

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1

#### D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

## The relationship of the auxiliary offices to the office of the ministry

*Prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations. Adopted by the General Church Council, February 1978.*

*Not edited.*

---

1. Men are appointed to the Office of the Ministry through call and ordination.
2. Men and women are appointed to auxiliary offices (teachers, lay mission workers, social workers) simply by call or appointment. The nature of the office and its functions are delineated in the document of call or appointment. What determines a person's eligibility for call and appointment varies – completion of prescribed course of studies and graduation from Lutheran Teachers College, professional and practical ability, maturity as a Christian. The Church has not stated specifically who may and who may not be called to auxiliary offices as it has done for those who intend to serve in the Ministry of the Church.
3. The nature of the office of a person who is called or appointed to a ministry in an isolated area or similar situation and who is involved, more or less, in all the functions of the Office of the Ministry – preaching, teaching, administering Holy Baptism (maybe even administering the Lord's Supper) – is at present unclear. The authority by which such a person carries out his particular ministry could be conferred in one of the following ways:
  - a. He could be called and ordained, as pastors are. If this is done, then a distinction needs to be made between pastors and these persons: the former are eligible to be called to and by any congregation or mission in the Church; the latter are limited to a particular situation and type of ministry, and are not eligible to be called to and by any congregation or mission.
  - b. This eligibility for call or appointment to a specialised ministry or a particular situation and his authorisation to function in it could be made known to the

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE AUXILIARY OFFICES TO THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

Church and conferred by the Church by means of a commissioning. It would need to be specified clearly just what authority this commissioning confers, for how long, and at what place it is validly exercised.

- c. The person could be called or appointed by the responsible group (group of people in an isolated area, or board of the Church) the same as those whose offices are auxiliary to the Office of the Ministry are called and appointed. The documents of call or appointment would indicate the nature and scope of the office and its function.

Since the nature and functions of the office under discussion are more closely related to the Office of the Ministry of the Church than are the auxiliary offices, authorisation could best be conferred by either (a) or (b). Theologically, both are acceptable.

Some important matters that relate to general church practice, however, should be noted. For example, ordination, as we understand and practise it, confers on a person not only eligibility to be called to or by any congregation or mission, but also authority to be regarded as, and to speak as, a pastor of the Church, not simply as pastor of a congregation. Ordination, moreover, is normally to a life-long vocation in the Church. The nature and function of the office under discussion is limited to place (see 3. above) and function; sometimes it may involve a 'full ministry' of the Church; sometimes it may involve only a 'partial or limited ministry' of the Church. Circumstances rather than office will determine the extent of the ministry from place to place.

Because of the differences that lie in the area of Church practice between the pastoral ministry of the Church, as we know it and practise it, and the nature and functions of the office under discussion, and in order to avoid confusion and possible malpractice, it is recommended that ordination be reserved for the former and that authorisation to the latter be by commissioning. The Letter of Appointment or Letter of Agreement will indicate the extent to which the person commissioned will engage in the functions of the Ministry of the Church, as well as where this will apply and for how long.

It is further recommended that persons who are selected to serve in this office do the necessary courses that relate to the Office of the Ministry of the Church, at Luther Seminary.