



ORDINATION

We're listening.

ORDINATION CONSULTATION BOOKLET

Documents for use at the consultations
on the CTICR Draft Doctrinal Statement
concerning the ordination of women and men

Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR)



LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF AUSTRALIA
where love comes to life

Ordination Consultation Booklet

Documents for use at the consultations on the Draft Doctrinal Statement concerning the ordination of women and men

Prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations.

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PURPOSE OF BOOKLET

This booklet has been prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) as a resource for the Ordination Consultations to be held throughout the LCA and LCNZ during the period March to October 2017. This booklet will be supplied to each person attending these face-to-face consultations.

The central document in this booklet is the **Draft Doctrinal Statement: The call and ordination of both men and women to the office of the public ministry** (page 7). This Statement appears again with a Commentary (page 18). Another key document is the **Preamble to Q&A 8: Does the ordination issue have to be church divisive?** (page 13).

The central documents in this booklet also appear on the **Ordination. We're Listening** (OWL) website (owl.lca.org.au), and you are encouraged to access other OWL resources. People may request a copy of this booklet be posted to them by contacting the LCA National Office by email: admin@lca.org.au or phone: (08) 8267 7300. Feedback on the key documents is invited at the consultations, or later by email to: cticr@lca.org.au.

CTICR acknowledges with gratitude the invaluable assistance of Linda Macqueen, LCA Communications Manager, and her staff, in the preparation of this booklet.

Timothy Pietsch

Consultations Project Officer - CTICR

28 February 2017 (Reprinted 28 March 2017)

BISHOP'S INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear fellow members of the LCA,

I join with the members of General Church Council (GCC) in thanking God for you and for Jesus in whose name we are saved.

The LCA has always called only men to be pastors. At three General Conventions of Synod (2000, 2006 and 2015) congregations have put proposals to include women in the pastorate. Each time the vote has failed to reach the two-thirds majority our constitution requires for a change of doctrine.

At the 2015 General Convention the following resolution was passed [General Synod resolution 2015:0216]:

That Synod requests the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations [CTICR] to build on its earlier work regarding the ordination of women and men to develop a draft doctrinal statement for General Pastors Conference [GPC] and the 19th Convention of Synod that presents:

- A theological basis for the ordination of women and men;
- A theological basis for why the ordination of women and men need not be church divisive;
- And that General Church Council [GCC] resource it.

Work to fulfil the terms of this resolution has proceeded in the following way:

- The CTICR has prepared:
 - The first version of a draft doctrinal statement, presenting a biblical and theological basis for the ordination of women and men.
 - A preamble to Q&A 8: Does the ordination issue have to be church divisive?
- The GCC has arranged resources so that these documents, particularly the draft doctrinal statement, can receive church-wide consideration by means of a series of consultations from March to October 2017.

In addition to these primary documents, the CTICR has prepared a commentary on the draft doctrinal statement, which provides further information in support of the corresponding sections of the main statement.

Today's consultation will focus on the draft doctrinal statement and the theological basis for why the ordination of men and women need not be church divisive. These documents are printed in this booklet, and are also available on the Ordination. We're Listening (OWL) website (owl.lca.org.au), along with other papers which include explanations of the present position of the church. These will help you understand why the LCA currently calls only men.

Thank you for joining this conversation in person by attending this consultation. Please pray for one another, for those leading this and other consultations, and for the church during this challenging period. To God be the glory.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor John Henderson
LCA Bishop

February 2017

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE

Prior to the 2015 General Convention the LCA's Ordination Dialogue Group developed the following five principles of dialogue.

- **Communion:** Because God has gathered us in communion with one another through his word and sacraments, we have freedom to dialogue with one another on contested matters. Strengthening this God-given communion is the goal of dialogue.
- **Trust:** Because God has made us brothers and sisters in Christ, we can trust God to use our communion to build us up in love and use our differences to grow us in holiness of life.
- **Listening:** Because God gives each of his children a unique perspective, we can listen to each other trusting God that as we listen we will grow in understanding of ourselves, of the other person, and of the communion that God creates.
- **Speaking:** Because God gives each of his children a unique perspective, we can speak to each other trusting God that as we speak we will grow in understanding of ourselves, of the other person, and of the communion that God creates.
- **Patience:** Because the communion God gives us in Christ is God's doing and not ours, we can be patient in listening and speaking to each other, trusting that God will deepen the unity he has already given us.

LCA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

1. Extract from **LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour**

We demonstrate God's love by:

- using polite and respectful language when engaging with each other, and
- respecting the opinions of others.

2. Extracts from **LCA Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policy**

In bringing God's love to life, the Church is committed to the prevention ... of harassment or abuse or the perception of harassment or abuse in the life of the Church.

The application of the policy will ensure an environment free from harassment or abuse of any type by:

- providing leadership and modelling appropriate behaviour
- encouraging people who are associated with the Church to be proactive in creating a supportive and respectful culture
- providing a safe environment that enables people to carry out their responsibilities associated with the Church free from abuse or harassment of any type.

During the consultation, if some deep issues need to be debated robustly, please carefully observe these key principles.

FORMAT OF CONSULTATIONS

	Responsibility	Time (minutes)
1. Welcome	District Bishop	5
2. Introduction	Project Officer	10
3. Opening Devotion	Chaplain	15
4. Presentation of the Draft Doctrinal Statement and Q&A 8: Does the ordination issue have to be church divisive?	District Bishop and CTICR Member	40
5. Small group discussion	District Bishop as facilitator	30
6. Morning/afternoon tea	Host Congregation	30
7. Feedback	District Bishop and CTICR Member	40
8. Close	Chaplain	10
		180 (3 hours)

Note: No sound or video recordings are to be made during any consultations.

OPENING DEVOTION

Reflect and prepare

We gather here together
as the body of Christ, united with him through baptism in his death and his resurrection.

We gather here together
as sinners in need of healing; as saints growing in grace.

We gather here together
eager to follow Christ and do his will; with open ears to hear his voice.

We gather here together
ready to learn; ready to listen; ready to see Christ in our brother or sister.

We gather here together in the name of our loving God
The Father, maker of heaven and earth
The Son, who was crucified for our sake
The Holy Spirit, the lord, the giver of life.

A reflection based on Colossians 3:12–14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion and kindness.

Lord Jesus, teach me today to be compassionate and kind. (pause for silent reflection)

Clothe yourselves with humility.

Lord Jesus, teach me today to be humble. (pause)

Clothe yourselves with gentleness and patience.

Lord Jesus, teach me today to be gentle and patient. (pause)

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Lord Jesus, teach me today to forgive, as you have forgiven me. (pause).

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Lord Jesus, teach me today to love my brothers and sisters, the way you love them.
(pause)

Lord God, your Spirit has guided and protected the church through every age, and you are guiding and protecting us today. As we study the question of the ordination of both women and men, live in our hearts, direct our discussions and show us your will. Help us to 'put on love' as we explore where we are of one mind, and the sensitive areas where we differ.

Give us compassion and self-control so that we do not try to dominate, control or coerce. Help us listen to each other and to hear each other, trusting that you often speak to us through a brother or a sister.

Open our hearts and minds to the possibility of being changed. Guide us and the whole church into your truth in the spirit of love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **Amen.**

DRAFT DOCTRINAL STATEMENT: THE CALL AND ORDINATION OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

Version 1¹

The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations has written this statement at the request of the 2015 General Convention.²

A. LUTHERAN DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

1. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) confesses that the office of the public ministry has been established by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. This is foundational to the LCA's teaching on the office of the ministry. Based on Articles 5 and 14 of the Augsburg Confession (AC), the teaching is set out in some detail in the LCA's Theses on the Office of the Ministry (TA 6), supported by scriptural references. This doctrinal statement takes the first ten theses of TA 6 as its starting point but not thesis 11, since this is the thesis that has barred women from the ordained ministry.
2. The texts that underpin the LCA's teaching on the doctrine of the ministry and those that are used in its Rite of Ordination (John 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26) may be applied equally to men and women. Therefore, the ordination of women to the office of the public ministry does not require any change to the Church's doctrine of the ministry, as set out in TA 6. Apart from TA 6.11, the ordination of both men and women does not change the LCA's doctrine of the ministry as articulated in the Confessions, the Theses of Agreement, or the LCA's Rite of Ordination.
3. According to the Lutheran Confessions, pastors 'do not represent their own persons, as Christ himself testifies (Luke 10:16), 'Whoever listens to you listens to me'. When pastors offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ.³ Just as Christ appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, broke bread with them, opened the scriptures to them, and opened their eyes to recognise him, so that their hearts were set on fire (Luke 24:30–32), so pastors fulfil their office by opening the scriptures and breaking bread with God's people. Through these channels of grace the eyes of God's people are opened to the good news of Jesus and their hearts are set on fire. Women are not excluded. On the contrary, since both men and women are created in the image of God and belong to the body of Christ, both can represent Christ.
4. The ministry of the first twelve apostles, which was foundational and temporary, continues today in the public ministry of word and sacrament. The precedent of male apostles and a male pastorate are facts of history; this precedent does not establish a requirement of the divinely instituted office. The fact that the twelve apostles whom Jesus commissioned were all male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time, but it is not prescriptive of the office for all time. Therefore, it cannot be a basis for refusing to ordain women.

¹ Feedback from the consultations will inform version 2 of the statement.

² Resolution 2015:0216 of the 18th General Convention of Synod. The draft doctrinal statement does not express the position of some members of the Commission.

