



# **STUDY GUIDE ON WORD AND SACRAMENT MINISTRY**

**Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee (FOD)  
of the National Church Council (NCC)**

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**

**2014**



# Word and Sacrament Ministry Study Guide

## INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to this *Study Guide on Word and Sacrament Ministry* prepared by the Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee (FOD) of the National Church Council (NCC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

In the fall of 2012, FOD was asked to consider the question of licensing lay people for sacramental ministry following upon a request to NCC from one of our Synods acting in Convention. The terms of reference were later broadened to “the study of Word and Sacrament Ministry in the ELCIC.”

FOD began its work with structured interviews of our five synod bishops (fall, 2012). FOD then received papers from the faculty of our seminaries and other doctors of the church (winter, 2013) and followed with an online survey open to all across the ELCIC (spring and summer, 2013). These efforts helped to shape the content and direction of this *Study Guide*.

Our hope in providing this resource is that members of the ELCIC across Canada will use it to explore and discuss the current reality for congregations in Canada with respect to Word and Sacrament ministry, and to reflect on how our Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament and of ministry might shape future options for the provision of ministry.

As the congregations of the ELCIC face declining numbers and attendance, more and more of them also face financial difficulty; some can no longer afford to call a pastor. In some small, rural, or remote congregations, supply pastors are not always available. The growing reality is that people in some ELCIC communities are unable to receive Word and Sacrament ministry as regularly as they would wish or at all.

How do we keep the Gospel communicated through the preached Word and the Sacraments central, while honouring the traditional Lutheran emphasis on well-educated, well-trained and well-formed leaders as we explore new ways of providing Word and Sacrament ministry? How do we honour our traditional understanding of what “good order” requires? These are the sorts of questions this Study will explore.

After the last Session, leaders and participants are invited to let the Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee know how they experienced this Study by using the survey tool outlined in Appendix 3. *Responses must be in by Monday, December 15, 2014.* The members of the ELCIC’s Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee thank you for your participation in this Study.

## Notes for the Leaders of the Study

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### PREPARATION

- Provide copies of this resource to all participants a week or two ahead of the Study.
- Invite participants to read the material for each Session ahead of time.
- Allow one-and-a-half to two hours per session.
- Sessions One and Four are likely to take less time while Sessions Two and Three are likely to take longer.
- It might be helpful to consider doing Sessions Two and Three in two parts each.
- Consider whether you might wish to make any of the material in Appendix 2 available as hand-outs.

### HOSPITALITY

- Put the coffee on!
- Make sure that all participants are introduced and feel welcomed.
- At the beginning of each Session, invite participants to note what caught their attention in the *Study Material*. Come back to these, as appropriate, in the course of the Session.
- Try to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to participate.
- Keep an eye on the time so that the group is able to discuss all of the questions before moving on.
- As you have opportunity, thank Study participants for their interest in this important work.

## SESSION ONE

### Context for Ministry in the ELCIC

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#### SESSION ONE OBJECTIVES

Our hope is that upon completing Session One each participant will understand and be able to describe the current context for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the ELCIC that prompts this Study.

#### SESSION ONE PREPARATION

- Read the Study Material for Session One

##### **Session One Opening Prayer**

*A member of the study group is invited to offer an opening prayer:*

*Gracious God, we give you thanks for calling us into your church. We thank you for the gifts of the Word and the Sacraments, means of grace that sustain us in this life. Be with us now as we study the needs of our church and the gifts of Word and Sacrament. Give us open minds and hearts to hear and receive your will, so that we may all be strengthened in spirit and in ministry. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

#### STUDY MATERIAL FOR SESSION ONE

##### **Our Congregations**

The congregations that make up the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) are as varied as the geography and peoples of Canada. Congregations are located in rural areas and in cities, large and small. Some are growing in participation and ministries; others are in a state of decline. Some congregations serve specific ethnic ministries. Some have teams of pastors and diaconal ministers; others have difficulty calling pastors due to lack of finances, remote location, or a combination of these and other factors.

Let's look more closely at five ELCIC congregations to get a better understanding of variety of contexts.

