

Are women authorised to proclaim the gospel in the gathered community?

An exegetical paper and survey of the New Testament evidence

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The primary question: Are women authorised to proclaim the gospel in the gathered community?

I believe the primary question with relation to women's ordination is 'Are women *authorised* to proclaim the gospel in the gathered community of the church?' This authorisation may come from Jesus himself, from God the Father, from the Holy Spirit, or from the apostles of Jesus.

This paper is an examination of some of the New Testament texts that pertain to this primary question.

The essence of the paper can be found in the accompanying summary document or the two dot point summaries found at page 13 and 19.

A note on 'ordination' and 'authorisation'

An understanding of ordination from a Lutheran perspective is important in the discussion about women's ordination. However, exploring the nature of ordination is not the primary purpose of this paper. These brief comments set the foundation.

In the Lutheran Confessions, the authority of the pastoral office *is* the authority to publicly exercise 'the office of the keys' through the forgiveness of sins, the public preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments. For example, the Augsburg Confession, Article V says '**To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry; that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments.**' (For a slightly longer overview of what the Lutheran Confessions say about the office of the ministry, See APPENDIX 1, 'The Lutheran Confessions and the Office of the Ministry.')

Nowhere in Scripture does Jesus command anyone to be a pastor. In fact, the only place the word 'pastor' (a translation of the Greek word for 'shepherd') occurs in the English translation of the New Testament is in Ephesians 4:11-12, which says that the risen and ascended Lord '...gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.'

So, if Jesus does not *command* certain people to be pastors, what does he do? Jesus *authorises* certain people for certain tasks of ministry: the preaching of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. In Lutheran theology these three things are inseparably intertwined. *Ordination* is understood as the *call* and *authorisation* of a person, by Christ, through the church, to be a pastor in order to exercise the office of the keys on behalf of the church. In other words, ordination is the call and authorisation to publicly preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.

How does Jesus authorise people for ministry in the Gospels? He does this in various ways.

- In some cases, Jesus authorises by *commanding*. When Jesus commands someone to do something, the authority to do that thing comes from his command. A good example of this is the great commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus says 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and *make disciples* (imperative) of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' Through this command, Jesus authorises his disciples to *make disciples* through baptism and ongoing teaching.
- In other passages, Jesus authorises by *commending* something that is already happening, even when others are casting doubt on its legitimacy, and even if Jesus has not yet explicitly commanded it. A good example is Jesus' commendation of the ministry of John the Baptist

in Matthew 11:1-10. John the Baptist himself has doubts about the legitimacy of his own ministry in pointing to Christ. He asks, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' Jesus *commends* John the Baptist and reassures him of the legitimacy of his prophetic ministry by saying, 'This is the one of whom it was written, "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."' Another example of this is found in Matthew 26:6-13. When the disciples rebuke the woman for her action of pouring expensive perfume on Jesus' head, he *commends* her and thus gives legitimacy to her action.

- Jesus may also authorise actions by *permitting* them, even if he has not yet explicitly commanded or authorised them. In [Luke 9:49-50](#), Jesus *permits* people to continue casting out demons and doing miracles in his name, even though they are not among his followers at the time.
- Sometimes Jesus authorises the words or actions of others by *blessing* them, even when they act without his prior permission or approval. An example of this kind of authorisation is found in the account of the wedding at Cana in John 2. Despite Jesus asking Mary, 'Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come,' Mary goes ahead anyway and says to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Then Jesus *blesses* this until-now unauthorised action of Mary by commanding the servants to fill water jars and then turning the water within them miraculously to wine.
- Jesus authorises certain people by *giving them to the church*. Ephesians 4:11-12 clearly states this: 'It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...' One example of this is that Jesus *gives* Paul as an apostle to the Gentiles, and also gives his apostolic writing to the church as Holy Scripture.
- Jesus can also authorise ministry by specifically *sending* people in his name, with his commission. In Luke 10 we read of Jesus sending the 72 disciples:

'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out labourers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves...Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.' The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!' Jesus replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.'

It is clear that as Jesus *sends* the seventy-two in his name, he gives them the authorisation/authority to do whatever their ministry might bring, including authority over evil spirits.

As we read the gospels, we need to be constantly alert to each of these ways in which Jesus and the apostles authorise people for ministry.

If we in the LCA are to consider women's ordination from a thoroughly scriptural perspective, we need to examine the whole of the New Testament, not only the epistles but also Jesus' words and actions in the Gospels.

The primary question with relation to women's ordination is 'Does the Triune God (through Jesus) authorise women to proclaim/preach/speak the gospel in the gathered community of the church and administer the sacraments?'. A secondary question we can also examine is: 'Do the apostles of Christ, such as Paul, recognise an authorised preaching ministry of women as legitimate?'

If the Scriptural evidence is that Jesus *did* authorise women to proclaim the gospel in the gathered community, and the apostles recognised this authorisation, we must ask why the LCA does not recognise this authorisation and allow the ordination of women.

In the LCA, the debate about women's ordination has been conducted primarily through the lens of two short texts in the epistles (from 1 Cor 14 and 1 Timothy 2), with people's interpretation of those texts dominating the evidence of other passages. In this paper I plan to approach this question from the opposite direction: survey the New Testament evidence *first*, and evaluate those two texts on the basis of that evidence.

Introduction: Challenging Unreconstructed Mental Images

As we read the Gospels and epistles, we form a particular 'mental image' of the text. This mental image may not be accurate, but it colours our subsequent reading and interpretation of what the passage is saying. The mental image may arise from initial contact with the text, for example, through Sunday School or other teaching; from our own readings of the texts; from problems with translation (such as inserting the word 'men' in the translation when that word is not present in the original Greek); or from cultural or other issues.

Sometimes these 'mental images' of the passage need to be *reconstructed*. In effect we need to undergo a paradigm shift in order to hear the text anew and understand what it is really saying.

To illustrate the importance of challenging these unreconstructed mental images, I would like to share with you one such example that has been significant in my reading of the Gospels.

Read Luke 9:18-27.

It begins: 'Once when Jesus was praying **in private** and **his disciples were with him**, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"'

Now, close your eyes and imagine the scene. Who is Jesus talking to? Who is present? What do they look like?

When I first pictured this scene in my mind, I heard the word 'disciples' and thought 'the Twelve.' My mental image had Jesus talking to a *small group of men*.

Now read Luke 24:1-8.

Verse 6 is particularly pertinent. The angel is speaking to the *women*:

'Remember how he [Jesus] told **you** while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."' Then **they** [the women] **remembered** his [Jesus'] words.'

Where in Luke's Gospel did Jesus say these things? In Luke 9:18-27. In other words, when Jesus was teaching his disciples *in private* in Luke 9, *this included the women who are now at the tomb*.

My unreconstructed mental image of Luke 9, in which Jesus is teaching his disciples in private, was initially a picture of Jesus surrounded by a small group of men. This mental image is scripturally wrong. It must be challenged and reconstructed. Now every time I read the word 'disciples' in

Luke, I must consider the possibility that women are present, unless they are specifically excluded by the text (for instance, as in the account of the Transfiguration, where Jesus takes only Peter, James and John with him up the mountain).

I invite you to read the exegetical study that follows in this paper with this in mind. There will be other unreconstructed mental images that must be challenged and changed.

I am attempting to keep this paper at a level accessible to lay people, especially those who don't know Greek. Sometimes a Greek word is important to the understanding of the text. In these cases, I give the English transliteration of the word in italics. Those who know Greek can examine the tenses etc. In exploring each passage, I first examine connections within the same passage, then connections within the same book, then connections within the New Testament, and finally use of the word in wider Greek literature. I usually use the New International Version (NIV) translation unless noted otherwise. Sometimes I reference the New Living Translation (NLT) as an inclusive language translation for comparison. When I give my own translation of the Greek I will note it in brackets as follows: (NH).

Examination of Key Texts Pertaining to the Question, 'Are women authorised to proclaim the gospel in the gathered assembly?'

The Gospels and Acts

1. Luke 2:36-38 The Prophetess Anna

Anna dwells in the temple, fasting and praying. She is a prophetess. In the Old Testament, prophecy relates to the authoritative speaking of the Word of God. She speaks (Greek: *lalein*) publicly in the Temple, the place of worship, about Jesus and his connection to the redemption of Israel. She is *commended* by the writer of the Gospel as he records her public speaking in worship.

2. Luke 15:1-2, 8-10 The parable of the diligent woman and the lost coin

In the parable of the diligent woman and the lost coin (Luke 15:1-2, 8-10), Jesus deliberately uses a woman as an exemplar of the missional action of God. He does this in the context of Pharisees who are grumbling that Jesus would eat with sinners.

Jesus says the woman seeks (Gk: *zeteo*) diligently for the *lost* (Gk: *apollumi*) coin. NIV translates that the woman will 'search carefully until she finds it.'

