuing formation for public ministers. This life-long formation is not simply education or learning; it represents shaping through reflection and change.
10. Public ministers bring various actors together to do God's mission in the church, in society and in creation. This involves work with individuals, groups of people and institutions, both inside and outside the church.
11. The ELCIC values and creates structures for public ministers to mentor other public ministers and candidates for public ministry.
12. Public ministers do not operate as isolated individuals. The ELCIC supports and encourages community among public ministers, especially those who are called to serve in isolated (whether geographically or sociologically) settings.
13. Public ministers are visionaries who encourage the church to take risks. They are concerned with both the vitality and the viability of the church. They communicate a vision of the church which emphasizes the church as a servant of Jesus Christ, delegated to move into the world to serve those most in need.

Deacon Karen Wedman is called to a ministry of administration regarding mission and culture within The Good Samaritan Society in Edmonton, Alberta. Deacon Karen embodies God's love through her care and compassion in service to staff, residents and families. She guides decision making and supervision through a lens of servant leadership which empowers each person with human dignity and worth.

Deacons

1. The ministry of deacons stimulates the whole church for mission.
2. Deacons each have a special area of expertise and competence which undergirds and contributes to their ministry. For some deacons this expertise and competence may provide financial support for the deacon's ministry.

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3. A reimagined vision for the ministry of deacons is an opportunity for our church to face some of its present challenges and to fill voids in our full communication of the Gospel as truly good news for people and the planet. Thus, the mission of the ELCIC is well-served by a more visible diaconate and a larger number of active deacons.
4. The particular focus of the ministry of deacons is at the “edge places” of church and society. Such “edges” include the zones where church and society intersect and interact, socio-economic and cultural communities that have been ignored by or are invisible to the church, and communities at the margins where the forgotten and discarded are forced to live.
5. Deacons are present in these edge places and bring awareness to the church, stories from the edges which can inform and shape the diaconal and prophetic actions of the church.

“Working in the edge places and in the church, deacons build relationships among likely and unlikely partners, accompany the marginalized and advocate for justice alongside those who may be unheard or whose voice is discounted.”

6. Working in the edge places and in the church, deacons build relationships among likely and unlikely partners, accompany the marginalized and advocate for justice alongside those who may be unheard or whose voice is discounted.

7. Deacons are educated and skilled in community organization and development.
8. Because of the unique history of diaconal ministry in Lutheran churches, deacons are formed in community and continue in communal support and accountability throughout their ministries. The ELCIC diaconal community has become essential to diaconal ministry. The ELCIC encourages and supports the community of deacons and allocates resources for its gathering for formation, including at ecumenical and international events.
9. A reimagined ministry of deacons includes more than individual service. Deacons create pathways for the baptized to participate in God’s mission, helping them discern their gifts for ministry, and supporting and encouraging people in their serving. Deacons see advocacy as important, work for social change and bear prophetic calls for social justice. Christ’s redeeming love is embodied through accompaniment and justice-seeking in each particular context.

Deacon Roderick McDowell

serves St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Fort Erie, Ontario. Situated at the border entry point at Buffalo, New York, Deacon Rod has been instrumental in the hospitality extended to, and care of, refugees. With his expertise as a former immigration lawyer, and his desire to be faithful in welcoming the stranger, his ministry is a natural extension of his lifelong vocation.

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10. Deacons share their special skills and expertise with the whole church. In order to facilitate this sharing, and to support communities which need such skills, in addition to the usual synodical roster of public ministers eligible for call, the ELCIC maintains a national list of deacons which notes the particular competencies or work of each deacon and makes this list available to synodical bishops.
11. The educational formation of deacons includes both theological education and education which enhances the deacon's particular competence and skill. When such education or other relevant experience has taken place prior to the candidate for diaconal ministry entering into the formational process of the ELCIC, the relevant candidacy committee will take such prior education and/or experience into account along with the current needs of the candidate for further educational and formative experiences.
12. As baby boomers reach retirement age, there may be an additional opportunity to call people who have skills and abilities to serve the church in diaconal ministry in new settings. Taking full advantage of their prior education and career paths, the training and formation of deacons might need to offer more flexibility and be determined by local needs and vocational paths that align with the gifts of the individuals.