*Five study group members are invited to read aloud the congregational vignettes.*

## **Vignette 1—Lutheran Church of the Cross, Victoria, BC**

Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria, BC, is an urban/suburban congregation of about 130 active households including a large number of elders and recently retired members, and a significant number of younger adults and families. It was established in 1960 and is a growing and very active congregation. Currently it is served by one full-time pastor and several part-time staff. The community is also served by a seminary intern. There are active men's and women's groups, a weekly elders' group, and youth, young adult and young families' groups. Adult education is encouraged through Bible and book study groups.

Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday and on other festival days. There is an emphasis on music with a cantor, worship musicians, and an active choir. The congregation has the gift of ten rostered leaders - the current pastor, two clergy active in non-parish ministries/interim ministry, six retired pastors and one deaconess. At least five of them can help by preaching and presiding, if needed. There are two other ELCIC congregations in the city, and Church of the Cross also has a growing relationship with neighbouring St Luke's Anglican Church.

The congregation works with Luther Court elder care facility, helping to provide telecast worship in the facility and Holy Communion every Sunday. Another initiative of the congregation is Luther House student residence for six university students who live in intentional community. As well the congregation's pastor serves as a campus chaplain at the University of Victoria. Members of the congregation are active in volunteer and financial support of local agencies and programs. The congregation has a parish pantry and food voucher program, and is a partner in the Shelbourne Community Kitchen project. It is involved in social justice concerns, and support of CLWR and other special international projects. The church facility is also well used by a daily play school, and various music and community groups.

## **Vignette 2—Edberg/New Norway, AB**

The Edberg/New Norway Parish is made up of two rural congregations in Central Alberta. Each congregation has a membership of about 75, with attendance usually around 15 in each place. Both congregations worship weekly, both have an active ladies group that meets monthly, there is a monthly bible study, and the New Norway congregation has a Sunday School with young kids from four families.

The parish is in a special arrangement with a neighbouring rural parish, Zion and St. Peter's, Bashaw. Edberg/New Norway cannot afford to pay a full time pastor's salary, so it contracts with Bashaw to share one pastor. The pastor spends two Sundays a month in Edberg and New Norway congregations, and two Sundays a month in the congregations of the Bashaw Parish. In terms of Eucharist, this means that the pastor presides weekly, but in alternate parishes. The Edberg/New Norway parish has a lay preacher and a retired pastor who lead Service of the Word on the other Sundays of the month. The parish feels fortunate to have them, because supply pastors are not always easy to find, especially in the summer months. Each parish plans a special joint service on

festival days, so that the pastor can be in both parishes, and the Eucharist can be celebrated. Four times a year, all four congregations gather to celebrate Eucharist together and share a potluck lunch. In some ways, it's a complicated situation—two parishes and four congregations—but it ensures full time ministry and regular celebration of Word and Sacrament.

### **Vignette 3—New Stockholm Lutheran Church, Stockholm, SK**

New Stockholm Lutheran Church in rural southeastern Saskatchewan was the first Swedish Lutheran congregation organized in Canada. The congregation will celebrate its 125th anniversary in 2014. Its 1925 brick building and the adjacent cemetery are designated as historic sites. About 15 to 20 people, most of whom are retired, meet weekly for worship. Holy Communion is celebrated once a month and on feast days. A retired Anglican priest from Yorkton preaches twice a month. One Sunday a month, a paid lay preacher leads worship, and on other Sundays worship is led by a local lay volunteer.

Each summer New Stockholm offers a Vacation Bible School open to the whole community. Other congregational activities include suppers, bake sales, craft sales, and other social and fundraising activities. Volunteers plan worship, provide music, and maintain the building and the cemetery.

For 24 years, the congregation shared a full-time call with the nearest ELCIC congregation, Redeemer in Esterhazy. But that partnership has ended and it has been two years since they have had a called pastor. The congregation struggles to find supply clergy to preach and preside. Two years ago they were unable to celebrate Holy Communion on Easter Sunday because no one could be found to preside. The congregation continues to decline, and some are concerned that Holy Communion is not being offered to the sick and homebound members.