This story of the diligent woman has unmistakable verbal parallels to an explicit definition of Jesus' mission: 'The Son of Man came to *seek* (Gk: *zeteo*) and save what was *lost* (Gk: *apollumi*)' (Luke 19:10).

In the two other parables in Luke 15, neither the shepherd who loses a sheep nor the prodigal's father are explicitly said to *seek* for what is lost. The diligent woman is. Hence in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus dares to exactly parallel his own mission of finding the lost with a diligent woman's effort.

An unreconstructed mental image may say 'This is just a story, and Jesus speaking about a woman in such a way is just an unimportant detail.' But Kenneth Bailey has shown that in all of Israel's sacred and rabbinic literature, only Jesus and the book of the prophet Isaiah use explicit parallels of God's work with a woman's work. Why does Jesus explicitly choose a woman in this parable as a parallel of God's work of finding the lost? Why would Jesus *commend* a woman's work in such a

way by comparing it favourably with the work of God, when no one else in Jewish sacred literature does so?

This woman in the parable proclaims the good news of finding the lost in the gathered community. She calls together friends and neighbours and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost coin!' Jesus finishes this parable with 'Just so, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.' If a woman could proclaim the good news in the gathered community so that just one sinner repents, would members of the LCA rejoice? Or would we, with the scribes and Pharisees, grumble that Jesus doesn't work in our prescribed ways and welcomes all sorts of riffraff to his party?

This parable raises another question for the LCA. 'How have we in the LCA been *impoverished* by explicitly excluding the proclamatory voices of women who love God, and diligently seek the lost, from the position of pastor? What precious 'coin' have we lost through disallowing a woman from publicly proclaiming the gospel in the gathered community?'

3. Luke 13:21 The parable of the yeast and the baker woman

In this parable Jesus again deliberately chooses a woman as an exemplar of God's catalytic work in bringing God's kingdom in the world. He says 'The *kingdom of God* is like yeast that a *woman* took and mixed into a large amount of flour, until it mixed all through the dough.' *God* is the one through whom the *kingdom of God* is catalysed in the world, through God's word. God's work in bringing the Kingdom of God is like this baker woman's work.

It is instructive, again, to think that Jesus could choose this woman as a parallel of God, and this woman's work as a parallel of God's kingdom work.

How do Lutherans understand that God's kingdom comes among us? Martin Luther's explanation to the second petition of the Lord's Prayer says:

*"Thy kingdom come."*⁷ What does this mean? Answer: To be sure, the kingdom of God comes of itself, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us. How is this done? Answer: When the heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit so that by his grace we may *believe his holy Word and live a godly life*, both here in time and hereafter forever.

Jesus is again *commending* women and the possibility that they might be part of God's kingdom work of spreading the Word so that God's kingdom may come in people's lives through faith.

4. John 4: Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the first evangelist to the Samaritans

In John 4 Jesus chooses a woman as his first point of contact with a Samaritan village. He does not go into the village with his disciples, but waits by the well to meet with the woman. What follows is not accidental.

In John's gospel, this woman is the first person whom Jesus tells that he is the Christ (John 4:26). In fact, in the Greek of John 4:26, Jesus says to the woman 'The one speaking to you – I AM (*ego eimi*).' These words *ego eimi*, I AM, are the same words used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament when God reveals his name to Moses at the burning bush. It is well known that there are a number of 'I AM' sayings in John – 'I AM the bread of life,' etc, culminating in Jesus' great claim in the Temple, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM!' What is not so well known is that the first of Jesus' I AM statements in the gospel of John is found here in chapter 4. Jesus is not just revealing himself to this woman as Messiah or Christ (both words mean 'the anointed one'). He

is revealing his identity as God himself to the woman. Jesus *authorises* this Samaritan woman with this profound truth which he has not yet spoken to anyone else in John's Gospel.

After her encounter with Jesus, who has told her he is the 'I AM' and the Messiah, the woman *proclaims the good news of Jesus in the town and invites the townspeople to consider if he could be the Messiah*. In doing so, she becomes the first evangelist to the Samaritans.

Does Jesus disapprove of the woman's public preaching or challenge its legitimacy?

On the contrary, Jesus not only *permits* her proclamation of the gospel, he *commends* it by using it as an opportunity to *teach his disciples*. Jesus not only *authorises* her by giving her the truth of his identity, he *authorises* her evangelistic proclamation by staying in the town for two more days to *bless it, fulfil it and work beside it*.

Let's examine both those of those aspects in John 4: teaching and fulfilment.

Teaching: John's equivalent of the Parable of the Sower

The conversation of Jesus with his disciples when they return from the town sheds light on the woman's testimony and its effects. Jesus says to his disciples that his work is to do the will of the one who sent him, and finish his work. This is what nourishes Jesus.

In the Gospel of John the Greek word *speiro*, to sow, is found only here in this passage. In the other gospels, it features most prominently in the Parable of the Sower (*speiro*, participle). In Luke 8, in the parable of the sower, the sower (*speiro*, participle) sows the seed which is the word (*logos*) of God. The seed takes root and produces a crop. Unlike in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus does not *tell* parables in John's gospel; rather, he *acts* in parabolic fashion. The verbal connections between John 4 and the Parable of the Sower are astonishing. John 4 is Jesus' parabolic action equivalent of the parable of the sower.

At the same time that the woman is proclaiming the gospel to the townspeople, Jesus says to his disciples, 'Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life (Gk: *zoe*), so that the sower (*speiro*, participle) and the reaper may be glad together.' The Samaritan woman's testimony is bringing a crop for eternal life, even as Jesus speaks to his disciples (John 4:33-37). Jesus then says to his disciples, 'Thus the saying "One sows (Gk: *speiro*) and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for (Gk: *kopiao*). Others have done the hard work (*kopiao*) and you have reaped the benefits of their labour' (John 4:38).

The Greek word *kopiao*, working hard (as found in John 4:38), is almost always used in the New Testament for 'working hard in the gospel,' that is, preaching the word. For example, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 says: 'We ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard (*kopiao*) among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you,' and 1 Timothy 5:17, 'The elders who direct the affairs of the church are well worthy of double honour, especially those whose work (*kopiao*) is word (Gk: *logos*) and teaching.'

In John 4 the use of *kopiao* also has clear connections with the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus is saying that the Samaritan woman is the one doing the 'hard work' (*kopiao*) of sowing (*speiro*) the word (*logos*), with the result that people come to faith (*pisteuo*) in Jesus and thus to eternal life (*zoe*). Although the woman does the hard work of sowing the word, the disciples are the ones who have the joy of reaping the harvest for eternal life (*zoe*): the joy of seeing the townspeople come to life-giving belief (*pisteuo*) in Jesus as the Christ.

Authorisation and fulfilment: the word of the woman and the word of Jesus

Jesus does not challenge the legitimacy of the woman's evangelistic proclamation. Rather, he stays in the town for two more days, blessing, continuing and fulfilling her work. John 4 is explicit in stating that the **word** (Gk: *logos*) of the woman and the **word** (Gk: *logos*) of Jesus have the same result.

John 4:39 says 'Many Samaritans from that city believed (Gk: *pisteuo*) in him through the word (Gk: *logos*, singular) of the woman testifying (Gk: *martureo*), "He told me everything I have ever done."' (NH)

John 4:41 says 'Many more believed (Gk: *pisteuo*) through his [Jesus'] word (Gk: *logos*, singular) (NH).'

Through the partnership of the woman's word and Jesus' word, the result is that many people from the town believe and know that Jesus really is the Saviour of the World (John 4:42).

The preaching word of the Samaritan woman and its result in the lives of the townspeople has strong verbal links with the 'purpose statement' of the Gospel of John as found in John 20:31: 'These are written that you may believe (Gk: *pisteuo*) that Jesus is the Christ (Gk: *Christos*), the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life (Gk: *zoe*) in his name.' The woman's evangelistic word, the word of Jesus, and the whole of the Gospel of John have the same purpose and the same outcome.

In summary: In John 4 Jesus reveals himself as the 'I AM' and as Christ (Messiah) to the Samaritan woman. She becomes the evangelist to the town, preaching publicly and doing the hard work of sowing the word, with the result that many people believe in Jesus as the Saviour of the World. Jesus' word and the woman's word have the same effect: life-giving faith in Jesus. The woman's hard work as evangelist is the same, in content, purpose and outcome, as the writing of John's Gospel. Jesus authorises her public proclamation of the gospel through *commending it* by teaching his disciples through it, *blessing it* by working alongside it, and *fulfilling it* by bringing more people to faith.