³ AC Apology 7 and 8,28 (Kolb & Wengert, page 178).

5. Jesus certainly acted in a counter-cultural way by defying many of the customs of his day, but there were certain restrictions imposed by the Jewish culture of the day. One of those restrictions was that only men could become disciples of a rabbi (teacher) and Jesus himself was a rabbi (John 1:38; 3:2; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8; 20:16). Therefore, for the sake of his saving mission Jesus freely chose only men to his inner circle of disciples or apostles. Jesus' calling of the twelve apostles, who represented the twelve patriarchs of Old Testament Israel, also brought Israel's history to its fulfilment. Therefore, they played a unique role in the history of the Christian church. These historical and cultural factors cannot be overlooked when trying to understand why Jesus did not include women in his inner circle but why they can be included in the church's ministry today.
6. The doctrinal basis for the ordination of both men and women recognises Christ's institution of the office and understands that the prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 do not apply today in a way that would exclude suitably qualified women from call and ordination to the public office.

B. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

7. Two texts (1 Cor 14:33b–36 and 1 Tim 2:11–15) have provided the basis for the LCA's prohibition of the ordination of women (TA 6.11). However, as the following paragraphs demonstrate, neither text speaks directly to the topic of ordination to the office of the public ministry, and neither text contains a command, either of the Lord or of St. Paul, that would prohibit the ordination of women.

1 Corinthians 14:33b–36

8. The mission of the church is St. Paul's primary consideration at Corinth. He insists that worship be practised 'decently and in order' so that the gospel may be proclaimed clearly and the church built up in love (14:33a,40).
9. The loveless exercise of spiritual gifts, and the speaking of wives that shamed their husbands in public, prevented worship from being conducted decently and in good order and therefore from building up the church in love (14:1–36; see also 8:1).
10. Also, within the strict codes of shame and honour throughout the Mediterranean world, such public display was prohibited (14:33b,36). The expansion of the church at Corinth, with its origins in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:1–11), would have been greatly hindered by the disruptive questions of wives (14:34,35).
11. 'The command of the Lord' (1 Cor 14:37) is Jesus' love command, the new commandment (John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:23; 4:21; 1 Cor 13:1–13; 14:1), the command that his followers love one another as he has first loved them. The command applies to all the worship regulations in chapters 11–14. The immediately preceding command that wives be silent at worship (14:34–37) should be seen in this light, as an example of how the law of love applied in a first century context, not as a prescription for all times and places.
12. Paul's warning that 'anyone who does not recognise this is not to be recognised' (14:38) applies to those whose disorderly conduct at worship breaches the commandment to build up the community in love.
13. Paul is clear that women served as prophets in the church at Corinth (1 Cor 11:5), a significant office in the early church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Prophets had the inspired spiritual gift of speaking and teaching the gospel clearly, so that people were built

up in faith and love and were led to the praise and worship of God (1 Cor 14:3–5,19, 24–33).

14. It is important to distinguish between prophets, among whom women were included, and the disruptive wives who were to be silent at worship and raise their questions with their husbands in the privacy of the home. Read as a whole it is clear that St Paul's highly specific worship regulations apply only in the social setting of the time in order to avoid giving offence to regular worshippers and to unbelievers and outsiders (1 Cor 14:22,23). However, his commands to build up the church at worship, by loving one another and by ensuring that worship takes place 'decently and in order' for the sake of the gospel, apply until the coming of Christ in glory. Different regulations invariably need to be enacted at different times in the history of the church in order to achieve these unchanging goals.

1 Timothy 2:11–15

15. The context for 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is a situation of disorder. Paul insists that the effective witness of the gospel depended, among many other things, on wives conforming to the social conventions of both the synagogue and the Greco-Roman world of the day, which required that they regard the home as their proper realm, conduct themselves quietly and reverently, live in subordination to the traditions of the day, and refrain from teaching or exercising domineering authority over their husbands (1 Tim 2:9–15). The effective witness of the gospel has always demanded the highest standard of conduct among Christ's followers (Matt 5:16; 1 Thess 4:11–12; 1 Tim 3:7; 6:1). But today the behaviour that makes a deep impression on outsiders no longer includes the deferential silence of women and their subordination within the domestic realm.

Codes of conduct

16. The early church was quick to formulate a consistent code of conduct governing interpersonal relationships (Eph 5:21 – 6:9; Col 3:18 – 4:1; 1 Tim 2:8–12; 1 Pet 3:1–7). Presupposing the transforming effect of the gospel, these tables of duties set a far higher standard than the 'secular' household codes of the day, countering the all too ready notion that freedom in the gospel implied licence in ethics, and paving the way for exemplary Christian conduct that would enhance the spread of the gospel. If the conduct of Christian wives deviated from accepted social opinion and standards in the Mediterranean world the reception of the gospel would have been severely hindered.

Galatians 3:27–28

17. In Galatians 3:27–28, St. Paul speaks of the unity of all baptised believers as children of God. The gospel does not abolish natural distinctions between people of different nationality, class or sex; rather, it erodes barriers built by humans that deny our unity as believers, barriers between Jews and gentiles (Acts 10:1–48; Eph 2:11–22; see Gal 2:11–14), between masters and slaves (Philem 16; 1 Cor 7:21–24; see Eph 6:5–9; Col 4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2), and between males and females. Since men and women share a common identity as children of God through the gospel, the distinction between the sexes that has been regarded as essential to the ordained ministry is made null and void.

Wider biblical witness

18. Even though the following examples may not have a direct bearing on the ordination of women, they show that women were involved in leadership roles in Israel and in the early church. Already in the Old Testament women are shown serving in leadership roles among the people of God (e.g. Exod 15:19–21; Judg 4 and 5; 2 Kgs 22:14–20). Jesus commissioned women to proclaim the resurrection to the disciples (Matt 28:10). The daughters of the evangelist Philip were prophets (Acts 21:9), Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, took the lead in teaching 'the way of God to [Apollos] more accurately' (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3), Phoebe was a deacon, or minister (Rom 16:1), the same word that describes the ministry of Epaphras (Col 1:7) and Timothy (1 Tim 4:6). Junia may have been an apostle (Rom 16: 7). Paul said that Euodia and Syntyche 'struggled beside [him] in the work of the gospel' (Phil 4:3), and nearly one third of the church leaders whom Paul greets in Romans 16 are women. Although there were a variety of models for leadership and a variety of ways of ordering the holy ministry in the early church, these New Testament examples show that women were included in leadership and ministry roles in the church.

C. CONCLUSION

19. Although the gospel transforms people, relationships and communities, the early church was careful and cautious in its practice so as not to create undue offence. With its home in Judaism, where women could not serve as priests in the temple or as leaders in the synagogue or study the scriptures with a rabbi, the church would have failed to make significant inroads with the gospel if all previous restrictions on women were immediately lifted. St Paul's regulations regarding the conduct of wives in worship and in society at large were driven by his overriding missionary imperative, to 'become all things to all people, so that [he] might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22).
20. Neither 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 nor 1 Timothy 2:11–15 records a command of the Lord that would prohibit the ordination of women. In a different social context today, the equal standing before God of all the baptised means that we can remove the role restrictions that have prohibited women from being ordained.
21. The ministry of word and sacrament has been instituted by Christ so that people may come to believe in him and be built up in faith, hope and love. The New Testament does not insist that those who hold the office must be male; they could also be female. The ordination of women to the office of the ministry is compatible with the doctrine of the ministry, as articulated in AC 5, TA 6.1–10 and the LCA Rite of Ordination. Therefore, duly called, qualified and authorised women may be ordained alongside their male colleagues and exercise the office of the keys, by proclaiming the gospel, pronouncing the absolution, and administering the sacraments (John 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26).

THESES OF AGREEMENT 6: THESES ON THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