### **Vignette 4—Trinity Lutheran Church, Berglund, ON**

The congregation of Trinity Lutheran in Berglund, Ontario is a worshipping community of about 25 people. It is located in an isolated community, a few kilometres from the Minnesota border. There is only one other church in the village, a Latter Day Saints congregation. The nearest ELCIC congregation is in Fort Frances, about 100 kilometres to the east. From the Synod office in Winnipeg, one would cross into the United States to reach Berglund.

A core group of women has been leading all programming in the faith community since 1992 when the last rostered minister called by the congregation left the community because of lack of financial resources. The congregation meets weekly for worship and bible study. There are four children in the church school program. Two retired pastors are able to supply Word and Sacrament once per month, although one is in ill health and over the age of 80. A lay person leads the congregation in services 3 or 4 Sundays per month and fulfills the pastoral role, except in crisis situations. She is supported through outside resources, relying on internet resources, and pastoral support from retirees and the Synod.

The congregation is outwardly focused, supporting the Synod, CLWR, and other ministries of the ELCIC. They have also become a meeting place for local groups and services in the village of Berglund and are well known for their service projects and support of community endeavors.

## **Vignette 5—Agricola Lutheran Church, North York, ON**

Agricola Lutheran Church is located in North York, an urban area of greater Toronto. Most of the members are Finnish or have family ties to Finnish heritage. Some members come from quite a distance each week, and people from other backgrounds are quite rare. There are over 2300 names on the membership records, but active membership is about 700. An average of 75 to 100 people gather at two worship services each week, one in English and one in Finnish. The Eucharist is celebrated at both services weekly. In addition, the Eucharist is celebrated monthly at Suomi-Koti, a Finnish seniors' and long-term care facility. On Sunday afternoons, a Swedish congregation meets at Agricola for worship.

The congregation offers Bible study, Sunday School, Confirmation, a Family and Tots group, and a women's group. An annual children's summer program is offered at the congregation's Bible camp near Marmora, ON.

Currently the congregation has a Finnish interim pastor and a Finnish retired pastor. But finding a pastor for Agricola can be a challenge. He/she has to be able to communicate in Finnish and English, and hopefully understand both cultures, and the cultures of both the ELCIC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The congregation has made a decision that they will no longer call pastors from Finland directly.

The Finnish congregations in the ELCIC belong to the Suomi Conference, one of three Special Interest conferences of the ELCIC. The group tries to provide pastoral coverage in Finnish to those congregations that still have a number of Finnish-speaking members. Sometimes a Finnish-speaking pastor occasionally travels to a congregation, and preaches and presides. In another case a Finnish pastor sends material (prayers, sermon, hymn lists) to an English-speaking pastor who will preside, but a lay person will read the sermon and prayers in Finnish. Another option where the presiding pastor is English, is for a Finnish-speaking lay person to translate chosen parts of the service for the congregation.

## **DISCUSSION**

- *Which of these described situations is most like the current situation in your congregation?*
- *Which of the described situations is furthest from your own experience?*
- *What would it be like to be in that context?*

## The Big Picture

The annual parochial reports submitted by congregations indicate that the ELCIC has been facing declining attendance, resulting in declining numbers and sizes of congregations every year since 1987. More and more congregations face financial difficulty, and some can no longer afford to call full-time ordained clergy. This is not just a challenge within the ELCIC. Other Canadian denominations are facing the same challenges. Similar trends exist in the United States and in parts of Europe.

We know that this trend is related to the reality of living in a “post-Christendom” era. The church is not held in the same regard as it was in the past. Some of us remember a time when almost everyone went to church, but that is no longer the case. The church is not central to many people’s lives. Sociologists such as Reginald Bibby have been telling us for many years that the fastest growing religious group in Canada is the “none” group, those who claim no religious affiliation. A recent study commissioned by the ELCIC Conference of Bishops and conducted by Ernst & Young suggests that these declining trends in church attendance will continue and accelerate.

## Preparation of Rostered Leaders

Another visible trend in the ELCIC is that fewer students are preparing for ordained and diaconal ministry within our church. This has put financial strains on our seminaries. The costs of preparing ordained and diaconal ministers include the costs of seminary formation, which is borne by the student, the synods, and the seminaries.