5. John 20: 17. Mary Magdalene sent by Jesus to tell the disciples the good news of the resurrection

In John's gospel Jesus chooses Mary Magdalene to be the first to see him after his resurrection. He authorises her to preach the gospel by explicitly *sending* her to Jesus' brothers, ie the disciples, with the *command to tell* them the good news. Jesus *commands* Mary: '**Go** (Gk: *poreuo*, imperative) instead to my brothers and **tell** (Gk: *eipe*, imperative) them: "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17).

Mary Magdalene does not disobey this command. As one who has been *sent* with Jesus' authority, she goes to the disciples, announcing (Gk: *angelo*) 'I have seen the Lord!' This is the only use of this verb *angelo* in the New Testament. It is the root verb of the word '*euangelo*,' which means 'to proclaim the Good news.' She obediently tells the disciples that Jesus has said these things to her (John 20:18). From ancient times Mary Magdalene has been called 'the apostle to the apostles.' The word apostle is from the Greek *apostello*, 'one who is sent.'

Jesus has *authorised* Mary's proclamation to the gathered community of disciples by explicitly *commanding* her and *sending her* to go and tell his brothers the good news.

6. Matthew 28: The women are commissioned to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus

In the resurrection account in Matthew 28:1-10, the angel of the Lord meets Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. The angel proclaims the resurrection and shows them the empty resting place of Jesus. The angel of the Lord *commands* them: ‘**Go quickly** (Gk: *tachu poreuesthai*, participle) and **tell** (Gk: *eipen*, imperative) his disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.”’

So far, this command to preach the good news of the resurrection is similar to the other synoptic Gospels. However, here in Matthew we have an extra piece of information. The angel of the Lord concludes by saying: ‘Now I have told you.’ This implies that this commission has come from God himself; the angel is acting under divine orders to tell this exact thing to the women. *God the Father has commanded and therefore authorised these women, through the angel of the Lord, to tell the disciples the good news of Jesus’ resurrection.*

Then in Matthew 28:8-10, Jesus completes this commission from the Father, by choosing to meet with the women before anyone else. When he meets them, Jesus again explicitly authorises their proclamation by *commanding* the women: ‘**Go** (Gk: *upago*, ‘depart,’ imperative) and **proclaim/preach** (Gk: *appangelo*, imperative) to my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

The Greek word *appangelo* is found also in Acts 26:20. In this passage, Paul says: ‘I preached (Gk: *apangelo*) that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds (NIV)’.

Jesus has fulfilled the command of the Father which has come through the angel, and has authorised the women and sent them to preach the gospel to the male disciples.

7. Mark 16

The young man in the tomb tells the women the good news, tells them to see the place where Jesus was laid, says ‘He has risen! He is not here,’ and commands them: ‘**Go** (Gk: *upago*, imperative) and **tell** (Gk: *eipen*, ‘tell’ imperative) his disciples and Peter.’ Perhaps ironically, at the end of Mark it is noted that ‘the women are *too afraid* to say anything’. Often in the church, women have been too afraid to speak the good news in the gathered community, or have been disallowed from doing this.

In the longer ending to Mark, Mary **proclaims/preaches** (*appangelo*) to the disciples of the resurrection of Jesus, and again the disciples *disbelieve* (*apisteuo*) the good news of Jesus’ resurrection as told by Mary Magdalene.

8. Luke 24:5-12: God chooses the women to be the first who hear the message of Jesus’ resurrection.

As mentioned in the introduction, the women at the tomb in Luke’s account of the resurrection are female disciples whom Jesus had taught in private along with his male disciples. The women are the first to be told of Jesus’ resurrection by the angels: ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he has risen! Remember how he told *you* while he was still with you in Galilee, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again.” Then they remembered his words’ (Luke 24:5-8).

The female disciples thus become the first people to fully understand Jesus' teaching that the Son of Man must rise from death. Before this, the (male) disciples did not understand what resurrection even meant (see Mark 9:9-10 for example).

In Luke 24:9-11, the women return to preach (Gk: *appangello*, see above) the good news to the gathered community of disciples, but the disciples *disbelieve* (*apisteuo*) the women's good news, because it 'seemed to them like nonsense (Gk: *leros*, silly talk).'

Later in Luke 24: 25, the risen Jesus chides the disciple community for *failing to believe this good news from the women*. 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe (*pisteuo*) all that the prophets have said. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?'

By doing this, Jesus has *authorised* the women's proclamation by *commending* it to the disciple community and chiding them for their disbelief.

9. The commission to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations in Jesus' name, as witnesses of the risen Jesus, includes both women and men Luke's gospel.

In Luke 24:45-49, Jesus says this to the gathered disciples: 'This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance (Gk: *metanoia*) and forgiveness of sins (Gk: *aphesin hamartion*) will be **preached** (Gk: *kerusso*, future passive) in his name to all nations (Gk: *eis panta te ethne*), beginning at Jerusalem. **You** (plural) are witnesses (Gk: *martures*) of these things.'

This is a key passage in the Lutheran church's understanding of the 'office of the keys' or the 'office of the ministry'. The Greek word *kerusso* is the key word for preaching in the New Testament. It means to herald, to publicly announce, and is used in such passages as Romans 10:14-15. The preaching authorised by Jesus in Luke 24 has as its content 'repentance and forgiveness of sins.' Jesus is *authorising those who hear him* to use what we would call 'the office of the keys,' the power and authority to publicly proclaim the good news and announce to people the forgiveness of their sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Who is present when Jesus authorises these people to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name? Who is the *you* (*plural*) to whom Jesus says this? *Whom* does Jesus authorise to exercise the office of the keys through his sending?

It is the Eleven and *those with them*. In Scriptural context, this clearly includes the women (Luke 24:9, see also Luke 8:1-4), and there are possibly up to 120 people present (Acts 1:12-15).

Jesus gives the authority of the 'office of the keys' to the whole community of disciples, including women. Luke 24:35-49 says in part: 'They [the two disciples who went to Emmaus]¹ got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven *and those with them* ... Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ... he told them: 'This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins **will be preached** (Gk: *kerusso*) in his name to **all nations** (Gk: *pantos ethnos*), beginning at Jerusalem.

¹ There is good Scriptural reason for believing that one of these disciples is female. We already know that women are included in Luke's word 'disciples.' In John 19:25 we find that one of the women at the cross is 'Mary the wife of Clopas.' Luke 24:18 says that one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus was called Cleopas. Vowels are fluid, especially in translating between languages such as Aramaic and Greek. So Clopas/Cleopas and his wife Mary are most likely to have been the 'two disciples' talked about in Luke 24. This would make sense of them *both* inviting Jesus into their home. In Middle Eastern context it is very difficult culturally to imagine that two adult men from different families shared the same house, but very easy to understand if this is a man and his wife. If this is indeed the case, then there is absolutely no question that women were part of the 'you plural' to whom Jesus gave the authority of the office of the keys.

You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send *you* what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until *you* have been clothed with power from on high.’

Luke and Acts were written by the same author and essentially comprise two parts of the same work. When we cross reference Luke 24 and Acts 2 (which describes the day of Pentecost, see below), we find that indeed, both men and women are clothed with ‘power from on high’ – the Holy Spirit – and are empowered to **preach** God’s wonders to people from ‘**all nations**.’

This passage in Luke 24 is a touchstone of the case that Jesus authorises and commissions both women and men to preach the gospel, the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. In its context in Luke and Acts, this resurrection appearance of the risen Jesus in Luke 24 unmistakably states that Jesus commissions both women and men to ‘**preach** repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations’. Jesus *authorises* both women and men to preach (*kerusso*) by *sending* them to be his witnesses, and *blesses* their preaching by pouring out the Holy Spirit. Jesus authorises both women and men to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins.

10. The office of the keys and the apostolic commission is given to both women and men in John 20:18-23

John 20:19-22 is a key passage in the Lutheran church’s understanding of ordination, of the ‘office of the keys’ and the ‘office of the ministry.’ In fact this passage is so important that it forms part of the ‘Word of God’ that authorises ordination ‘according to the mandate of our Lord’ in the LCA’s Rite of Ordination (see Appendix 1).

In John 20:19-23, the risen Jesus authorises the community of disciples to forgive sins. In doing this he gives the office of the keys to the community. He also authorises this whole community to continue his apostolic mission by saying, ‘As the Father sent me, so I am sending you (plural).’

How did the Father send the Son? John 3:16-17 says ‘For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not *send* his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.’

This apostolic commission (being sent as Jesus was sent) comes with the whole authority of Jesus himself to do all the will of God. In John 13:20 Jesus says: ‘Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.’

Who is present at this resurrection appearance of Jesus? We know that in John’s gospel ‘disciple’ means more than just the Twelve Apostles. John 19:38 says that Joseph of Arimathea was a ‘disciple’ of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. The ‘Twelve’ are distinguished from the ‘disciples’ in John 20:24-25. In John 4:1, Jesus is making and baptising more ‘disciples’ than John, who baptises both women and men. In short, the word ‘disciples’ in John is used broadly and flexibly, and includes women.