1. The New Testament ministry is the office instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, through which as through instruments the Holy Ghost works saving faith in the hearts of men. Matt 10; Matt 28:18–20; Luke 9:1,2; 1 Cor 3:5–8; Augsburg Confession V; Form.Conc., Sol.Decl. XI,29.
2. The office of the ministry is therefore an office instituted not by man, but by God. 2 Cor 5:18–20; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; Apology XIII,11.
3. Since it is Christ's will that His Gospel be preached and the Sacraments administered, and since the use of the means of grace is essential to the existence of the Church on earth, and since according to the Lord's promise the Church on earth is to remain until the end of time, Matt.16:18, the office of the ministry is an office, which is simultaneous with the Church and to which the Church is bound from its beginning to the end of time. Matt 28:18–20; Mark 16:15,16; Rom 10:8–17; 1 Cor 1:21; Rom 16:25,26; Augsburg Confessions XXVIII, 8-10, 20,21.
4. Though the power to remit or retain sin, to make known the Law and the Gospel, was originally and immediately given by the Lord of the Church to all Christians, that is, to the whole Church and also to the individual congregation, and though all believers are a spiritual priesthood, yet the office of the ministry is not identical with the spiritual priesthood of all believers in Christ. But there is a vital connection between the two inasmuch as the ministry by the institution of the Lord necessarily exists within the Church which is the royal priesthood and the people of God. Matt 16:15–19; Matt 18:15–20; 1 Pet 2:9; John 20:19–23; Luke 24:33–36; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 1 Cor 12:28,29; Rom 10:15; Smalc. .Art., Tract.24, 67–69.
5. The office of the ministry is essentially an office of service to the Lord and His Church with the Word and the Sacraments, which office the ministers of the Church must exercise in obedience to their Lord and the directions given in the Word. Therefore, the office of the ministry does not give to those who bear it, arbitrary power over Christians, nor does it deliver the ministers of the Word up to the arbitrary directions and commands of men. Likewise, it is not a Levitical priesthood of the New Testament (Apol. XIII,7-11; XXIV, 58,59); nor are those who bear it an exclusive class distinct from Christians generally; nor do they possess a peculiar sanctity or an indelible character; nor does the ministry possess the power of self-perpetuation. Matt 23:8–12; 1 Cor 3:5; 4:1,2; 2 Cor 4:5; Col 1:23–25; 1 Pet 5:1–3; Matt 20:25–28; Apol.XXVIII, 13,14; XXII,9; XXIV, 86 (German and English text re Liturgia); Smalc. Art., Pars II, IV, 9; Form.Conc., Sol. Decl. XII, 30; XI, 29.
6. According to the New Testament the spiritual functions of the Apostolate are continued only in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Acts 6:1–4; Acts 24:23; Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 3:1ff; 5:17; Titus 1:5ff; 1 Pet 5:1; Heb 13:17; Apol.XV, 42 (44); Smalc.Art.Tractatus: 10, 13-15, 60-65; Smalc.Art., Pars II, IV,9; Form.Conc., Sol.Decl. X.10.
7. 'No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called' (C.A. XIV). The Lord calls individuals into the office of the ministry through the Christian congregations, Acts 13:1–4; and the Christian congregation, either alone or together with other congregations, or through properly appointed representatives, calls qualified persons (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9; 2 Tim 2:24,25; Acts 1:24) into the office of the ministry publicly to exercise the functions of this office. The minister of the Word is thus called by the Lord through His Church, and by the Church as through human agency and authority, but in obedience to the command of the

Lord. He is therefore the servant of the Lord Jesus, a minister of the New Testament, a steward of the mysteries of God, called to serve by publicly administering the means of grace. 2 Cor 4:5; Rom 10:15; 2 Cor 5:18; 1 Thess 5:12,13; Augsburg Confession XIV; Apol.VII, 28(end of paragraph); Smalc. Act. Tractatus: 14, 15, 24, 26, 67-69.

8. Ordination, though not a Sacrament, is the solemn ecclesiastical rite in which a duly qualified person (1 Tim 3:2-7); Titus 1:5-9), having accepted a call by a congregation or the Church, is received by the Church as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4: 11; Titus 1:5) and publicly declared to be a minister of the New Testament, his call thereby being ratified and publicly acknowledged, and the blessing of the Lord is invoked upon him with the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands is an old and biblical rite, but it has no divine command and is not essential for the validity and efficacy of the office. Acts 6:6; 8:17; 13:3; 1 Tim 5:22; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Num 27:18; Smalc.Art.Tractatus 70.
9. Although the office of the ministry is the only office ordained by Christ for His Church of the New Testament, yet the Christian congregation has the authority to establish auxiliary offices (elders, deacons, teachers, Sunday-school teachers and superintendents, trustees, wardens, etc.) after the example of the apostles and the early Christian Church (e.g., diaconate). Acts 6:6; Rom 16:1.
10. Similarly the Church at large has the liberty and authority from Christ to establish various ecclesiastical and administrative offices for the common prosecution of various undertakings in obedience to the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations. 1 Cor 12:4-13, 26-28; Acts 11:21-23. This necessitates proper guidance and direction, spiritual and otherwise, 1 Cor 14:40; 2 Cor 8:18-21; 9:5, because the Lord has commanded that everything be done decently and in order and in accordance with the law of love. Such arrangements may vary according to time and circumstances. All external arrangements in congregations and in church bodies and all ranking of the ministers are purely of human right and the efficacy of the ministry of the Gospel is not bound to any human institution. Matt 23:8; 1 Cor 3:21-23; Augsburg Confession XV; XXVIII, 5-29; Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 10, 11, 61-65.
11. Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament. 1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired.

AUGSBURG CONFESSION ARTICLES 5 AND 14

Article 5: Concerning the Office of Preaching

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.

Article 14: Concerning Church Government

Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.

PREAMBLE TO Q&A 8: DOES THE ORDINATION ISSUE HAVE TO BE CHURCH DIVISIVE?

The 2015 General Convention of the Lutheran Church of Australia asked the CTICR to prepare a draft doctrinal statement outlining a theological basis for the ordination of women and men, and also outlining a theological basis for why the ordination of women and men need not be church divisive. In 2016 the commission gave its primary attention to the theological basis for the ordination of women and men and to an accompanying commentary. The fruits of that work are available for the consultations and will be reworked in light of feedback.

At this stage the commission has been unable to complete the second task, of presenting a draft of the theological basis for why the ordination of women and men need not be church divisive. There are two main reasons. The first is that drafting the theological basis for the ordination of men and women proved to be time consuming, and did not leave much time for this second task. The second reason is that the commission has not yet agreed on how to approach the question, given the complex theological, practical and pastoral considerations involved. The commission is still committed to attending to the task that synod has requested. Background work has been done and the commission is continuing to work on the draft statement, which it plans to complete in time for the lead up to the next General Pastors' Conference and General Convention.

Prior to the last convention a series of Questions and Answers (Q&As) were written as a contribution to the dialogue on the ordination of women. Since we don't yet have the second task prepared, responding to the question why the ordination of both men and women need not be church divisive, we are including Q&A 8 here as background reading because it addresses the same topic. We again commend it to your reading and study. In addition, we have included one question for small group discussion which asks for reflection on this matter. As part of this consultation the commission is willing to receive feedback on this issue as well, and use that feedback to inform its future work.

Q&A 8: DOES THE ORDINATION ISSUE HAVE TO BE CHURCH DIVISIVE?

One of the concerns raised in discussions about the ordination of women is that it could 'split the church'. Over the years the LCA has been blessed with remarkable unity, even amidst diverse opinions on many matters. But now, those on both sides of the question recognize that proceeding with the ordination of women could result in a rupture within the institution of the LCA. While no one can predict what in fact will happen given either outcome, the question addressed here is whether the ordination of women has to be divisive. In other words, would certain outcomes on the ordination question leave some members or congregations conscience-bound to separate from the LCA? Before we explore some of the theological and practical issues surrounding these questions, there are a few contextual matters worth noting.

First, and most importantly, synod will primarily be addressing the theological issue of whether it is biblically permissible to ordain women to the public ministry of word and sacrament. The practical implications of any decision for the unity of the church flows on from this theological deliberation. Care needs to be taken that what might happen as a result of either decision does not predetermine how we think biblically and theologically about this issue.

Second, it helps to define what we mean by unity and division. Here we can make a broad distinction between 'baptismal unity', 'sacramental unity' and 'institutional unity'. The first is the foundational unity all Christians share with each other based on a common baptism and confession of faith in Jesus Christ. In a more narrow sense, there is also the sacramental unity of Christians who demonstrate their common confession by sharing together in Holy Communion. Happily, such sharing often extends across institutional boundaries; therefore we speak of the altar and pulpit fellowship of different church bodies. More narrowly still, there is institutional unity, which in this case concerns the teaching and organization of the LCA. Of course, other forms of unity are important too, such as cultural and family ties, for example. But our focus here is particularly on the sacramental and institutional unity of the LCA.

Third, as already mentioned, the question cannot be whether or not the ordination question will be church divisive. Rather, we are asking whether or not it has to be church divisive. It is neither possible nor prudent to predict how people might react in certain circumstances, but we can gauge whether or not scripture and theology actually direct us to give up visible unity when full doctrinal agreement is lacking. Obviously this is not a settled question. For some, the ordination question is a weighty enough matter to divide over, in spite of their concern for the unity of the church; for others, the sacramental and institutional unity of the LCA is itself of greater theological value.

With this in mind we now turn to a few core theological issues, followed by some further practical questions, before concluding with some recommendations on more or less helpful ways of proceeding.

Theological issues

Unity

Unity is a gift of God, and is ultimately an expression of God's will for all creation (Eph 1:10). As a foretaste of this, the Triune God creates the unity of the church by uniting us with himself and with each other, through baptism into Christ and by the gift of the Spirit (Eph 4:4-6). This unity extends across the generations with Christians of all times and places, and can be seen as the Father's answer to the prayer of his Son (John 17:20-23). Therefore, as we confess in the creeds, we can make the audacious claim that the church is indeed 'one' and 'holy'.

This gift of unity is effected by the Holy Spirit, expressed by his people in a common confession of faith, and enacted sacramentally in the worship of the local congregation. Through the preaching of the gospel and the celebration of Holy Communion, Christ unites us with himself and each other, and he equips us for service in the world. We recognize that this 'participation in holy things' is the presupposition for all the other kinds of unity we enjoy in the LCA, such as a common mission, governance, and practice. Finally, the gift of unity also entails an ongoing task, that of preserving the gift of unity as much as is humanly possible (Rom 12:18). We are called to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit' (Eph 4:3).

Disunity

Sadly, division is often the reality in a sinful world, including visible divisions in God's church. To some extent, disunity expresses the continuing influence of our fallen nature, both individually and communally. This does not mean that Christians should in every circumstance perpetuate an outward show of unity where a common confession of faith is lacking; sometimes faithfulness to God's word and the gospel leaves no other option but to separate.