At the same time, student debt is increasing. Most new graduates of the seminaries cannot afford to serve in part-time calls. The number of full-time calls is declining, as well as the number of students preparing for ordained and diaconal ministry. It is difficult to predict if we will have enough ordained clergy for the number of full-time calls in the future.

These realities have caused some measure of grief in our church. Yet we do not grieve as those who have no hope. This Study seeks to participate in God’s mission of proclaiming and celebrating the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

## Sacramental Practices

Prior to 1980 most congregations that came together to form the ELCIC did not celebrate Holy Communion every Sunday. The Lutheran Book of Worship (“green book”), published in 1978, incorporated a new-for-many, more joyful and less austere approach to the Lord’s Supper. Congregations began celebrating Holy Communion more frequently.



In 1991, the ELCIC's Statement on Sacramental Practices (see Appendix 2) expressed our evolving understanding of the sacraments, and encouraged the weekly celebration of Holy Communion. In a great many congregations in the ELCIC, weekly Holy Communion has become the practice. People expect and hunger for the opportunity to receive the Lord's Supper frequently. We are reaping a good harvest from the seeds that were sown!

## DISCUSSION

- *In the survey conducted in the spring of 2013, someone observed, "In my lifetime the church has developed a deeper hunger for the Eucharist. . ." How has your experience of Holy Communion changed or not changed over time?*

## Provision of Word and Sacrament Ministry in the ELCIC

As a result of all these trends and realities, some congregations are not able to find a pastor to preside and preach every Sunday. The number of congregations unable to afford full-time or part-time clergy will increase in future. The synodical bishops are currently working with congregations to fill these needs in a variety of ways, including forming multi-point parishes, yoked congregations and wide-area parishes. For a description of these options, please refer to Session Four.

Some congregations are being served by our full-communion and ecumenical partners. In some places, laypersons have preached in the absence of rostered ministers. Some of these laypersons have been trained, and some not. One synod provides a "sermon bank" for congregations where a lay person is preaching. However the growing reality is that people in some ELCIC communities are unable to receive Word and Sacrament ministry regularly or at all.

## DISCUSSION

- *Have you ever been part of a multi-point parish, a wide-area parish, or shared ministry with an Anglican congregation or another partner (United, Presbyterian...)? What was that experience like?*
- *What has been your experience with lay people preaching in your congregation? Were they reading a prepared sermon, or had they prepared one themselves?*

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Study is to help the whole church reflect on our Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament and of ordained and diaconal ministry, and to explore how we might provide ministry to people in all communities of the ELCIC.

In this Session we have looked at current trends in the ELCIC that are challenging the church. There are times and places where the future looks bleak for our church. But at the same time we know that God is with us in the challenge! What is the future to which God is calling us?

## LOOKING AHEAD TO SESSION TWO

In the next Session, we will be looking at our Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament, and how our understanding might shape the ways we provide ministry in congregations. Session Two requires a substantial amount of background reading. Please do as much of this work as you can. Even if you can't complete the background reading, please do as much as you can and come to the next Session. Plan to bring others along!

## SESSION TWO

### Lutheran Theology of Word and Sacrament

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#### SESSION TWO OBJECTIVES

Our hope is that upon completing this Session participants will

- be able to discuss with others what Lutherans mean by “Word and Sacrament”;
- have a renewed appreciation for how our theology of Word and Sacrament shapes congregational life;
- experience a renewed hunger to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments.

#### SESSION TWO PREPARATION

- Read the *Study Material for Session Two*
- Read the *Small Catechism* on The Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the The Sacrament of the Altar as found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (pages 1164-1166).
- Read Articles IV to XIV of the *Augsburg Confession* (Appendix 1).

#### Session Two Opening Prayer

*A member of the study group is invited to offer an opening prayer:*

*Gracious God, we give you thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who produces faith in us. Be with us now as we study the place of preaching, Holy Communion and Baptism in the life of our church. May our conversation and our study increase our hunger to hear your Word and to receive the Sacraments. Open our hearts and minds to the ongoing reformation of the church. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

#### STUDY MATERIAL FOR SESSION TWO

##### The Gospel

For Lutherans the central theological affirmation has always been that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone. What this means is that our standing before God and our identity as people of God is determined by the unconditional promise which God has made in Christ and not by whatever we may or may not have achieved in our lives. This is the Gospel, the Good News of what God has done and is doing in Christ.