Does Jesus include women in this apostolic commission and the gift of the authority to forgive sins? In Scriptural context, the answer to this questions is *yes*.

John 20:18-23 says:

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood

among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ...As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Simply stated, despite the paragraph break and heading in our English bibles, there is no break between John 20:18 and John 20:19. In fact, in the original Greek, there were no verse numbers or chapters (or even spaces between words!). Chapter and verse numbers were only added much later to the translations of biblical texts. Mary Magdalene, one of the female disciples, has not left the other disciples between these two verses. Hence, we know that *at least* Mary Magdalene is present when Jesus gives this apostolic commission and the authority of the office of the keys to the disciples. Also, the 'disciple whom Jesus loved' has been commissioned by Jesus on the cross to treat Mary the mother of Jesus as his own mother, and 'to take her into his own [home]' (the Greek says literally 'the disciple took her into his own') (John 19:25-27), so she would certainly be with the beloved disciple, and therefore present at this time. It is clear that at least these two women are present, and likely that many other women are also present as disciples.

In summary, Jesus does not just meet a *small group of men* in the upper room on that first Easter evening. The Scriptural evidence clearly points to a group of people beyond the Twelve, including women. It is to *these people*, this *community of disciples, including women*, that Jesus gives the *authority* to forgive sins, and *commissions* them: 'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.' He *authorises* both men and women by *giving* them the gift of the Holy Spirit, by *permitting them* to forgive sins in his name, and by *sending them* just as the Father sent him.

For the Lutheran church, the authority to exercise 'the office of the keys' through the forgiveness of sins (which includes the public preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments) is the authority of the pastoral office. Both women and men are authorised by Jesus to fulfil the ministry of the pastoral office. See Appendix 1 on the Rite of Ordination in the LCA for more on this.

11. In the book of Acts, both men and women are empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the good news 'to all the nations' on the day of Pentecost

One further piece of evidence must be placed here in continuity with the Gospels, before we examine evidence from the Epistles. From Acts 1:14-15, we know that the community of believers which gathers on Pentecost Day includes both men and women, and numbers around 120 people. This group is waiting for the gift Jesus promised (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:7-8), the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will empower them to be witnesses to Jesus in all the nations, in fulfilment of Jesus' commission in Luke 24:49.

Acts 2:1 says 'When the day of Pentecost came, they were *all together in one place.*'

Acts 2:4 says '*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak (Gk: *laleo*) in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.'

This includes the women! What are these Spirit-filled people speaking? They are 'declaring the wonders of God' (Acts 2:11) in the native tongues of 'all the nations' (Acts 2:5) who are gathered in Jerusalem for the festival!

This is the beginning of the fulfilment of Jesus' commission to both men and women to *preach* his resurrection, and the repentance and forgiveness of sins to 'all nations' in Luke 24:45-49 (see above).

Our mental images of Pentecost day may be influenced here by a translation issue. The NIV translation is unhelpful. It says in Acts 2:7, 'Utterly amazed, they asked 'Are not all these **men** who are speaking Galileans?'

The word 'men' is not in the Greek text. It has been inserted by the translators of the NIV. Similarly in Acts 2:15, when Peter stands to explain what is happening, the NIV says 'These **men** are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!' Again, the word 'men' is not in the Greek text.

A better translation would be, 'Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?...These people are not drunk, as you suppose!...'

On Pentecost day, not only men, but also women, are proclaiming the wonders of God in tongues and preaching this good news in public.

In Acts 2 the apostle Peter *explicitly* explains why *both men and women* are preaching in the public assembly of those who are gathered in Jerusalem for worship at the festival of Pentecost. He does this by choosing Joel 2:28-32 as his Pentecost sermon text.

'These people are not drunk, as you suppose...no, this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Holy Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy [i.e. speak the Word of the Lord], your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy...and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."'

Peter, in choosing this verse, is beginning to answer the question asked by the onlookers: 'What does this mean?' Why are these men and women publicly declaring the wonders of God in the resurrection of Jesus, in languages they have never learned before?

In summary the Acts account says that on Pentecost day both men and women are empowered and authorised by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to publicly declare God's good news by prophesying (proclaiming the Word of the Lord) in languages they have not learned before, so that people from all nations can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. This is the beginning of the fulfilment of Jesus' commission to both men and women in Luke 24:45-47 to preach (Gk: *kerusso*) repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations (see also Acts 2:38).

In the passages from the gospels and Acts examined above, it is clear that Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit authorise women to preach the good news of Jesus' resurrection and the forgiveness of sins. Some might argue 'But the church was not even in existence at this time! So these women are not authorised to preach the gospel *in the church*.' However, in Lutheran theology, the church is nothing other than 'the community of saints among whom the Gospel is preached and the sacraments administered...' It is the *preaching* and the *sacraments* which both create and constitute the church, because they create and nurture faith. The church *is* present when the women speak. It *is* present when the risen Jesus appears to the disciples and they believe his word. The church is not yet *organised* in ways that we might recognise as congregations, but it is certainly present on the day of Pentecost as people come to faith in Christ through the proclamation of the resurrection and Peter's preaching, and as people are baptised into the Christian faith. So women are not only *present*, they are *preaching publicly* in people's mother tongues when the church is first created and constituted on Pentecost day. It is likely that women are also administering the *sacrament* of baptism on this day. Consider for a moment the logistics of baptising *3000 people in one day*. It simply would not be physically possible for the 12 male apostles to baptise all 3000 people that day. So it is likely that many of the 120 or so of the original believers, including

women, were baptising new converts, as indeed they were authorised to do by Jesus when he gave them the authority to forgive sins in John 20 and Luke 24.

Summary of evidence from the Gospels and Acts

Here is a dot-point summary of evidence from the Gospels and Acts that women are authorised to proclaim (Gk: *appangelo*), preach (Gk: *kerusso*), and/or speak (Gk: *lego/eipen*) the good news; that Jesus gives to women as well as men the commission of the office of the keys; and that Father, Son and Holy Spirit individually and together authorise this preaching ministry.

- The prophetess Anna speaks publicly in the worshipping community in the Temple of the redemptive work of the child Jesus.
- In Luke 15, Jesus deliberately parallels his own mission to ‘seek’ and save what is ‘lost’ with the work of a diligent woman to ‘seek’ her ‘lost’ coin, and parallels the joy of God over one repenting sinner with the joy of the woman. This is done in the context of people grumbling that Jesus eats with sinners – that in fact, he will use any means to reach the lost.
- In Luke 13, Jesus chooses a woman as an exemplar of the catalytic action of God in bringing God’s kingdom and spreading it through the world.
- In John 4, Jesus reveals himself as the ‘I AM’ and as the Christ to the Samaritan woman. She becomes the evangelist to the town, doing the *hard work* of *sowing the word*, with the result that many people *believe* in Jesus as the Saviour of the World. Jesus *authorises* her public proclamation by *commending* her and *blessing* her proclamation through bringing people to faith. The word of the woman and the word of Jesus have the same effect in people’s lives. The woman’s hard work as evangelist is parallel, in content, purpose and outcome, to the author of this gospel and his writing of the good news about Jesus.
- In John’s Gospel, Jesus *commands* Mary Magdalene to announce the good news of his resurrection to the apostles. She becomes the ‘apostle to the apostles.’
- In Matthew 28, God the Father, through the angel of the Lord, *commands* the women at the tomb to *preach/proclaim* the good news of Jesus’ resurrection to the male disciples.
- Again in Matthew 28, Jesus chooses the women to be the first to meet him. He explicitly authorises them by *commanding* and *sending* them to *preach/proclaim* the good news of his resurrection to the disciples.
- In Luke 24, women disciples, who were present when Jesus taught his disciples in private, are commissioned to *preach/proclaim* the good news to the disciple community. The disciples disbelieve the women’s good news. Later, Jesus chides the disciple community for being ‘foolish and slow of heart’ in disbelieving the good news which has been proclaimed by the women.
- Later in Luke 24, Jesus *authorises* the disciple community, including the women present, with *preaching* (Gk: *kerusso*) repentance and *forgiveness of sins* in his name to all nations. He *authorises* women and men with the office of the keys; that is, the power and authority to forgive sins.
- In John 20, Jesus *sends* his disciples, including the women present, with his own authority: ‘As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.’ He *authorises* them to forgive sins and *gives* the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit empowers the women and men present on the day of Pentecost to *publicly preach* the wonderful deeds of God among the people of all nations present for worship in Jerusalem, in languages they have not learned before, so that people may call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Peter’s Pentecost sermon text explains what God is doing in allowing both men and women to prophesy, that is proclaim the authoritative

Word of the Lord, in public in this mass gathering. This public preaching creates and constitutes the church as thousands are baptised.