Similarly, not every doctrinal controversy leads inevitably to division. It does so if there is a clear denial of the central tenets of the Christian faith. If one of the parties departs from those core doctrines confessed in the ecumenical creeds (e.g. the Trinity, or the person of Christ) or the Augsburg Confession (e.g. justification by faith, or the means of grace) separation becomes inevitable. However, false teaching, which may not in itself be a core issue, will impinge in some way or another on things that are considered 'central tenets', even if all false teaching is not on the same level.

The question for us then becomes: how does the ordination of women relate to these central doctrinal tenets? Some will maintain that because the ordination of women does not impinge on these central matters, it should not be a church divisive issue. Others, however, will claim that it is possibly church divisive because the ordination question touches on a central matter, namely the authority of scripture, and the ordination of women is seen to disregard scriptural authority.

Unity and division in the LCA

Before we address some possible practical outcomes, it is worth pausing to consider why this issue of unity and division looms so large in LCA thought and history. The very formation of the LCA came about through a decades long effort to overcome the disunity that separated the two former Lutheran synods. Such union did not come cheaply. Only through years of discussion was a church union achieved that maintained the theological integrity of each group. Both synods knew all too well the reality of church division. And so considerable care was taken to clarify key issues, overcome misunderstandings, and lay a synodical foundation that could support a common confession and mission, even while allowing a certain breadth of theological opinion.

In its Theses of Agreement (TA), the new church spelt out its principles governing church fellowship (TA, I). Here two specific points continue to guide our discussion concerning the ordination question.

- First, the Theses maintain that if a 'difference in teaching or practice is a departure from the doctrine of the Bible, such difference cannot be tolerated, but must be pointed out as an error, on the basis of clear passages of Holy Writ; and if the error is persisted in, in spite of instruction, warning, and earnest witness, it must at last lead to a separation' (TA, 1.4a).

- Second, while the Theses hold that false doctrine and practice are church divisive, they also remind us that any 'differences in exegesis that do not affect doctrine are not church divisive' (TA, 1.4e).

A key point, at least from the perspective of the Theses, is that the ordination question is not simply an isolated matter of biblical exegesis, but a specifically doctrinal matter (see TA 6.11). Because the ordination of women relates to the divine ordering of the ministry, the Theses view the question as impinging on a core doctrinal matter, and therefore require unanimity.

However, in 1976 the LCA's Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) considered the question of the permanent status of the LCA's Theses of Agreement and offered the following advice to the Church: 'Like all confessional statements, the Theses of Agreement are always under the authority of God, and therefore there must always be a readiness to submit them to the critical scrutiny of God's Word and accordingly confirm them, or amend or repudiate them when further study of God's Word shows them to be inadequate or in error' ('The Permanent Status of the Theses of Agreement', DSTO A26).

The question for the LCA at this point, then, is whether it can, with good conscience, change its previously stated doctrine and practice. In other words, can the LCA show that the issue of ordination involves differences of exegetical opinion that do not affect doctrine and so are not church divisive?

Practical questions

Whatever the actual decision will be at the upcoming synodical convention, there could be a number of practical outcomes. While we tend to associate such outcomes with a decision in favour of ordaining women, maintaining the status quo might also have ramifications of a practical nature.

A decision to retain the current teaching of the Church could lead to outcomes such as these:

- It could precipitate the departure of LCA members who have till now remained loyal to the Church while waiting and hoping for a change in teaching and practice.
- It could further hinder the perception of the Church's attitude to women, both in the LCA and in the wider community.

A decision to change the current teaching of the Church could lead to outcomes such as these:

- Individuals may feel conscience-bound to leave a congregation when they can no longer worship in it, or a congregation or a group of congregations may feel conscience-bound to separate from the LCA because in their opinion it has moved away from one or more of its key doctrinal commitments.
- Individuals or congregations might remain within the LCA, but under protest. Their protest could be that they continue to state publicly their opposition to the decision of the LCA, or perhaps even work towards having the decision reversed following due synodical process.

In addition to these issues of conscience facing members and congregations, there are further practical questions that bishops and pastors have a special responsibility to address, even though they ultimately concern all members of the church:

- At present, pastors, though holding divergent views on this issue, can worship together. What are the implications for a united pastorate once a decision is made?
- How would bishops and pastors relate to dissenting pastors and congregations who wish to stay within the LCA?
- How would pastors care for dissenting members who wish to remain within the LCA but also voice publicly their opposition to the church's decision?
- Would the right of congregations to call pastors of their own choosing from the LCA Roll of Pastors remain unchanged?
- Would it be theologically feasible for a district, group of congregations, or an individual congregation to remain in the LCA while maintaining a different theology and practice with respect to ordaining women?
- How would a decision affect synodical functions, both services and debates on the floor of convention?
- What would be the possible implications for the church's mission, in Australian society generally, and also in specific cultural situations where the role of women might differ?
- How would our decision affect church relations with other Lutheran bodies, and with other Christian churches?

Conclusion

The main question underlying this discussion has not been whether the ordination of women will divide the church, but whether it has to divide the church. In thinking this question through, we stressed that the first question the LCA has to address is the biblical and theological permissibility of the ordination of women. The implications of whatever decision is reached for the LCA's unity is strictly speaking a secondary issue, although it was also noted that the unity of Christ's church is itself a theological issue that needs to be kept in view.

Because of the apostle Paul's words to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3), the attitude with which we discuss the ordination question is of the highest importance. Even if church separation cannot be ruled out, it should always be our goal to avoid such an outcome. To this end, we commend 'A Message from the LCA Bishop' to readers for some very helpful steps towards the making of a healthy dialogue [To read this message, go to owl.lca.org.au and select 'Bishop's Message' from the top navigation bar].

As we continue to discuss this matter, it is faith that leads us to listen as attentively as we can to God's word; it is hope that keeps us listening as attentively as we can to each other, and it is love that binds us together as we do so.

DRAFT DOCTRINAL STATEMENT PLUS COMMENTARY: THE CALL AND ORDINATION OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN TO THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

Each Draft Doctrinal Statement paragraph appears in bold followed by the Commentary which is not bold.

A. LUTHERAN DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

- 1. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) confesses that the office of the public ministry has been established by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. This is foundational to the LCA's teaching on the office of the ministry. Based on Articles 5 and 14 of the Augsburg Confession (AC), the teaching is set out in some detail in the LCA's Theses on the Office of the Ministry (TA 6), supported by scriptural references. This doctrinal statement takes the first ten theses of TA 6 as its starting point but not thesis 11, since this is the thesis that has barred women from the ordained ministry.**

The Lutheran understanding of the office of the holy ministry puts the emphasis on Christ who first established this office and now calls pastors to serve his church through the ministry of word and sacrament.

The only paragraph of the *Theses of Agreement* that would need to be amended if the LCA resolved that women may be ordained is TA 6.11, which states that '1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This rule is binding on all of Christendom'. This is the current public teaching of the Church. If the LCA voted to change its current teaching and permit the ordination of women as well as men, it would first have to amend thesis 11 according to the procedures laid down in the constitution. However, that is not the concern of this document.

The status of the *Theses of Agreement* and the process involved in making any change to them is set out in the *LCA's Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions*:

Like all confessional statements, the Theses of Agreement are always under the authority of the Word of God, and therefore there must always be a readiness to submit them to the critical scrutiny of God's Word and accordingly confirm them, or amend or repudiate them when further study of God's Word shows them to be inadequate or in error (DSTO A 26).

- 2. The texts that underpin the LCA's teaching on the doctrine of the ministry and those that are used in its Rite of Ordination (John 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26) may be applied equally to men and women. Therefore, the ordination of women to the office of the public ministry does not require any change to the Church's doctrine of the ministry, as set out in TA 6. Apart from TA 6.11, the ordination of both men and women does not change the LCA's doctrine of the ministry as articulated in the Confessions, the Theses of Agreement, or the LCA's Rite of Ordination.**

The doctrine of the ministry as such is not in contention, only the matter of the ordination of women. However, the Lutheran Confessions do not address the specific question of the ordination of women but speak only about the office of the ministry. Furthermore, there is a difference of opinion within the LCA as to whether the ordination of women is a doctrine or a practice. However, the mere fact that the *Theses of Agreement* (TA 6.11) prohibit the call and ordination of women to the public office clearly makes it a doctrinal issue for the LCA.

The doctrinal basis for the call and ordination of women to the public ministry is no different from that of men. In both cases, the ministry is grounded in Christ's command to preach the gospel, to baptise, to administer the Lord's Supper, and to absolve the penitent. Consequently, the teaching that women may be ordained as well as men is based on the same doctrine of the ministry as taught in the LCA since its beginning 50 years ago—with one exception: the gender of the pastor, whether male or female, is now said to have no doctrinal consequences.

All can agree that the office of the ordained ministry depends solely on the word of Christ, which first established it and which continues to be heard through it today. However, the argument against the ordination of women sees the 'word of Christ' (much like the command of the Lord in 1 Cor 14:37) not only as the word that is proclaimed by the office but also as the word that establishes the office and so for that reason it sees it as prohibiting women from becoming pastors. The argument for the ordination of women, on the other hand, understands the 'word of Christ' here in such a way that it does not prohibit the ordination of women. The office was established by Christ to proclaim the gospel and whether it is proclaimed by a man or a woman makes no difference to the gospel. The crucial thing is that the gospel is preached, and in that we can all rejoice (Phil 1:18).