The problem we all face is that this affirmation flies in the face of everything that we hear in our culture and everything we are taught about the world. What our culture believes is that the person who works hard and thinks positively will achieve what they choose to achieve. The Gospel is not common sense or cultural wisdom.

So, how can we come to have faith in Christ; how can we hear the Gospel? The Lutheran affirmation is that the Holy Spirit is at work when we hear the Word of God and when we celebrate and receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The work of the Holy Spirit is to create faith in us. We hear the Gospel when we hear the Word, when we are baptized and when we eat and drink the Lord's Supper.

## Hearing the Gospel *Aloud*

When Luther was asked "What is the Word of God?" he answered that the Word of God is the Gospel preached and heard by people like us. (Endnote 1) What he meant by this is that, in the first place, the Word is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. When Christ is proclaimed, the Word of God is heard here and now. As John 1 says, "In the beginning was the Word . . . ." The Word is present from eternity and at the creation of all things (Genesis 1). The Word is there when God speaks and acts in the history of the people of Israel—in the liberation from slavery, in the call of the prophets, in the return from exile. The Word becomes flesh in Jesus. The Word is present in the church today through the preaching of Law and Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments.

The Word is God speaking, and will accomplish what God intends (Isaiah 55). What God speaks and intends is promise. When we think of the Word of God, we need to remember that God's promise works differently from other forms of language. When speaking, we can, for example, simply communicate information. Or we can issue commands, or ask questions. But

### **SIGNS OF THE CHURCH: Word of God**

Luther believed that the true Church, "the holy catholic church, the communion of saints" which we confess in the Apostles' Creed, is hidden in the world. Its presence can be recognized by certain external signs. He gives the seven most important of these in *On the Councils and the Churches* published in 1539 (*Luther's Works*, volume 41). Five of these signs are relevant to this Study. Four are set forth in Session Two and one in Session Three. The first of these is the presence of the Word of God:

First, the holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy word of God. To be sure, not all have it in equal measure, as St. Paul says [I Cor. 3:12–14]. Some possess the word in its complete purity, others do not. Those who have the pure word are called those who "build on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones"; those who do not have it in its purity are the ones who "build on the foundation with wood, hay, and straw," and yet will be saved through fire. More than enough was said about this above. This is the principal item, and the holiest of holy possessions [here Luther is referring to the practice of needing a relic before a church can be dedicated], by reason of which the Christian people are called holy; for God's word is holy and sanctifies everything it touches; it is indeed the very holiness of God, Romans 1 [16], "It is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith," and I Timothy 4 [5], "Everything is consecrated by the word of God and prayer." For the Holy Spirit himself administers it and anoints or sanctifies the Christian church with it. . . .

Now, wherever you hear or see this word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, "a Christian holy people" must be there, even though their number is very small. For God's word "shall not return empty," Isaiah 55 [11], but must have at least a fourth or a fraction of the field. And even if there were no other sign than this alone, it would still suffice to prove that a Christian, holy people must exist there, for God's word cannot be without God's people, and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's word. Otherwise, who would preach or hear it preached, if there were no people of God? And what could or would God's people believe, if there were no word of God. (LW 41, 148-150)

God's Word of Promise accomplishes what is proclaimed. God says "Let there be light" and light happens. God says "You are forgiven" and we are forgiven. Christ says "This is my body" and we receive the body of Christ.

The Word of God creates the Church. When the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments received, the Church comes into being and exists in the people who hear and receive. At the same time the church is the community of people whose mission is to make sure the Word is spoken and heard in the world. Thus every congregation, synod and church lives in tension: these are concrete organizations in the world with constitutions and by-laws like every other human organization, yet the church only becomes the Church, the Communion of Saints, when the Word is proclaimed and heard. The Church is hidden in the churches.