Pastors

1. The ministry of pastors stimulates the whole church for mission.
2. Pastors are primarily responsible for administering the Word and Sacraments in the community of the church. Pastors are able to properly distinguish Law and Gospel in the context of congregation and world so that the Gospel can be heard as good news in the specific situation.
3. As part of their responsibility for Word and Sacrament, pastors are theologians and theological educators in the community. Pastors teach people to think theologically about their experiences of life in the context of the mission of God using the most effective methods available.
4. As part of their responsibility for Word and Sacrament, pastors teach the theology of vocation, enabling people to grasp the theological meaning of daily work and secular responsibilities, and encouraging congregations to stress the importance of a missional call in daily life.
5. Pastors share leadership by practicing a ministry of discernment which identifies those most gifted for the tasks at hand and enabling them to use and develop their gifts. Pastors expect laypeople to use their gifts to take leading roles in the mission of God, in the congregation and in the world.
6. Pastors are community builders, educated in community organization and development. Pastors are collaborators who work constructively with laypeople and other public ministers for the good of the whole.

“Pastors share leadership by practicing a ministry of discernment which identifies those most gifted for the tasks at hand.”

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

7. The education and formation of pastors includes work both in theology (including biblical, historical and systematic theology) and the skills necessary for contemporary ministry. Pastors value lifelong learning and will pursue opportunities and experiences which enhance ministry.
8. Some pastors are “tentmakers” or bi-vocational. Their calls in the church are part-time, or in some cases, pastors are self-supporting; their secular vocation provides financial support for their public ministry.

Bishops

1. The ministry of bishops stimulates the whole church for mission.
2. The ministry of bishops is carried out under the authority of and as representative of the whole synod or the whole national church.
3. Bishops see the “big picture.” Bishops work with synods, ministry areas, conferences, congregations and other ministry settings to identify and encourage opportunities for collaboration and intentional partnerships for mission.
4. Bishops represent the church in ecumenical and international gatherings and bring home to synods and congregations the experiences of churches in very different contexts from our own with very different challenges from our own. In this function bishops are both representatives and teachers.

“Bishops...identify and encourage opportunities for collaboration and intentional partnerships for mission.”

5. Bishops encourage congregations, ministries, ministers and synods to take risks for mission and provide support in both success and failure. Bishops model an approach to ministry in which a present failure is a learning opportunity for the future.
6. Bishops encourage the church to think seriously and realistically about its future, always pointing to the Gospel as the touchstone. Bishops ensure that leaders are aware of ways to make the church more nimble.
7. Bishops accompany pastors, deacons, congregations, specialized ministries and other expressions of the church in their work together.
8. Bishops signal the appropriate use of the policies governing *Authorized Lay Ministries*, *Synodically Authorized Lay Ministry of the Word*, or the *Alternative Route for Admission to the Roster of Ordained Ministers*.
9. Bishops work with local leaders to articulate the possibility and significance of calling a deacon, not to fill a pastoral vacancy, but to help the community enter more deeply into its call to *diakonia*.

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

10. Bishops help to identify and encourage leaders, including lay leaders, deacons and pastors.
11. The ELCIC sees the initial and continuing formation of bishops as an important focus. Bishops pursue continuing education. Synods provide resources for such on-going formation.
12. Some bishops may be bi-vocational, combining a call to serve as bishop with another call or with a secular vocation.