- 3. According to the Lutheran Confessions, pastors 'do not represent their own persons, as Christ himself testifies (Luke 10:16), 'Whoever listens to you listens to me'. When pastors offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ.¹ Just as Christ appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, broke bread with them, opened the scriptures to them, and opened their eyes to recognise him, so that their hearts were set on fire (Luke 24:30–32), so pastors fulfil their office by opening the scriptures and breaking bread with God's people. Through these channels of grace the eyes of God's people are opened to the good news of Jesus and their hearts are set on fire. Women are not excluded. On the contrary, since both men and women are created in the image of God and belong to the body of Christ, both can represent Christ.**

The main point of this paragraph is to stress that the validity of the pastoral ministry depends on Christ whom pastors represent, not on their own person. As the Apology of the Augsburg Confession says, 'When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ'.¹ This is the reason their ministry is valid.

But how do pastors represent Christ? The sinfulness of human nature (AC 2) makes it clear that pastors cannot represent Christ according to his moral character. Nevertheless, throughout its history the church has raised up individuals who have gained supporters around their claim that the validity of the public office and the efficacy of the means of grace depend on the Christian character of the minister. This opinion is repudiated in Augsburg Confession, Article 8, which affirms that the validity of the office and the efficacy of the word and the sacraments are guaranteed by nothing other than their source in God and that the ministry is not nullified by the character of the minister if it falls short of what is demanded of a minister of the gospel (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). This is in line with the thought of St Paul when he says words to the effect that questions of character and motive should not be permitted to impede the proclamation of the gospel (Phil 1:15–18).

Pastors do not represent Christ by virtue of a special quality or character that is conferred with ordination. The LCA's Theses of Agreement says that ministers do not 'possess a peculiar sanctity or an indelible character' (TA 6.5; A12).

Just as the first Adam embraces the whole of sinful humanity, both men and women (Rom 5:12,15), so also through the new Adam, Jesus Christ, God redeems and restores fallen humanity, both men and women (Rom 5:15–19; 1 Cor 15:45–49). Through their baptismal incorporation into Christ, women are just as much a part of the body of Christ as men are and can represent Christ to the members of his body no less than men.

The teaching concerning the image of God tells the same story. Both women and men bear the divine image (Gen 1:27). Through baptism they put on Christ (Gal 3:27,28; Eph 4:24; Col 3:8–14) and by the indwelling Spirit 'are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another' (2 Cor 3:18). Having been clothed in Christ, all believers equally, whether male or female, may now represent Jesus to other members of his body. The biblical teaching on the image of God prevents us from saying that only males can represent Jesus as rightly called ministers.

- 4. The ministry of the first twelve apostles, which was foundational and temporary, continues today in the public ministry of word and sacrament. The precedent of male apostles and a male pastorate are facts of history; this precedent does not establish**

¹ AC Apology 7 and 8,28 (Kolb & Wengert, page 178).

a requirement of the divinely instituted office. The fact that the twelve apostles whom Jesus commissioned were all male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time, but it is not prescriptive of the office for all time. Therefore, it cannot be a basis for refusing to ordain women.

This paragraph explains the relationship between the first apostles and today's pastors. In the strictest sense, Jesus' apostles were those who saw the risen Lord and were then commissioned by him to bear witness before the world. Since the apostolic office involved eyewitness testimony and personal authorization by Jesus, it was both foundational and temporary. When the apostles died out, they were not replaced by new apostles. Matthias was the replacement for Judas, not the first of a new generation of apostles. But the ministry that Christ began with the apostles continues, not by the laying on of hands in an unbroken historical succession of male-only ordinations, but by the public ministry of word and sacrament. Christ is present and life-giving in the church today through the apostolic ministry of word and sacrament as exercised by those in the public office, a ministry that reaches back to the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection but is no longer restricted to males.

- 5. Jesus certainly acted in a counter-cultural way by defying many of the customs of his day, but there were certain restrictions imposed by the Jewish culture of the day. One of those restrictions was that only men could become disciples of a rabbi (teacher) and Jesus himself was a rabbi (John 1:38; 3:2; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8; 20:16). Therefore, for the sake of his saving mission Jesus freely chose only men to his inner circle of disciples or apostles. Jesus' calling of the twelve apostles, who represented the twelve patriarchs of Old Testament Israel, also brought Israel's history to its fulfilment. Therefore, they played a unique role in the history of the Christian church. These historical and cultural factors cannot be overlooked when trying to understand why Jesus did not include women in his inner circle but why they can be included in the church's ministry today.**

There certainly were no women among the twelve disciples. However, it is also certainly the case that Jesus did not choose any Gentile disciples. Yet the church has never argued that it is wrong for Gentiles to become priests or pastors. It has always understood that, in the kingdom of the new covenant, the old barriers are broken down. As St. Paul states in Galatians 3:28, 'in Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek'. Thus the church has accepted Gentiles as full members of the kingdom. But in the same verse Paul also points out that in Christ there is no longer 'male and female'. For a consistent argument, it is important to see that for St. Paul the overcoming of the barriers applies to women as well as to Gentiles.

The fact that Jesus first called and commissioned only men to preach his word was necessary in order to show that the New Testament church, represented as it was by the twelve apostles, was the fulfilment of Old Testament Israel, represented by the twelve patriarchs.

The fact that Jesus called only men to be apostles was also necessary for another reason. In first century Palestine, a woman had no standing in public life and her testimony was not valid in a court of law. Since the apostles whom Jesus commissioned were witnesses of the resurrection (according to Acts this is how they saw themselves), this would have been an impossible role for women. This is borne out by two facts: First, when the women, who were the first to see Jesus alive, the first witnesses of the risen Lord, reported this to the Eleven, they refused to believe: 'But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense' (Luke 24:11). Secondly, when Paul recounts the list of eye witnesses in his letter to the church at Corinth, the tradition he is citing deliberately leaves out any mention of the women (1 Cor 15:3-8), even though they had been the first to discover the empty tomb and to see Jesus alive. However, given that Paul is building a case for the truthfulness of the resurrection based on eye-witness testimony, he does not include the women in the list of witnesses in order not to undermine the cogency of his argument.

Even though Jesus acted in a very counter-cultural way in some respects (such as even allowing women among his followers and speaking to the Samaritan woman all alone, things that no self-respecting Jewish rabbi would ever do), nevertheless, Jesus' post-Easter mission would have stalled if he had included women among the twelve apostles. The message of the resurrection met with enough rejection as it was (Acts 17:32), but if it had been proclaimed by

women, it would have received no hearing at all (Luke 24:10,11), certainly not by any self-respecting Jewish man, let alone the leaders of a synagogue. It is Jewish culture here that is the issue, not Hellenistic culture which had female priests at many cultic sites. However, the Christian church grew out of Judaism, not Hellenism, and it was to Jews that the message of Jesus' resurrection was first taken, and even when the gospel was taken outside of Palestine, as we know from Acts, Peter and Paul repeatedly went to the Jewish synagogue first, in line with the divine plan: to the Jews first and then to the Greeks (Rom 1:16).

As the Draft Doctrinal Statement makes clear, this cultural factor cannot be overlooked when trying to understand why Jesus did not include women in his circle but why they can be included in the church's ministry today. It is in this light that we are to understand paragraph 4 of the Doctrinal Statement when it says that 'the fact that the twelve apostles, whom Jesus commissioned, were all male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time, but not prescriptive of the office for all time'. To repeat a point made earlier: this historical precedent is not the same as a divine command.

The church is a model of the new creation for the world, demonstrating to the world, however imperfectly, what God intends for his creation and what he will perfectly reveal when he unveils the new heavens and the new earth. The old order of creation is transformed 'in the Lord' (1 Cor 11:11; Gal 3:27,28). The church gradually abolished from its community the discrimination based on these distinctions. In New Testament times, it resolved the Jew/Greek divide. Then Christians worked for the abolition of slavery. Finally, the church is working to include women in its various roles, including the office of pastor.

The central concern, of both the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, is that the good news of salvation be brought to all people in the most effective way possible. The church lives under the gospel in Christian freedom and is 'gospel-centred' not 'law-oriented'. That does not mean Christians are 'free' to disobey the law of God, but that we are free to let our lives be shaped by the gospel and the missionary imperative so that all people may hear the good news. Today the effectiveness of the church's mission would be enhanced by having women serve as pastors. The LCA is therefore being urged to receive with thankfulness the gifted women that God is giving us to serve as pastors in our church.

The greatest concern is not that the LCA might cave in to the 'spirit of the age', but that we might allow non-essentials to stand in the way of the clear and effective communication of the gospel. Of course, we must be on our guard against the watering down of biblical doctrine through cultural pressure. The world does not define the gospel for the church. But it is also true that the church must be culturally sensitive and flexible in the way it communicates the gospel.

Paul says, 'To the Jews I became a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel' (1 Cor 9:20-23).

The church is called to follow this example of Paul and be flexible in non-essentials for the sake of the gospel. The gender of the pastor, whether male or female, is not essential to the message proclaimed, nor to the validity and efficacy of the ministry. When Scripture is read in this light, it does not prohibit women from serving as pastors today. Western culture has moved on from the patriarchal societies of previous centuries to the extent that not having women pastors today could well be a barrier to mission—the very opposite of the situation at the time of Jesus and his apostles.

Pivotal to a correct interpretation of scripture is the understanding that some biblical texts need to be read contextually if they are to be interpreted accurately, while others readily transcend the original time and place of writing. With Luther, we will always ask, 'To whom was this word of God or that word of God addressed, and in what way does it apply to us today?' With Paul we will ask, 'Does this interpretation of the scriptural injunction, or that practice, promote Christ in today's cultural milieu? Or does it place an unnecessary stumbling block in the way of the gospel?'