## DISCUSSION

- *Why do you think Luther stressed the importance of hearing the Gospel aloud? How is that different from simply reading Scripture?*

### The *Embodied* Gospel

The most basic form of the Word of God is Jesus Christ. The Word in flesh is what we call "incarnation"—"in-flesh-ment." Luther believed that incarnation is one of God's most basic ways of working. The Word is hidden in the flesh of Jesus; the Word is hidden in the everyday language of preachers. In the same way the Word is hidden in the water of Baptism and in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

What does this mean? To answer that question we need to back up a bit to the word "hidden." For Luther, God's work is not always, or even very often, visible and obvious. God's greatest act appears to be God's worst defeat: the crucifixion of Jesus. In the cross God secures the salvation of creation and defeats the forces of evil, but the external appearance is that human pride and arrogance have won the day and put God to death. That is the appearance of Good Friday. The actual work and presence of God is hidden in the cross. This is God's pattern, God's characteristic way of working, to be hidden in what appears to be God's opposite.

#### **SIGNS OF THE CHURCH: Holy Baptism**

Second, God's people or the Christian holy people are recognized by the holy sacrament of baptism, wherever it is taught, believed, and administered correctly according to Christ's ordinance. That too is a public sign and a precious, holy possession by which God's people are sanctified. It is the holy bath of regeneration through the Holy Spirit [Titus 3:5], in which we bathe and with which we are washed of sin and death by the Holy Spirit, as in the innocent holy blood of the Lamb of God. Wherever you see this sign you may know that the church, or the holy Christian people, must surely be present...Baptism does not belong to the baptizer, nor is it given to him [or her], but it belongs to the baptized. It was ordained for him [or her] by God, and given to him [or her] by God, just as the word of God is not the preacher's (except in so far as he [or she] too hears and believes it) but belongs to the disciple who hears and believes it; to him [or her] is it given. (LW 41, 151-152)

This pattern will help to understand how the sacraments communicate the Gospel. What we see is water, bread and wine, but what is conveyed is the Word of God. We are visibly washed with water; what God is doing by the Holy Spirit is working our salvation and incorporating us into the people of God. We are visibly eating bread and drinking wine; what God is doing is giving us the body and blood of Christ which grants us union with Christ in his body the church. What God is doing is hidden in, with and under the material elements.

### **SIGNS OF THE CHURCH: Holy Communion**

Third, God's people, or Christian holy people, are recognized by the holy sacrament of the altar, wherever it is rightly administered, believed, and received, according to Christ's institution. This too is a public and precious possession left behind by Christ by which his people are sanctified so that they also exercise themselves in faith and openly confess that they are Christian, just as they do with the word and baptism....

...Wherever you see this sacrament properly administered, there you may be assured of the presence of God's people. For, as was said above of the word, wherever God's word is, there the church must be; likewise, wherever baptism and the sacrament are, God's people must be, and vice versa....(LW 41, 152-153)

This is why, for Lutherans, the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist can never be about "substance" or "change," nor can it be about a merely spiritual presence. The real, bodily presence is about promise and fulfillment. We hear the words of promise, "This is my body" and "This is my blood," and in eating the bread and drinking the wine we receive what is promised, the true body and blood of Christ. The promise made in the words is fulfilled in the eating and drinking even when we can't quite bring ourselves to believe that it is possible.

This Gospel hiddenness comes into the open through preaching which properly distinguishes Law and Gospel. To distinguish Law and Gospel properly means that we recognize that God speaks to us in many and various ways. Each of these ways is appropriate to the situation at hand. When facing hardened hearts such as those of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, God might well speak a harsh Word through the prophet Elijah in hopes of breaking through the wall they had built (1 Kings 16:29-22:40); that is Law. When the people are crushed in slavery, God sends Moses to speak a Word of liberation; that is Gospel. In reading the Scriptures we need to be able to distinguish when God is speaking a Word of Law and when God is speaking a Word of Gospel. When preaching we need to be able to understand the situation well enough to discern whether people need to hear a Word of Law or a Word of Gospel, and we need the skill to bring the Word to bear on what the need is. The Gospel is the most crucial because only the Gospel can save and only the Gospel can teach us the life of discipleship.