The evidence from the Gospels and Acts is clear: God the Father, the risen Jesus, and the Holy Spirit separately and together commission and authorise both women and men to proclaim the good news publicly in the community; to forgive sins; and to take up the office of the keys; or, in LCA terminology, to be pastors.

Comparison of the Gospels with the development of creedal tradition, and implications of the comparison

In all four Gospels, women are the first to be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. However, if we compare the accounts of the Gospels with the development of the tradition of Jesus' resurrection appearances, as found for instance in 1 Corinthians 15, we see how women are quickly excluded from the tradition. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3: 'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to *Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time...*'

By the time Paul becomes a Christian, the witness of the women to the risen Jesus has been explicitly excluded from the developing tradition. In the first century, women were not counted worthy of being witnesses in court. Their testimony was considered worthless in the culture. The male disciples considered the good news proclaimed by the women as 'silly talk', and it wasn't considered worthy of being included in the creedal list of resurrection appearances. This explicit exclusion of women's public preaching of the risen Jesus has continued till this day.

It is not incidental that God chooses to have women as the first witnesses of the resurrection, nor that Jesus chooses a sinful, outcast Samaritan woman to be the first to whom he reveals his divine identity as 'I AM.' It is vitally important; it is part of the self-emptying and self-humbling of Jesus that even in his resurrection and exaltation, the least likely people are the ones chosen by him to be witnesses and to proclaim the good news. The fact that women are the first witnesses to the resurrection and the true identity of Jesus is a practical outworking of Jesus' upside-down kingdom and his dictum that in the Kingdom of God, 'the first shall be last and the last shall be first'.

Would the risen Jesus chide our church for continuing our foolish, slow-of-heart ways that disbelieve that women could proclaim the good news, and claim that they have no authorisation from God to do so?

Evidence from the epistles

It seems clear from the above evidence that the risen Jesus authorised women to preach the Gospel publicly in the gathered community. What about the epistles? Did the Apostle Paul, for example, recognise this public preaching ministry of women in the church as legitimate? Below is a survey of passages pertaining to this question.

First, though, it's important to remember that only once in Paul's epistles is the word 'pastor' mentioned. Ephesians 4 says 'It is he [Jesus Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.' In the early church, the title 'pastor' was not yet commonly used of church leaders. Other titles such as deacon (*Gk: diakonos*),

presbyter or elder (Gk: *presbuteros*), and apostle (Gk: *apostolos*) were used for church leaders, as were practical descriptions of the work of people whom we would call ‘pastor’ in our church today. We must be careful not to let this differing terminology prevent us from recognising the work and calling of what we would today call ‘pastors.’

12. Paul’s greetings to female workers in the gospel, Romans 16

a. 16:1-2 Phoebe, minister of the church at Cenchrea, *prostatis* over many people

Paul’s *first priority in his list of greetings* in Romans 16 is to *commend* Phoebe, ‘who is [a] *minister* (Gk: *diakonos*, masculine) of the church at Cenchrea’ (NH).

In an oral culture, where the letter to the Romans would have been read out loud to the church, the sense of a word is closely linked with its immediate prior use. The immediate antecedent use of the word *diakonos* is just a chapter earlier in Romans 15:8, where Paul says that Jesus is ‘*diakonos* to the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs...’

This is still in the minds of the hearers. Jesus is *diakonos* to the Jews; Phoebe is *diakonos* of the church at Cenchrea. Jesus’ work for the Jews is paralleled with Phoebe’s work for the church at Cenchrea.

Paul uses this very same word, *diakonos*, of himself as a *servant* of the Word (2 Cor 11:23, 2 Cor 3:6 among many other places); of Apollos and Paul who are ‘*servants* (*diakonoi*, plural), through whom you came to believe’ (1 Cor 3:5); in his pastoral letter to young Pastor Timothy when he writes, ‘If you point these things out to the brothers you will be a good *minister* (*diakonos*) of Christ Jesus’; of *deacons/ministers* of the church in general in 1 Timothy 3:8, and in many other places. (Note that in 1 Timothy 3:8 the word ‘men’ is not specified in the Greek, despite the NIV’s insertion of this word. From Romans 16:1-2, it is clear that *diakonos* can refer to men or women.)

The point here is that there is **no difference** between these terms. *Diakonos* means, equally and equivalently, ‘servant,’ ‘minister,’ and ‘deacon.’ Phoebe is a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea. A servant is a minister; a deacon is a servant; a minister is a deacon. Phoebe’s work as deacon/minister for the church in Cenchrea is equivalent to Paul’s work as a ‘minister of reconciliation’ in 2 Corinthians 5 and Timothy’s work as ‘a minister of Christ Jesus’ in 1 Timothy 4:6. There is no artificial distinction between ‘deacon’ and ‘minister.’ Phoebe is a minister of the church in Cenchrea, doing the same kind of work as the apostle Paul, the church leader and evangelist Apollos, and the pastor Timothy.

Paul asks the church in Rome to receive Phoebe in a way worthy (Gk: *axios*) of the saints. He asks them to give Phoebe any help she may need from them, for ‘she has become *prostatis* to many people, including me’ (NH). The NIV translates this as ‘for she has been a *great help* to many people, including me.’ This word *prostatis* needs some more exploration, as this is its only occurrence in the NT. It is from the root *proistemi*, which means ‘rule, maintain, be over.’ What are some other occurrences of this root word?

- *Proistemi* is used in 1 Timothy 5:17, describing church leaders to whom we would now give the title ‘pastor’: ‘The elders who *direct the affairs of the church* (Gk: *proistemi*) are worthy (Gk: *axios*) of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.’ My more literal translation is: ‘Those elders, *set over you* (GK: *proistemi*), of double honour are worthy (Gk: *axios*), especially those who work hard (Gk: *kopiaio*) among you in word (Gk: *logos*) and teaching’ (NH).
- The same root word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, ‘Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are *over you* (Gk: *proistemi*) in the Lord, and who admonish you.’ Paul is clearly referring to people whom we would call ‘pastor’ in the LCA.

- The word *prostatis* which Paul uses to describe Phoebe is also related to the same root as the word *prostasso* which means ‘to command,’ ‘to enjoin,’ ‘to order.’ This word is used in Acts 10:33 when Peter goes to Cornelius’s house and Cornelius says: ‘We are here in the presence of the Lord to listen to everything the Lord has *commanded* you to tell us.’ *Prostasso* is also found in Acts 10:48, where ‘Peter *ordered* that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.’

Phoebe was a minister (Gk: *diakonos*) of the church in Cenchrea, who was *set over* (Gk: *prostatis*) many people, including Paul. She was ‘worthy’ (Gk: *axios*) of people’s help and support.

The verbal links between Romans 16:1-2 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18 are striking. The Greek words *axios* (*worthy*) and *proistemi* (*set over*) occur in both passages. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul says ‘For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out grain” and “The worker deserves his wages.”’ Thus in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 Paul is encouraging people to make sure that the material needs of their pastors are provided for as they do the hard work of preaching the Gospel. In Romans 16:1-2, Paul encourages people to support Phoebe with ‘whatever she may need,’ for she has been ‘set over many people’ as a ‘minister of the church.’ Just as in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 Paul encourages people to provide for the needs of pastors who work hard at preaching and teaching, here in Romans 16:1-2, Paul is encouraging the Roman church to make sure that Phoebe’s material needs are provided for while she works as minister of the church and one who is ‘over the church’ in preaching the gospel.

In summary, in Romans 16:1, Paul recognises that Phoebe is a minister of the church in the same way that he as apostle and Timothy as pastor are. In our usage of the term, we would say Paul recognises Phoebe as a pastor of the church at Cenchrea. He urges the Christians in Rome to support Phoebe in her work as minister of the gospel, because she is one who has been set over/given authority over many people, including at one time Paul himself. Paul’s commendation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1 makes it likely that when Paul was in Cenchrea (as we read in Acts 18:18) Phoebe was Paul’s pastor, who preached to him and ministered to him.

b. Romans 16:3 Priscilla and Aquila, fellow workers of Paul, leaders of the church that meets in their home

In Romans 16:3 Paul greets first Priscilla (female) and then Aquila (male), his ‘fellow workers (Gk: *sunergoi*, plural) in Christ.’ He then greets ‘the church that meets in their house’ (Romans 16:5). Later in the chapter, in Romans 16:21, Paul uses exactly the same word to describe Timothy: ‘Timothy, my fellow worker (Gk: *sunergos*, singular) sends his greetings to you.’ We know Timothy is a pastor in the church. Others whom Paul calls fellow-workers include Luke, Titus, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. Paul also greets the church that meets at Priscilla and Aquila’s house. It seems that Aquila and Priscilla together are pastors of this house church.

c. Romans 16:6, 12, 13. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis, women who work hard in the Lord in the work of preaching the gospel

In Romans 16:6 Paul greets Mary ‘who worked very hard (Gk: *kopiaio*, past tense) for you (ie the churches at Rome).’