A contextual reading of the texts that appear to prohibit women from the public office clearly deal with issues peculiar to the churches Paul was addressing. Paul's central concern was always the clear proclamation of the gospel within orderly worship so that people would be brought to faith and built up in the faith. In various ways, the involvement of women at Corinth

and Ephesus was hindering that primary goal, so they had to be counselled to desist. The Bible and the Lutheran Confessions are insistent that the church's essential task, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to bring the good news of Christ's salvation to all nations (Matt 28:19,20). The Confessions clearly indicate that the office of the ministry does not depend upon the qualities or maleness of the minister for its validity or efficacy, but upon the gospel and the sacraments.

- 6. The doctrinal basis for the ordination of both men and women recognises Christ's institution of the office and understands that the prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 do not apply today in a way that would exclude suitably qualified women from call and ordination to the public office.**

Since women *may* be ordained, the question of whether they *should* be ordained will depend on pastoral considerations and what is best for the well-being of the church.

B: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

- 7. Two texts (1 Cor 14:33b–36 and 1 Tim 2:11–15) have provided the basis for the LCA's prohibition of the ordination of women (TA 6.11). However, as the following paragraphs demonstrate, neither text speaks directly to the topic of ordination to the office of the public ministry, and neither text contains a command, either of the Lord or of St. Paul, that would prohibit the ordination of women.**

In its debate about the ordination of both men and women, the LCA has focused chiefly on two texts, 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15, because they are the two texts that the Church has said prohibit the ordination of women (Theses of Agreement 6.11). However, neither text deals specifically with the office of the ordained ministry, and neither text contains a command, either of the Lord or of St. Paul, that would prohibit the ordination of women. The point of these texts, however, is as binding now as it was then, that is, that worship be done 'decently and in order' (1 Cor 14:40), so that the gospel can be proclaimed clearly and the worshipping community built up in faith, hope and love. This section of the commentary provides the evidence for the case that the Bible permits the ordination of both men and women to the office of the ministry.

1 Corinthians 14:33b–36

- 8. The mission of the church is St. Paul's primary consideration at Corinth. He insists that worship be practised 'decently and in order' so that the gospel may be proclaimed clearly and the church built up in love (14:33a,40).**

Central to St. Paul's worship regulations for the church at Corinth (1 Cor 11–14) is his insistence that worship be conducted 'decently and in order' so that the gospel may be proclaimed clearly and the church built up in love. Disorderly worship subverts the chief purpose of worship, receiving and celebrating God's gifts of grace which serve the mission of the church through internal growth and external expansion. Paul introduces his instructions regarding wives in the worship services at Corinth by speaking of God as 'a God not of disorder but of peace' (14:33a), and he concludes the instructions with the words: 'All things should be done decently and in order' (14:40).

- 9. The loveless exercise of spiritual gifts, and the speaking of wives that shamed their husbands in public, prevented worship from being conducted decently and in good order and therefore from building up the church in love (14:1–36; see also 8:1).**

Paul identifies those whose loveless behaviour was preventing worship from being conducted in an orderly fashion, thereby putting a stumbling block in the way of the clear proclamation and faithful reception of the gospel. There were those who were exercising their spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy in a disruptive manner, such as by speaking over one another rather than waiting till it was their turn to prophesy or by speaking in tongues without an interpreter present (14:27–32), and those wives who were doing what ought not be done in that society, shaming their husbands by speaking up in the public domain (14:34–35). The Corinthian text raises the question as to whether Paul is referring to women in general or wives in particular, because the same Greek word is used for both; the same applies to the word for men and husbands. Normally, when the words men and women (and man and woman) are used in the

same context, husbands and wives are meant (see 1 Cor 7:2,14; Eph 5:22; 1 Tim 2:12; 3:2; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1). At 1 Corinthians 14:35 this is clearly the case because the phrase 'their own husbands' is only used in connection with married couples (1 Cor 7:2; Eph 5:22; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1). Therefore, Paul's prohibition applies only to wives, not to women in general.

10. Also, within the strict codes of shame and honour throughout the Mediterranean world, such public display was prohibited (14:33b,36). The expansion of the church at Corinth, with its origins in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:1–11), would have been greatly hindered by the disruptive questions of wives (14:34,35).

The appeal of the gospel and the growth of the church at Corinth, with its origins in the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18:1–8), would have been greatly hindered by the disruptive conduct of such wives. The text doesn't spell out the specific problem. Maybe they were chattering noisily because they couldn't hear or understand what was being said by the worship leaders. Or, they were interrupting the orderly progression of worship with their questions. Or, claiming to be inspired by the Spirit, they were disrupting worship with their insights. Such public displays by wives were regarded as culturally inappropriate throughout the Mediterranean world (14:33b,36) with its strict codes of shame and honour among Jews and Gentiles alike. At all events the speaking that St. Paul forbids (14:35) cannot refer to the inspired prophesying and praying of women (1 Cor 11:5), but only to the shameless conduct of certain wives that disrupted the worship at Corinth. Such disturbances reflected a general refusal to be subordinate to the customary behaviour of that day, and a specific refusal to be subordinate to the principle of orderly worship. Neither 1 Corinthians 14:34 nor 1 Timothy 2:11 speaks of the subordination of wives to husbands, as other texts do that deal with life within the family (Col 3:18; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1,5).

11. 'The command of the Lord' (1 Cor 14:37) is Jesus' love command, the new commandment (John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:23; 4:21; 1 Cor 13:1–13; 14:1), the command that his followers love one another as he has first loved them. The command applies to all the worship regulations in chapters 11–14. The immediately preceding command that wives be silent at worship (14:34–37) should be seen in this light, as an example of how the law of love applied in a first century context, not as a prescription for all times and places.

A broader and deeper consideration governing the worship regulations in 1 Corinthians 11–14 is Paul's appeal to his readers to ensure that all that they do is done to build up the church in love, a note already sounded several chapters earlier (8:1). Flowing from his great hymn of love in chapter 13, the apostle commences chapter 14 with the command: 'Pursue love'. Love is the yardstick by which all spiritual gifts are measured, and the goal of all spiritual gifts.

This context makes it clear that, when St. Paul writes that 'the things that I am writing to you are a command of the Lord' (14:37), he is not referring to an otherwise unknown command of Jesus that would prohibit women from becoming pastors. Instead, 'the command of the Lord' is shorthand for the new commandment that Jesus has given to his disciples, that they love one another as he has first loved them (John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:23; 4:21; see also Matt. 22:34–40). Far from being prohibitive, the command is expansive, full of exciting possibilities for the enrichment of worship.

Furthermore, the love command applies to everything that precedes in chapter 14, and in fact throughout chapters 11–14. It is clear that the command does not apply only to the immediately preceding words about the silence of wives in church because St. Paul writes: 'the things that I am writing to you are a command of the Lord', not 'what [or, the thing that] I am writing to you is a command of the Lord'. In ancient Corinth the love command was expressed through several specific instructions designed to enhance the worship life of the church. Those instructions call for constant reshaping and reformulating today as Jesus' fundamental love for the church gives rise to fresh instructions that will serve to nurture the church's internal growth and promote its external expansion.

12. Paul's warning that 'anyone who does not recognise this is not to be recognised' (14:38) applies to those whose disorderly conduct at worship breaches the commandment to build up the community in love.

Paul's much debated warning that those who fail to abide by his worship regulations will not be recognised (1 Cor 14:38) could mean that the worship leader should refuse to acknowledge the disruptive speakers and let them take their turn in speaking, or that their prophetic ministry should not be recognised, or even that they should be excluded from the worshipping community. It is even possible that Paul is speaking of their eternal condemnation (see 1 Cor 3:17). The threat shows once again how seriously Paul regards the loveless conduct that disrupts orderly worship.

13. Paul is clear that women served as prophets in the church at Corinth (1 Cor 11:5), a significant office in the early church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Prophets had the inspired spiritual gift of speaking and teaching the gospel clearly, so that people were built up in faith and love and were led to the praise and worship of God (1 Cor 14:3-5, 19, 24-33).

St. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians that women were among those who have received the gift of prophecy (11:5), a ministry of gospel proclamation and spiritual discernment that built up the church in love and provided encouragement and consolation (14:3-5, 24-33). Clear prophetic proclamation catechised the church (14:19). Prophecy called unbelievers and outsiders to account, convicted them of their sin and their need of a Saviour, and ultimately led to the praise and worship of God (14:24-25). After apostles, Paul can speak of no higher office in the church than the prophetic office (1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11), an office in which women also were engaged (11:5).

14. It is important to distinguish between prophets, among whom women were included, and the disruptive wives who were to be silent at worship and raise their questions with their husbands in the privacy of the home. Read as a whole it is clear that St Paul's highly specific worship regulations apply only in the social setting of the time in order to avoid giving offence to regular worshippers and to unbelievers and outsiders (1 Cor 14:22,23). However, his commands to build up the church at worship, by loving one another and by ensuring that worship takes place 'decently and in order' for the sake of the gospel, apply until the coming of Christ in glory. Different regulations invariably need to be enacted at different times in the history of the church in order to achieve these unchanging goals.