Our Church

1. The ELCIC is a missional, diaconal and prophetic church. The ministry of the ELCIC is based in and focused on the mission of God. The church is delegated by Christ to serve persons, society and creation; and it speaks the Word of God into the world's situations.
2. In the ELCIC we are expanding and deepening our participation in God's mission. We take our baptismal vocation, our *diakonia*, seriously.
3. In order to expand and deepen our participation in God's mission, we are reclaiming the ministry of laypeople, reimagining the ministry of deacons, and refocusing the ministry of pastors.
4. Reclaiming the ministry of laypeople means that laypeople have a clear understanding of baptismal vocation as each person's unique contribution to the mission of God in daily life, in the church and in the world.
5. Reclaiming the ministry of laypeople means that the ministry of deacons, pastors and bishops focuses on the empowerment and enabling of laypeople to live their vocations and practice *diakonia*. Public ministers are moving beyond approaches to their roles which may have worked in the past or which are modeled on ecclesiastical or corporate hierarchies.
6. In the ELCIC, public ministers serve under call with defined responsibility, defined accountability and defined support. This necessary structure should not prevent the church from innovating as necessary for the sake of mission. Leaders make use of current policies which allow for innovation and seek new opportunities as they arise.
7. The ELCIC focuses on education of all participants of every age and at every level. The church seeks opportunities to increase the depth and breadth of its understanding and practice of the Christian faith. Leaders seek out new and creative ways to nurture faith and action in the disciple community.

“In order to expand and deepen our participation in God’s mission, we are reclaiming the ministry of laypeople, reimagining the ministry of deacons, and refocusing the ministry of pastors.”

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

8. Structure serves mission; mission does not serve structure. Decisions are made quickly and effectively. Bureaucracy is minimized. At every level of the church, leaders are aware of the resources and gifts available within the community and help people to discern gifts of which they may not have been aware.
 9. One factor which has held the ELCIC back from full missional, diaconal and prophetic ministry is its church culture. The ELCIC is striving to relinquish a culture of fear and caution and embrace a culture in which people are willing to take risks for the sake of mission, for the sake of God's action in the world.
- “Structure serves mission; mission does not serve structure.”**
10. The ELCIC is committed to be a nimble church which does effective ministry in a rapidly changing cultural and social context. Those in the church have the courage to take risks; they are willing to succeed or fail; and they learn from both successes and failures. All value saying “yes” to new ideas and initiatives.
11. The ELCIC seeks out all opportunities for mission outside its traditional ministries and comfort zone, including those that might at first seem strange or unusual. The ELCIC is responsive to the gifts and needs of visible minorities, refugees, immigrants and Indigenous peoples. The ELCIC develops partnerships with community groups, other churches, religious groups and movements to participate in God's mission.
 12. The ELCIC is oriented toward God's world. The ELCIC is making the boundaries between the church and the context in which it ministers more permeable. The ELCIC's ministries are intended to meet the actual needs of those around it. Careful and sensitive research and experience are used to determine what a community's needs are. Roles and functions within congregations and synods are structured according to the needs of the community.
 13. The ELCIC finds new and creative ways to invite into the Christian journey those who are seeking. The church and all its people communicate the Gospel of God's promise in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus so that those who see our actions and hear our words will hear our message as good news specifically for them, a message of freedom and liberation.
 14. These principles and commitments require much of the ELCIC. Nonetheless, we dedicate ourselves to the work, to act and to reflect. We believe the promise of God.

Recommendations:

Clarifications and Responses to Questions Raised with FOD

1. Ordination

Ordination is the rite which marks and celebrates the initial acceptance of a call into the public ministry of bishop, pastor or deacon. Our church honours all the ordained whether they were originally ordained or consecrated in the course of accepting a call to public ministry.

2. A Single Rite

A single rite serves for the ordination of bishops, deacons and pastors. The rite contains variable sections pertaining to each role and material demonstrating the complementarity of the various ministries of the ordained and of all the baptized.

3. Forms of Address

The titles and forms of direct address for the ordained are bishop, deacon and pastor. Deacons, pastors and bishops may use the honourific “The Reverend”. Pastors, deacons, bishops and those studying for public ministry (seminarians) may wear a clerical collar where appropriate.

4. Honouring our history

In respect of our history, we honour those who continue to use the title “diaconal minister” or “deaconess” or who prefer to be addressed as “sister.”

5. Equal Pay

Our church is not organized hierarchically and does not see one ordained ministry as superior to another. Public ministers are paid on the same scale reflecting such relevant training and experience as they bring to their ministry.