In 16:12 he greets Tryphena and Tryphosa, ‘those women who are working hard (Gk *kopiaio*, present active participle) in the Lord.’

Also in 16:12 He greets ‘My dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard (Gk: *kopiaio*) in the Lord.’

As mentioned above in relation to John 4, *kopiao* is a vital word in the proclamation of the gospel. In fact in the epistles, almost without exception, the Greek word *kopiao* means ‘working hard in proclaiming the gospel, in preaching and teaching.’

Compare Paul’s greeting and use of this word here in Romans 16 with some other occurrences:

- In 1 Thessalonians 5:12 Paul uses this very word, clearly speaking of church leaders that we in the LCA would now call pastors: ‘Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who *work hard among you* (Gk: *kopiao*, present active participle), who are over you (Gk: *proistemi*, see Phoebe above) in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.’
- Compare with 1 Timothy 4:9-10, ‘This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, and for this we *labour and strive* (Gk: *kopiao*, present active indicative), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe.’ Paul goes on in this passage to tell Timothy to devote himself to public teaching and preaching.
- In 1 Timothy 5:17 Paul writes: ‘Those elders set over you (see Phoebe above), of double honour are worthy, most especially those working hard (Gk: *kopiao* present, active, participle, plural) in word (Gk: *logos*) and teaching.’ (NH, literal translation from the Greek)

Although this word is worth further study, it is clear from the examples given here that when Paul greets women who ‘work hard in the Lord’ he is greeting women who are *working hard in preaching the gospel in word* (Gk: *logos*) *and teaching*. In Romans 16, Paul greets hardworking women who have positions that we would now call pastors; that is, the ones who publicly proclaim and teach the Word in the church.

d. Romans 16:7 Paul greets Andronicus (masculine) and Junia (feminine), who are ‘outstanding among the apostles.’

The word ‘apostle’ is used somewhat flexibly in the NT. It is certainly wider than just the Twelve. Paul and Barnabas are called ‘apostles’, as are others who were not among the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus during his earthly ministry. It can range in meaning from simply ‘one who is sent’ to a technical term meaning ‘a witness of the resurrection.’ The LCA’s public teaching states that the apostolic office of preaching the word continues in our current pastorate.

Andronicus, a man, and Junia, a woman, are here greeted by Paul as people who are ‘outstanding among the apostles.’ Paul greets and acknowledges the authority of a female apostle, one who is *sent* by the Lord to do the work of preaching. Other pastors and scholars have done extensive work showing that Junia is indeed a woman and indeed recognised as an apostle, one who is sent by the Lord with his own apostolic authority. Pastor Ray Schultz of the LCA is widely acknowledged for his work in this field. This brief note is simply to point out that a woman is acknowledged by Paul as an apostle.

13. Philippians 4:2-3 Paul acknowledges Euodia and Syntyche as women who contended by his side in preaching the gospel

In Philippians 4, Paul writes of two women, Euodia and Syntyche. He pleads with them to ‘agree with each other in the Lord.’ They are women who, Paul says, ‘contended by my side (Gk: *sunaltheo*) in the gospel (Gk: *en to euangellio*), together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers (Gk: *sunergoi*).’ (NH)

The NIV translation of Phil 4:3 may be misleading here. It translates ‘...these women who contended at my side *in the cause of the gospel*’ not ‘...these women who contended at my side *in the gospel*.’

The New Living Translation says, much more accurately, ‘And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.’

The translation here is important. The phrase ‘...in the *cause* of the gospel’ could imply that Euodia and Syntyche had some kind of supporting role, perhaps similar to lay workers or office staff in our present day churches. But being a fellow-worker (Gk: *sunergos*) in the gospel (Gk: *eis to euangelio*) clearly indicates that these women *preach* the gospel. This is because when Paul uses the word ‘gospel’ or the phrase ‘in the gospel’ in Philippians, it means ‘the *preaching* of the gospel’ and is inseparably linked with ‘speaking the word of God’ and ‘preaching.’ For example, Phil 1:12-14 says, ‘Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to **advance the gospel**...because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to **speak the word of God** more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some **preach Christ** out of envy and rivalry...’

Earlier in Philippians, Paul spoke of Timothy in language nearly identical to how he speaks of Euodia and Syntyche: ‘But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because, as a son with his father, he has served with me **in the gospel** (Gk: *eis tou euangelion*)’ (Philippians 2:22). Paul also speaks of Epaphroditus as a **fellow-worker** (Gk: *sunergos*), just like Clement, Euodia and Syntyche.

In summary, in Philippians 4:2-3, Paul speaks of two women who toiled by his side as fellow-workers in the **preaching of the gospel**, just as Timothy and Epaphroditus did. He is distressed that his female fellow pastors or preachers of the gospel cannot currently agree with each other and work together. Paul recognises and accepts their authority to preach the gospel; he longs for them to be able to agree with one another so that their preaching will be most effective.

14. 1 Corinthians chapters 11-14: Women prophesy in the Corinthian church, that is, speak the clear word of God for the conviction of sin and belief in Jesus

Certain verses from 1 Corinthians have classically been used as proof texts for the prohibition of women’s speaking the word of God in the public worship of the church. In fact, 1 Corinthians as a whole clearly says that women *do* speak the word of God publicly in the church, with a limited exception in a particular case.

This understanding relies on the whole context of Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians, not simply two verses.

First, Paul is clear that women pray and prophesy (Gk: *propheteuo*) in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5). It is not a question about *whether* this should happen in 1 Corinthians 11, simply a question of *how*. Should they do it without a head covering? Paul thinks not. ‘If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice, nor do the churches of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:16).

What does it mean to prophesy (Gk: *propheteuo*)? What does ‘prophecy’ mean?

Fortunately, in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, prophecy is clearly defined. It includes the following elements:

- Prophecy is speaking (Gk: *laleo*) to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor 14:3).

- Prophecy *edifies* the church (1 Cor 14:4-5).
- It must be *intelligible speech* (1 Cor 14:9, 18-19).
- The goal of prophecy is *conviction of sin and true worship of God* (1 Cor 14:24-25).
- Two or three prophets should *speak* (Gk: *laleo*) (1 Cor 14:29-30).
- Again, the intention is that everyone be *instructed and encouraged* (1 Cor 14:31) in an intelligible way, for God is a God of peace, not of disorder, as in all congregations of the saints (1 Cor 14:33).

Our mental images of ‘church’ and of a ‘worship service’ in a congregation may suffer a rude shock when we encounter Paul’s description of worship in the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians chapters 1-14. Paul does not use the word ‘preaching’ (Gk: *kerusso*) anywhere within this passage about worship, from 1 Corinthians 11-14. The word simply does not appear. However, I think everyone could agree that the definition of ‘prophecy’ given above is exactly what we would describe as ‘preaching’ in the church today: Speaking clear, intelligible words to people, in order to strengthen, edify and encourage people, to build up the church, for the conviction of sin, for repentance and true worship of God.

Yes, this sounds like a good description of what we would think of as preaching (or what we would *hope* to be hearing in the preaching in our churches!).

Paul says that people in the church should be eager to ‘prophecy’ (1 Cor 14:1). They should long to speak God’s word, they should be eager to do this, and they should be permitted to do this: to speak clear, intelligible words for the edification of the church, for the conviction of sin, and for the true worship of God (1 Cor 14:39-40). Women can do this, as we know from 1 Cor 11:5. In fact they clearly speak this way in the Corinthian church: ‘When you come together, *everyone* has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation,’ (1 Cor 14:26).

Paul instructs all people to be eager to prophesy

In summary: Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11-14 that women *do* prophesy in the church; that is, speak clear, intelligible words for the instruction and edification of the church, for the conviction of sin, and for true worship of God. There is no question as to *whether* this happens, only a question as to *how*.

So what about the classical text in 1 Corinthians 14 where it seems Paul prohibits women ‘speaking’ (Gk: *laleo*) in the church and commands them to be silent? Is Paul contradicting himself?

I will deal with this text (and the one from 1 Timothy) *after* I give a summary of evidence from Paul’s epistles about whether Paul recognised the legitimacy of women publicly preaching and proclaiming the gospel, which is clearly authorised by Jesus, by the Father and the Spirit in the Gospels and Acts.

Summary of evidence in the epistles of Paul

- Paul recognises Phoebe as a minister of the church in Cenchrea, who has been set over many people in the church. He asks the Roman church to provide for her needs as a minister of the church as she proclaims the gospel.
- Paul greets his fellow workers in the gospel (like Timothy), Priscilla and Aquila. He recognises this husband and wife as pastors of the church that meets in their house.