As noted in the draft doctrinal statement, it is vital to distinguish between those women who exercised the gift of prophecy, probably few in number, and those disruptive wives whom Paul asked to remain silent in church and wait till they were home before raising their questions (14:34-35). Paul was all too well aware that if wives were permitted to speak it would disrupt worship, because the fledgling church would have failed the test of meeting acceptable community standards. The public speaking of wives would bring shame on their husbands and undermine the effective witness of the gospel (14:35). The conduct of this latter group posed such a threat to the proclamation and reception of the gospel that Paul also appeals to the fact that 'God is a God not of disorder, but of peace' (14:33a,40), to existing ecumenical practice (33b), to the law (34) and to the word of God (36), in order to put a halt to their unruly behaviour. As 1 Corinthians 14 is read as a whole it is clear that St Paul's highly specific worship regulations apply only for the time being in order to avoid giving offence to regular worshippers and to unbelievers and outsiders (14:22,23). A literal application of the worship regulations in these chapters would require, among many other things, that the church encourage the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues and reinstate them as a regular component of worship, with all who have such gifts taking their respectful turn. Wisely, the church has distinguished clearly between those universal regulations that apply for all time and in all circumstances and the particular regulations that are specific to the time and circumstances of the New Testament era church. The latter applied only in the social setting of the first century church in order to avoid giving offence. No indication is given that the specific regulations of 1 Corinthians 14 apply until the coming of Christ in glory. But the essential requirement, that worship be orderly for the sake of the gospel, never becomes dated.

1 Timothy 2:11–15

- 15. The context for 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is a situation of disorder. Paul insists that the effective witness of the gospel depended, among many other things, on wives conforming to the social conventions of both the synagogue and the Greco-Roman world of the day, which required that they regard the home as their proper realm, conduct themselves quietly and reverently, live in subordination to the traditions of the day, and refrain from teaching or exercising domineering authority over their husbands (1 Tim 2:9–15). The effective witness of the gospel has always demanded the highest standard of conduct among Christ's followers (Matt 5:16; 1 Thess 4:11–12; 1 Tim 3:7; 6:1). But today the behaviour that makes a deep impression on outsiders no longer includes the deferential silence of women and their subordination within the domestic realm.**

Historically, 1 Timothy 2:11–15 has proved the greatest barrier to the ordination of women. Here, wives are commanded to be modest in clothing and hairstyle, lead reverent lives in subordination to customary codes of conduct, and not lord it over their husbands. Depending on our perspective, we may be tempted to withdraw in horror at such supposedly outdated views, or alternatively urge that they be implemented with rigour. Whatever our immediate reaction, it is vital that we honour God's word by doing the hard work of getting to the bottom of what St. Paul is saying here. What issues was he dealing with in the church at Ephesus where Timothy served as pastor?

Paul's letters to Timothy consist of the apostle's instructions to his 'child' in the faith in how to exercise pastoral leadership in the church at Ephesus. Winsome conduct (1:5), sound [healthy] teaching in conformity with the gospel (1:10–11), prayers for those in authority so that people can lead quiet and peaceable lives (2:1–2), careful ordering of the ministries of the church (3:1–13), and reminders of the obligations of each person's calling (5:1 – 6:2), will bear fruit in what God desires, namely, that everyone 'be saved' and 'come to the knowledge of the truth' (2:4).

Paul's concerns about sound teaching were well founded. Teachers had made inroads into the congregation with their false teaching (1 Tim 1:3–8; 4:1; 6:3–5). Their doctrine had caught on, especially among some women (1 Tim 4:7; 2 Tim 3:6–7). It had led them to pleasure seeking, idle gossip, and the love of expensive clothes and fancy jewellery (1 Tim 2:9; 5:6, 11–13), and others into a life of self-denial and abstinence (4:3), with the result that the men had become angry and argumentative (1 Tim 2:8; 6:4–5).

It would appear that the teachers who had infiltrated the church at Ephesus had fused certain features of the Artemis cult with the teachings of the church. It was taught that the goddess Artemis, the source of life and purity, was created before her male consort Attis, who was unfaithful and inherently sinful. In this matriarchal cult, with its centre at Ephesus (Acts 19:23–41), men could only become priests after renouncing their problematical masculinity through ritual castration and by becoming spiritual ascetics who abstained from certain kinds of food (1 Tim 4:3). Notions of female priority and superiority had crept into the church, and certain 'weak-willed' women found the new ideas particularly appealing (2 Tim 2:6–7).

In order to counteract such views Paul made a clear demarcation between the Artemis cult and the Christian faith. Drawing on the creation and fall accounts, he stressed the priority of Adam in creation and Eve's susceptibility to deception. He was not saying, as many have said, that women were inherently more susceptible to temptation than men. Rather, he was saying that insufficient instruction in the faith made people—at Ephesus, especially the women—highly susceptible to the enticements of false teachers. If the women had known their place and behaved with decency and decorum, they would not have been led astray, as Eve was in the beginning.

Wives were permitted to learn from their menfolk, something that was not permitted in Judaism; but they should pursue their studies quietly (2:11–12). The word is different from the word for silence at 1 Corinthians 14:34, even though few Bible translations differentiate between the two terms. The word, which is used in verses 11 and 12, doesn't mean absolute silence, but a respectful and deferential quietness. Also, the verb that is usually translated as 'having authority over' a husband (not, a man) appears only this once in the New Testament. From wider usage beyond the New Testament the word appears to signify the assertive and

domineering exercise of authority over others. Perceptively, Luther follows the Vulgate and employs the verb 'to dominate', and his German translation records that the wife is not to lord it over her husband; literally, 'I do not permit a wife to be her husband's lord' (Luther Bible, 1545). Women boisterously bullying their menfolk because of their 'learning' and new-found freedom is what Paul rules out. Rather, they are to study quietly (not silently) at the feet of a teacher, as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39) and as Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), with the possibility of becoming a teacher when ready and the times allowed.

Wives are called to be subordinate in both texts that have been under the spotlight in our Church's discussions (1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11). The form of the verb that is used suggests a voluntary subordination, not by compulsion and not according to a fixed scheme. In both texts Paul is calling on women to honour the teaching of the apostles and the regulations governing worship and life within the domestic realm. In neither 1 Timothy 2:11 nor 1 Corinthians 14:34 does St. Paul call on wives to practise subordination to their husbands, as he does elsewhere. The subordination of Christian wives in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11 means conformity to the best standards of conduct within the society of the day, even surpassing them in several respects, and the quiet and respectful attitude of listening to the apostolic message and learning from it.

Codes of conduct

- 16. The early church was quick to formulate a consistent code of conduct governing interpersonal relationships (Eph 5:21 – 6:9; Col 3:18 – 4:1; 1 Tim 2:8–12; 1 Pet 3:1–7). Presupposing the transforming effect of the gospel, these tables of duties set a far higher standard than the 'secular' household codes of the day, countering the all too ready notion that freedom in the gospel implied licence in ethics, and paving the way for exemplary Christian conduct that would enhance the spread of the gospel. If the conduct of Christian wives deviated from accepted social opinion and standards in the Mediterranean world the reception of the gospel would have been severely hindered.**

In 1 Corinthians 14:33–36 and 1 Timothy 2:11–14 St. Paul exhorts the church to follow exemplary standards of behaviour for the sake of the gospel. For St. Paul and St. Peter, such conduct was patterned to some extent on the patriarchal household codes of Greek and Jewish ethical thought of the first century. But the so-called household codes of the Bible (e.g. 1 Tim 2:9–12,15; Eph 5:21 – 6:9; Col 3:18 – 4:1; 1 Pet 3:1–7) set a far higher standard of ethical conduct than their counterparts in the wider community, because they have a Christian foundation; they presuppose the transformation of the believer's mind 'in Christ'. On the one hand this sensitivity to accepted standards showed that the gospel did not necessarily contain the seeds of social and political revolution, or moral licence; and on the other hand it made it more likely that the gospel would gain a ready hearing in the outside world. Paul's exhortations are in keeping with his principle of becoming 'all things to all people, that [he] might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22).

Galatians 3:27–28

- 17. In Galatians 3:27–28, St. Paul speaks of the unity of all baptised believers as children of God. The gospel does not abolish natural distinctions between people of different nationality, class or sex; rather, it erodes barriers built by humans that deny our unity as believers, barriers between Jews and gentiles (Acts 10:1–48; Eph 2:11–22; see Gal 2:11–14), between masters and slaves (Philem 16; 1 Cor 7:21–24; see Eph 6:5–9; Col 4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2), and between males and females. Since men and women share a common identity as children of God through the gospel, the distinction between the sexes that has been regarded as essential to the ordained ministry is made null and void.**

This text speaks of the common identity before God of all baptized believers. All are children of God and fellow 'sons' and heirs with Christ. It is said that the text speaks exclusively of salvation through baptismal faith in Christ, and has no relevance for the discussion of the ordination of women. But the text follows Paul's words about his major disagreement with Peter who failed to practise the truth that the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down (Acts 10; Eph 2) by withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentiles

(Gal 2:11–14). The gospel preached is the gospel lived. The new creation in Christ transforms people and relationships.

In the relationship between master and slave, Paul was more inclined to speak of their duties to each other (Eph 6:5–9; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2), than to issue a clear call for the abolition of slavery. But at Philemon 16 and 1 Corinthians 7:21 there is a clear hint of what is to come, and Galatians 3:27–28 spells out the principle that sounds the death knell of slavery for those who believe in Christ. In the Galatians text Paul may have in mind the ancient Jewish prayer in which men thanked God that they were not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. The gospel does not abolish natural distinctions between people of different nationality, class or sex (see Augsburg Confession 16.5), but it chips away at barriers that people have constructed down through the ages that deny our unity as believers. To the extent that barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:1–48; Eph 2:11–22; Gal 2:11–14) and between masters and slaves (Philem 16; 1 Cor 7:21–24; Eph 6:5–9; Col 4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2) have been broken down in the history of the church and within the wider society, it has not happened without an intense struggle. But the gospel has not taken full effect, eroding the barrier between 'male and female', while women are still denied access to the ordained ministry.