6. Sacraments

Pastors are responsible for the administration of the sacraments of holy baptism and holy communion.

7. Weddings and Funerals

Normally, a pastor presides at weddings and funerals, in congregational and other settings, by virtue of their call. Normally, a deacon’s invitation to preside at a wedding or funeral emerges from a relationship formed while exercising their ministry in the setting to which they are called.

8. Full-time and Part-time

Our church can no longer assume that a candidate for public ministry will have access to full-time employment in the church. Bishops, pastors and deacons may each find themselves at times and places of part-time employment.

9. Tentmakers

Our church would do well to expand the space for tentmakers (self-supporting ministers) and bi-vocational people. Models for ministry which include both a churchly and a secular vocation would appear to be becoming the “new normal.”

APPENDIX

The Arusha Call to Discipleship

The Arusha Call to Discipleship emerged from the World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship" which met in Arusha, Tanzania in March of 2018. In September 2018, the Arusha Call to Discipleship was taken up by a joint meeting of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee (USA) and the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission (Canada). This gathering referred the Arusha Call to Discipleship to the four presiding bishops for their public endorsement.

World Council of Churches Conference on Mission and Evangelism 13 March 2018

Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship

The World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism met in Arusha, Tanzania, from 8–13 March 2018. More than one thousand participants gathered. All are engaged in mission and evangelism and come from different Christian traditions and from every part of the world.

We joyfully celebrated the life-giving movement of the Spirit of God in our time, drawing particular inspiration from the African context and spirituality. Through Bible study, prayer and worship, and by sharing our stories together, we were encouraged to be witnesses to the reign of God that has come to us through the life, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Despite some glimmers of hope, we had to reckon with death-dealing forces that are shaking the world order and inflicting suffering on many. We observed the shocking accumulation of wealth due to one global financial system, which enriches few and impoverishes many. This is at the root of many of today's wars, conflicts, ecological devastation, and suffering. We are mindful that people on the margins bear the heaviest burden. This global imperial system has made the financial market one of the idols of our time and it has strengthened cultures of domination and discrimination that continue to marginalize and exclude millions, keeping them in conditions of vulnerability and exploitation.

"Discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world."

These issues are not new for 2018, but the Holy Spirit continues to move in our time, and urgently calls us as Christian communities to respond with personal and communal conversion and transforming discipleship.

Discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world. In what the church's early theologians called "theosis" or deification, we share God's grace by sharing God's mission. This journey of discipleship leads us to share and live out God's love in Jesus Christ by seeking justice and peace in ways that are different from the world (John 14:27). Thus, we are responding to Jesus' call to follow him from the margins of our world.

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

As disciples of Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively:

- We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.
- We are called to worship the one Triune God, the God of justice, love, and grace at a time when many worship the false god of the market system.
- We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ—the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life—in word and deed, in a violent world in which many are sacrificed to the idols of death and many have not yet heard the gospel.
- We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency in the search for justice and dignity.
- We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.
- We are called to care for God’s creation and be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of ruthless human-centered exploitation of the environment for greed and consumerism.
- We are called as disciples to belong together in a just and inclusive community, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalization and exclusion.
- We are called to be faithful witnesses of God’s transforming love in dialogue with people of other faiths in a world where politicization of religious identities often cause conflict.
- We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money.
- We are called to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill.
- We are called to follow the way of the cross, which challenges elitism, privilege, personal and structural power.
- We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.

We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.

Reimagining Our Church—Public Ministry in the ELCIC

This is a call to transforming discipleship. This is not a call that we can answer in our own strength, so the call becomes, in the end, a call to prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life in all its diversity and beauty.

Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, we praise you that you came to find the lost, to free the oppressed, to heal the sick and to convert the self-centred.

Holy Spirit, we rejoice that you breathe in the life of the world and are poured out into our hearts. As we live in the Spirit, may we also walk in the Spirit. Grant us faith and courage to take up our cross and follow Jesus - becoming pilgrims of justice and peace in our time.

For the blessing of your people, the sustaining of the earth and the glory of your name, we pray, through Christ our Lord. Amen.