- Paul recognises Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis as women who are doing the hard work of proclaiming the gospel in word and teaching, just as other church leaders and pastors are doing.
- Paul recognises Junia, a woman, as an apostle, one who is sent by Jesus to proclaim the gospel and exercise the office of the keys.
- In Philippians 4, Paul pleads with Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord. These are fellow workers (ie, pastors and evangelists) with Paul, women who have contended at his side in the preaching of the gospel, just like Timothy and Epaphroditus.
- In the Corinthian church, women pray and prophesy, that is, speak clear intelligible words in the worshipping community for the edification of the church, the conviction of sin and the right worship of God.
- It is thus clear from the epistles that Jesus Christ, Lord of the church, has given some women to be apostles (eg Junia), some to be prophets (eg the women in the Corinthian church), some to be evangelists (working hard in the proclamation of the gospel, such as Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis) and some to be pastors and teachers (eg Phoebe, minister of the church at Cenchrea, set over many people). Paul recognises these giftings and callings of women in the church. More than simple or grudging recognition, he has worked beside many of them in the very same work of preaching the gospel, and acknowledges their blessing and their calling in positions of service to which we in the LCA would give the title of ‘pastor.’

An examination of the ‘prohibition’ of women speaking in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2

Given this ample positive evidence that Paul recognised the legitimacy of the public preaching of women, what is Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, when he commands women to be ‘silent’ in the churches? Is Paul contradicting himself? How can he write ‘Women must be silent in the churches’ in the same letter where he clearly says that women prophesy in the church?

I will now briefly investigate this question. Others have done much more exegetical work on the two classic texts, the *sedes doctrinae* of the prohibition of women’s ordination, and that work is accessible to those who would like to investigate further. For instance, I would point the reader to the LCA’s *Ordination – We’re Listening* web pages which include the work of the CTICR and other theologians on these texts.

Below is 1 Corinthians 14:27-35 (NLT translation). The full context is included because it is very important. It turns out that there is not *one* command to silence in 1 Corinthians 14. There are *three*. These three commands to silence are *each directed to groups of people who normally ‘speak’ publicly and aloud in the church in Corinth, who are directed to be silent in certain circumstances.*

1 Corinthians 14:27-35: the threefold command to silence (NLT)

²⁷ No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must **speak** (Gk: *laleo*, imperative) one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. ²⁸ But **if** no one is present who can interpret, they must **be silent** (Gk: *sigato*, imperative) in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

²⁹ Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. ³⁰ But **if** someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is **speaking** (Gk: *laleo*, participle) must **be silent** (Gk: *sigato*, imperative). ³¹ In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to **speak** (Gk: *laleo*), one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged.

³² Remember that people who prophesy are **in control** of their spirit (Gk: their spirit is *upotasso*,

under submission) and can take turns.³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.

³⁴ Women (Gk: *gune*, same Greek word as wives, see below) should **be silent** (Gk: *sigato*, imperative) during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to **speak** (Gk: *laleo*). They should be submissive (Gk: *upotasso*), just as the law says.³⁵ **If** they wish to **learn** (Gk: *matheo*) something, they should **ask** their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to **speak** (Gk: *laleo*) in church meetings.

What is Paul NOT saying? We know that women, tongues speakers and prophets normally speak aloud, publicly in the church. They are not normally silent. In particular, we know from 1 Cor 11:5 that women pray and **prophecy** in the church. What is prophecy? It is '**speaking** (Gk: *lalein*) for the edification of the church' (1 Cor 14:3-5). So Paul has already explicitly said in 1 Corinthians that women 'speak' words of prophecy aloud in the church. What is going on here?

Each of the commands to silence is not a total prohibition but a limited, contextual one, as highlighted by the word 'if' in the NLT translation above.

- The context in which *tongues speakers* should be silent in the church is **if** there is no interpreter, because their speaking will not edify the church. This is not a permanent prohibition; it does not mean the tongues speakers should never speak again. It is contextual. The command to silence has a particular situation in mind.
- The context in which *prophets* should be silent is **if** another prophet receives a revelation, so that everyone can clearly hear the word of God from the second prophet. This does not mean that the first prophet should NEVER speak again, but that they should let the clear word of revelation come through from another person at that particular time. This is not a permanent prohibition; it is contextual. The command to silence for prophets has a particular situation in mind.

Verse 35 holds the key to the context in which women should be silent. Women, specifically wives (which is the same Greek word), 'should ask their husbands at home' **if** they *wish to learn something*. As an aside, note that Paul's whole instruction in 1 Corinthians 14 *cannot* apply to all women, only those who have husbands. It would be incoherent to tell women who have no husbands to 'ask their husbands at home if they wish to learn something'

- Thus the context in which *wives* should be silent in the church is **if** they **want to learn**, and are **questioning their husbands**. They should question at home. This is not a permanent prohibition; it is contextual. It does not mean women should never speak (or preach) in church; we already know that they do so as prophets and tongues speakers in the Corinthian church. This command to silence also has a particular situation in mind.

The whole of this section, with its three injunctions to silence (tongues speakers with no interpreter; prophets when another prophet has a revelation; women who have questions of their husbands during worship) has a clear flow and a central concern. The central concern is that the **proclamation of the gospel be clear and unhindered**. The way this is to happen is through good **order**, hence the use of the word *upotasso* (to be properly ordered, to be in submission) and Paul's reference to God: 'For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints.'

In this passage, Paul is prohibiting the *disruption* of worship (by uninterpreted tongues speakers, by raucous prophets, or by wives who have questions of their husbands). The three commands to silence are present so that people can hear the clear message (prophecy) and be convicted of sin (14:24-25).

To the women/wives in the congregation, Paul is speaking about *disruptive questions from women during the worship service, which stop people being able to hear the clear message*. He is speaking to ‘women in the pew,’ not to ‘women in the pulpit.’ Paul is saying to the women, ‘Do not disrupt the proclamation of the gospel with your questions during worship.’ He is NOT saying, ‘You are not allowed to preach the clear message of the gospel in public worship.’ In fact, he is making sure the church is properly ordered, so that indeed the clear message of the gospel may come through male and female tongues speakers (interpreted) and male and female prophets.

Despite its use as a key text in prohibiting women’s ordination, this passage from 1 Corinthians 14 is **never** connected with the office of the keys or with preaching in the Lutheran Confessions. This passage does not have anything to do with ordination or the office of the ministry. It has to do with people’s behaviour in church when the gospel is being proclaimed.

The other ‘prohibition’ of women ‘speaking’ in the churches

The other text that is used in the prohibition of women’s ordination in the LCA is 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Here is my translation.

¹¹ A woman should **learn** (Gk: *matheo*, imperative, see 1 Corinthians 14:35 above) quietly and **submissively** (Gk: *upotasso*). ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach a man or have authority (Gk: *authenthein*) over him, but to be in submission. (NH)

In this passage there is only one imperative verb; that is, only one command. The imperative verb is ‘**learn**.’ Paul is teaching women how to *learn* the word of God, as they have not yet been able to do under Judaism. In Judaism, one rabbinic source says it would be better to destroy the holy scrolls of Torah than to let women learn their contents. Women were not permitted to be disciples of a rabbi. Jesus’ teaching of women disciples, as we find in the gospels, was a radical departure from the cultural norm.

To imagine a parallel situation from the gospels, Paul’s instruction here is similar to Jesus’ word about Mary in the house of Martha, when Mary sits quietly at Jesus’ feet **listening** to him and **learning** from his teaching. This was a scandalous and radical departure from the norm in first century Judea, when women were not permitted to be disciples of rabbis. Jesus says ‘Mary has taken the better portion, and it will not be taken away from her.’ Women **should learn** quietly and in good order! They cannot yet teach, for they have not yet learnt, and they definitely should not usurp their husbands’ authority.

The word ‘permit’ (‘I do not permit a woman to teach...’) found here is a word which is limited in time and scope, not a permanent state of affairs. The Greek word *authenthein* which is translated ‘have authority over’ a man is found only once in the New Testament, in this verse. In the wider Greek literature it actually means to ‘domineer over’ or ‘usurp the authority of.’ In some literature from around the same time it means ‘to murder’.

So a perfectly legitimate translation of this passage would be: ‘A woman should learn quietly and in full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach a man or to domineer over him, but to be in submission.’

Paul’s concern in this passage is similar to 1 Corinthians: wives are to learn. Paul is not giving instruction about women **preaching** (or not), but about women **learning**. They are not to usurp their husband’s authority or domineer over them. They can’t teach, as they haven’t yet learned.

Once again, in the Lutheran Confessions, this passage from 1 Timothy 2 is **never** connected with the office of the keys or with preaching. This passage does not have anything to do with ordination or the office of the ministry.