The question arises as to why the full range of practical conclusions from Galatians 3:27–28 were not enacted in the early church. The main reason is that though the gospel is inherently transformative, the church remained highly cautious and conservative when it came to putting those implications into practice in the Mediterranean world of that time. For example, though Paul taught that circumcision counted for nothing (Gal 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19), he still had Timothy circumcised to avoid offence in regions where Jewish Christians were prominent (Acts 16:3). Likewise, though Gentiles were free from the Jewish law, the first Apostolic Council decreed that aspects of the law, including the prohibition of eating meat with blood in it, were to be enforced even among Gentile converts (Acts 15:7–11, 19–21). This edict, even though issued by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:27–29), is not observed among us today. As with St. Paul's regulations regarding the conduct of wives at worship and of women in society at large, the early church's prime concern was to avoid offence for the sake of the mission of the church.

Wider biblical witness

- 18. Even though the following examples may not have a direct bearing on the ordination of women, they show that women were involved in leadership roles in Israel and in the early church. Already in the Old Testament women are shown serving in leadership roles among the people of God (e.g. Exod 15:19–21; Judg 4 and 5; 2 Kgs 22:14–20). Jesus commissioned women to proclaim the resurrection to the disciples (Matt 28:10). The daughters of the evangelist Philip were prophets (Acts 21:9), Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, took the lead in teaching 'the way of God to [Apollos] more accurately' (Acts 18:26; Rom 16:3), Phoebe was a deacon, or minister (Rom 16:1), the same word that describes the ministry of Epaphras (Col 1:7) and Timothy (1 Tim 4:6). Junia may have been an apostle (Rom. 16:7). Paul said that Euodia and Syntyche 'struggled beside [him] in the work of the gospel' (Phil 4:3), and nearly one third of the church leaders whom Paul greets in Romans 16 are women. Although there were a variety of models for leadership and a variety of ways of ordering the holy ministry in the early church, these New Testament examples show that women were included in leadership and ministry roles in the church.**

In many parts of the Bible women are seen functioning in leadership roles among the people of God. For example, Miriam led the people in their worship of God after they crossed the Red Sea (Ex 15:19–21), Deborah was a judge and prophet in Israel (Judg 4 and 5), and Huldah was a prophetess who proclaimed God's word to the religious leaders of Israel (2 Kgs 22:14–20). Jesus constantly elevated the status of women, often to the amazement and chagrin of the disciples (John 4:27). An angel of the Lord commissioned women to announce the resurrection to the disciples, and then Jesus gave the women additional instructions for the disciples (Matt 28:1–10). Phoebe is described as a deacon, or minister (Rom. 16:1), the same term that describes Epaphras (Col 1:7) and Timothy (1 Tim 4:6). Priscilla took the lead over her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos 'the way of God more accurately' (Acts 18:26). Junia may well have been an apostle (Rom 16:7). And Paul describes Euodia and Syntyche who 'struggled beside [him] in the work of the gospel' (Phil 4:3), and Priscilla (Rom 16:3), as his valued

co-workers, a significant term that is used also of Timothy, Titus, Apollos and Epaphroditus (Rom 16:21; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25), opening up the very real likelihood that women shared in the apostolic ministry with Paul (Rom 16:1,3,6,12). In fact, nearly one third of the church leaders whom Paul greets in Romans 16 are women. The titles shared by men and women indicate a shared ministry. It is also noteworthy that beyond the pages of the New Testament Mary Magdalene came to be known as the 'apostle of the apostles' in the early church. Although these texts may not have a direct bearing on the ordination of women, they do show that women were involved in significant leadership roles in Israel and in the early church.

There were a variety of models for leadership and a variety of ways of ordering the ministry during the early church era. Where the New Testament speaks more generally of those who exercise oversight within a Christian community, performing tasks that equate most closely to the responsibilities of LCA pastors today, the terms that are used can apply both to men and to women. Such leaders are described as pastors (Eph 4:11), as overseers with responsibility for shepherding the church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–4), or as leaders who will have to give an account of their pastoral care for the souls of their people (Heb 13:7,17). In other words, where pastors are pictured in the New Testament, women are not excluded from the portrait.

Whereas the ministry as it later developed was not formed during Jesus' earthly ministry, the New Testament constantly portrays women as gifted for the office. They were invariably to the fore in doing what the disciples were called to do: giving their lives in service (Mark 12:44), ministering to Jesus in times of great need (Mark 14:3–9), following Jesus (Mark 15:41), evangelising the community (John 4:39), and sitting at his feet as a disciple (Luke 10:39).

C. CONCLUSION

- 19. Although the gospel transforms people, relationships and communities, the early church was careful and cautious in its practice so as not to create undue offence. With its home in Judaism, where women could not serve as priests in the temple or as leaders in the synagogue or study the scriptures with a rabbi, the church would have failed to make significant inroads with the gospel if all previous restrictions on women were immediately lifted. St Paul's regulations regarding the conduct of wives in worship and in society at large were driven by his overriding missionary imperative, to 'become all things to all people, so that [he] might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22).**

Studying biblical texts in their historical context in order to discern the basic theological and pastoral concerns of the writers is of paramount importance. As that is done, with prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church is well placed to determine how those concerns should be reflected in its teaching and practice today. Though the gospel is unchangeable, church history indicates that teaching and practice are always subject to study, review, and if necessary, change. When the Jewish home-soil of the early church and the prevailing culture of the first century Greco-Roman world are taken into consideration, it is understandable why the New Testament writers took such pains to avoid offence, as indicated especially by St. Paul's regulations for the churches of Corinth and Ephesus, and the strictures he imposed on the demeanour of wives in view of what was acceptable in the Mediterranean world of his day. He was vitally concerned that the gospel should gain traction and the mission of the church proceed with as few impediments as possible. Paul was driven by the desire to 'become all things to all people, so that [he] might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22). This missionary imperative, held in common by the leaders of the New Testament church, led to a considerable degree of care and caution when it came to calling for the wide-ranging transformations that would emerge as the implications of the gospel were drawn out more completely. But the seed had been sown, and the liberating message of the gospel, effecting the equality of all baptized believers before God, was already seen breaking down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles in the pages of the New Testament. And cracks in the wall that separated masters and slaves were also starting to appear.

- 20. Neither 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 nor 1 Timothy 2:11–15 records a command of the Lord that would prohibit the ordination of women. In a different social context today, the equal standing before God of all the baptised means that we can remove the role restrictions that have prohibited women from being ordained.**

Neither 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 nor 1 Timothy 2:11–15 records a command of Christ or St. Paul that would exclude women from the apostolic ministry of the word. When Paul says that 'a bishop must be the husband of one wife' (1 Tim 3:2), and hence a man, he is simply reflecting the historical and social reality that most, if not all, spiritual overseers of that era would be male. In keeping with contemporary Australian culture, Paul's principle that he 'become all things to all people, that [he] might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22) is best put into effect as the Church now permits women who sense a call to the public ministry to offer themselves as candidates for ordination.

- 21. The ministry of word and sacrament has been instituted by Christ so that people may come to believe in him and be built up in faith, hope and love. The New Testament does not insist that those who hold the office must be male; they could also be female. The ordination of women to the office of the ministry is compatible with the doctrine of the ministry, as articulated in AC 5, TA 6.1–10 and the LCA Rite of Ordination. Therefore, duly called, qualified and authorised women may be ordained alongside their male colleagues and exercise the office of the keys, by proclaiming the gospel, pronouncing the absolution, and administering the sacraments (John 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26).**

Christ has instituted the public office of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments for the sake of the mission of the church, so that people may come to saving faith and be built up in faith, hope and love within the church. Without a prescribed pattern of ministry in the New Testament, the specific form that the public office takes is determined by the church from time to time and from place to place. There is no command of our Lord or the apostles that would prohibit the ordination of women who are duly equipped and called. The texts that underpin the LCA's teaching on the ministry, used at ordination services (John 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26), may be applied equally to men and to women. The ordination of women does not require a new doctrine of the ministry, but only a change in our practice. It remains for us to understand that it is now time for the barrier that the church has constructed between men and women, in its received understanding of ordination to the office of the public ministry, to come down, for the sake of the mission of the church and a more thorough-going appreciation and application of the significance of the gospel.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Are there parts of the Draft Doctrinal Statement that you do not understand?
For example, what is clear or unclear?
2. Are things included or left out that surprise you?
3. Please share with the group what would help you to understand the issues better.
4. The fact that the twelve apostles were male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time of Jesus, but is not prescriptive of the office for all time (see Draft Doctrinal Statement para. 4). Discuss.
5. Paul's unchanging goal was that the church be built up in love (1 Cor. 8:1; 14:1). This requires different regulations at different times and in different places (see Draft Doctrinal Statement para. 11 and para. 14). Discuss.
6. How does the Draft Doctrinal Statement interpret the prohibitions of 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14 in terms of their implications for the office of the public ministry?
7. One of the key questions that arises is: 'Does the ordination of women need to be church divisive?' Discuss.

NOTES