Summary of the ‘prohibitions’ of women ‘speaking’ in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2

- Paul’s concern in 1 Corinthians 14 is that everyone be able to hear the clear speaking of the word of God in the public worship. His **threefold command to silence** is directed at groups that **normally speak in the church**: tongues speakers, prophets, and women/wives. Each prohibition has a specific circumstance in which it is to be applied. For wives, they are to be silent if they have questions of their husbands – they are to learn at home. They are not to bring the church into disgrace by interrupting the clear proclamation of the gospel with their questions, but are to be in good order (as is everyone else in the church). This passage does not have to do with ordination or the office of the keys.
- Paul’s concern in 1 Timothy 2 is with how women/wives are to **learn**. Wives are not permitted to teach their husbands (as they have not yet learnt). They are certainly not to usurp their husbands’ authority, but learn quietly, with a calm spirit, in good order. This passage also does not have to do with ordination or with the office of the keys.

Conclusion: Summary and Questions for the LCA

This paper has shown that Jesus is not just ‘a nice man who was kind to women and treated them well.’ In the Gospels and Acts, Jesus repeatedly and consistently authorises women to preach the good news through *commending* them, *commanding them to preach*, *sending* them with his own authority, *blessing* their proclamation, giving them *authority to forgive sins*, and choosing them as his witnesses to *preach* the good news to all nations. God the Father, through the angel of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit also *command, authorise and empower* women to preach and proclaim the good news publicly.

This paper has also shown that Paul, far from denying the legitimacy of the pastoral ministry of women, *recognised* their authority to preach and lead the church by *commending them, working beside them, and upholding their call and gifting* as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The classical texts used to prohibit the ordination of women have no connection with the office of the ministry in the Lutheran Confessions, and are commanding women to be silent in the church in certain limited circumstances. These passages are not prohibiting women from preaching but rather from disrupting clear preaching, and are directed to how women are to learn, not to preaching or to the office of the ministry.

I therefore ask members of the LCA to consider the following questions:

Since Jesus dares to parallel his own action of ‘seeking and saving the lost’ with that of a diligent woman in Luke 15, why has the church been reluctant to let women publicly proclaim the good news so that sinners may repent? If a woman could proclaim the good news in the gathered community so that just one sinner repents, would the LCA rejoice? Or would we, with the scribes and Pharisees, grumble that Jesus doesn’t work in our prescribed ways and welcomes all sorts of riffraff to his party?

How has the LCA been *impoverished* by explicitly excluding the proclamatory voices of women who love God, and diligently seek the lost? What precious ‘coin’ have we lost through disallowing a woman from publicly proclaiming the gospel in the gathered community?

Some opponents of women’s ordination claim that the ‘command of the Lord’ in 1 Corinthians 14 is that women not preach publicly in the gathered assembly. They narrow this command of the Lord to two verses about women’s silence, and not to the whole section on orderly worship. They thus say that women who have a sense of internal call to the pastoral ministry of the LCA must either be deceived or that this ‘call’ is actually from the devil. They also claim that if women were to preach, the Holy Spirit could not use their preaching to bring people to faith in Christ, as the Spirit will not work in opposition to the command of the Lord. These are serious claims indeed. However, why then does Jesus consistently and repeatedly authorise women to preach/proclaim the good news about him, from John 4 onwards?

Why in John 4 does Jesus not only approve the public proclamation of the Samaritan woman, but use it to teach his disciples about the work of sowing the word and reaping belief for eternal life? Why does Jesus not question the authority of the woman to preach the good news in the town, but actually work alongside it? Why do the ‘word’ of the woman and the ‘word’ of Jesus have the same effect - that of bringing people to saving faith in Jesus for eternal life? Why does Jesus not say, when the townspeople come out to him after the woman proclaims the good news in the town, ‘I’m sorry, but I don’t actually authorise women to proclaim the good news in public! This is a bit

embarrassing and highly irregular. Just forget what she has said, and listen to me. I will set you straight.’ Jesus does the opposite, as does the author of John’s gospel. The word of Jesus and the word of the woman have the same effect as the written testimony of the gospel—saving faith in Jesus and eternal life in his name.

Since women are clearly commissioned and authorised (by the angel of the Lord acting on behalf of God the Father, by angels, by Jesus himself) to preach/proclaim the good news of the resurrection to the gathered community of disciples, why does the LCA not give women this authority?

Since Jesus gives the power of the keys to the whole disciple community, including women, and says that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be *preached* in his name to all nations, and tells them that they are witnesses of these things, why does the LCA not allow women to exercise the office of the keys publicly as pastors of the church?

Since Jesus says to the disciple community including women, ‘As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you,’ and ‘If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you do not forgive them, they remain unforgiven,’ why does our church say women are not authorised to do this?

Since the Holy Spirit is poured out on both men and women on the day of Pentecost and they all proclaim ‘the wonders of God’ in native languages to people of ‘all nations’ gathered in Jerusalem, in fulfilment both of the Spirit-inspired prophecy of the prophet Joel and the words of Jesus himself at the end of Luke’s gospel, are we resisting the Holy Spirit by excluding women from spirit-filled proclamation of the good news as pastors in the church?

Since Paul recognises women in multiple ways as equal partners in the work of the gospel, including as ‘ministers’ of the church, ‘fellow workers,’ ‘those who work hard in the gospel,’ and even ‘apostles,’ why does the LCA not recognise women in such ways?

In the early church, despite the clear commission of Jesus in the gospels, the witness of women to the risen Jesus was specifically *excluded* in the development of tradition as found in 1 Corinthians 15. Does our church need to repent of doing the same thing by specifically excluding women from the public witness of preaching the good news of the risen Jesus as pastors of the church?

Appendix 1: The Lutheran Confessions and the Office of the Ministry

AUGSBURG CONFESSION, ARTICLE IV. [JUSTIFICATION]

¹ It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, ² when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. ³ For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

AUGSBURG CONFESSION, ARTICLE V. [THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY]

¹ To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry; that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. ² Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. ³ And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

SMALCALD ARTICLES, ARTICLE IV. [THE GOSPEL]

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers council and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second,⁵ through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered," etc.

SMALCALD ARTICLES XIV. ORDER IN THE CHURCH

It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.

The **LCA's Rite of Ordination** includes the following parts. Notice what the 'mandate of our Lord' includes: the commission to forgive sins, to make disciples (commission to baptise) and commission to celebrate Holy Communion. Notice also the first question under 'Confessional Assent.': 'Do you believe that the *Lord* has called you *through the church* to the ministry of word and sacrament?' Also note the words with which the pastor is ordained: 'By the *authority* which our Lord Jesus Christ has given to his church, I ordain and consecrate you, N, to the holy office of the public ministry, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

Extract of the LCA's Rite of Ordination

WORD OF GOD

The president or an assistant says to the ordinand:

According to the mandate of our Lord and apostolic practice you are now to be ordained to the office of the public ministry with the laying on of hands and prayer.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you pronounce them unforgiven, unforgiven they remain.

And our Lord says: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

St Paul writes: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Ordination: CONFSSIONAL ASSENT

The minister says to the ordinand:

Before our Lord God, to whom you must give account, and in the presence of this congregation/assembly, I ask: N, do you believe that the Lord has called you through his church to the ministry of word and sacrament?

Yes, I do.

Do you believe and accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written, and inerrant word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life?

Yes, I do.

Do you acknowledge and accept as true expositions of the word of God and as your own confession of faith all the symbolical writings of the evangelical Lutheran church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580?

Yes, I do.

VOWS

I promise, with the help of God, to carry out faithfully the ministry entrusted to me in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the confessions of the Lutheran church.

I promise to be diligent in the study of the Scriptures and in the use of the sacraments; to pray for God's people; to nourish them with the gospel; and to lead them by my own example in faithful service and holy living.

I promise to uphold the public teaching and practice of the Lutheran Church of Australia and to accept the pastoral and doctrinal oversight of my president.

I promise to keep inviolate the seal of confession.

PRAYER

May almighty God graciously give you the wisdom, strength, and compassion to do what you have promised.

Amen.

ORDINATION

The ordinand kneels. The minister lays his hands on the ordinand and says:

Eternal God, through your Son, Jesus Christ, pour out your Holy Spirit on N and fill him with the gifts of grace for his ministry to your people.

Amen.

The minister keeps both hands on the head of the ordinand. Other clergy may add their right hands. The minister says the formula of ordination.

By the authority which our Lord Jesus Christ has given to his church, I ordain and consecrate you, N, to the holy office of the public ministry, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The newly ordained pastor may remain kneeling as he is vested with the stole.

Receive this stole as a mark of the ministry which you have by the mercy of God.

The newly ordained pastor stands. The minister raises his right hand as he says:

I declare you to be a pastor of the Lutheran Church of Australia.