## **DISCUSSION**

- *How would you describe the Lutheran understanding of the Word of God? How is that different from the frequently-expressed idea that the Bible is the Word of God?*

## How the Lutheran Confessions Express This Theology

During the Reformation the Lutheran theologians and political leaders were called upon several times to explain themselves to the other leaders of the Holy Roman Empire, of which they were a part. The most significant of these instances was the Diet of Augsburg (the Diet was the Parliament of the Holy Roman Empire) in 1530. At that time the Lutheran principalities and cities presented a confession of faith which became known as the *Augsburg Confession* which, alongside Luther's *Small Catechism*, has remained the most basic statement of Lutheran theology.

The *Augsburg Confession* (AC) consists of a series of articles. In the fourth article the confessors present the heart and core of their belief: ". . . [I]t is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith . . ." (Endnote 2) In the fifth article, the Confession states how we obtain 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 . . ." (Endnote 3) Following this the Confession teaches that the faith given by the Holy Spirit yields the fruit of good works (AC VI) and that the Church is the assembly of believers where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments administered. Thus the unity of the Church depends on the preaching of the Gospel and the Gospel sacraments being received, not on customs, traditions or ways of organizing the church (AC VII and VIII). The Confession then sets out the basics of what Lutherans teach about Baptism (AC IX), The Lord's Supper (AC X), confession (AC XI), repentance (AC XII) and the use of the sacraments (AC XIII). From this order we can see how each of these teachings relates to those which have come before.

In addition to having to explain themselves to the authorities, the Lutheran theologians also felt the need to teach the people the Reformation faith. For this purpose Luther wrote the *Small Catechism*. For some centuries people had learned the most basic catechism: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Luther added explanations to each commandment, to each of the three articles of the creed and to each petition of the Lord's Prayer. He also added sections which presented the meaning of the sacraments. The *Small Catechism* became the most basic document by which Lutherans taught the Christian faith to their children.

## From the Sixteenth Century to Us

The Reformation brought unprecedented change to the way people worshipped God and thought about their faith. What preaching there was tended to be moralistic and focused on what people need to do to gain God's favour. Luther and the other Reformers taught young pastors to preach the Gospel by properly distinguishing Law and Gospel and only to preach the Law when necessary to break through walls of self-righteousness; most of the time what was needed was the pure Gospel of God's grace. In the century or so before 1500, people had been avoiding communion, and only received the bread, if at all, once a year at Easter. Luther and the other reformers tried to encourage people to receive communion (now both bread and cup) more often.

Old habits were hard to break. Preachers often forgot how important it was to distinguish Law and Gospel properly, and people remained reluctant to receive communion very often. We should not be surprised that Medieval piety was slow to die out; it had taken 1000 years

### **SIGNS OF THE CHURCH: Office of the Keys**

Fourth, God's people or Holy Christians are recognized by the office of the keys [confession and absolution] exercised publicly. That is, as Christ decrees in Matthew 18 [15-20], if a Christian sins, he should be reproved; and if he does not mend his ways, he should be bound in his sin and cast out. If he does mend his ways, he should be absolved. That is the office of the keys... Now where you see sins forgiven or reproved in some persons, be it publicly or privately, you may know that God's people are there... (LW 41, 153)

to be formed in the people and we have only had 500 years to try and move beyond it! By the beginning of the twentieth century the general habit of Lutherans was to celebrate and receive communion about four times per year. The end of World War I brought the beginning of changes to religious practice in most European churches. The Great War had traumatized a generation, and those who still practised the Christian faith were searching for a deeper experience of it. Movements arose in the churches which emphasized, among other things, a more frequent reception of Holy Communion. By the 1940s these movements had begun to be felt in North America and some Lutherans moved to celebrating and receiving the Lord's Supper monthly. By 1960 monthly celebration was common and some Lutherans had begun to celebrate and receive communion twice per month, though in some places the old ways held on longer.

The movement toward more frequent communion continued and by the early 1970s there were Lutheran congregations which had begun celebrating communion every Sunday. At first people were not sure about this practice. Lutherans had been taught to approach Communion with a penitential mood and to be concerned about being worthy, both remnants of the Pietist movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After the Second Vatican Council reformed the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s, even people outside the Catholic Church came to see how abiding attitudes from the Middle Ages still coloured their approach to the sacraments. Worship books produced in the 1940's and 50's did not serve the needs of congregations in the 70's as these congregations embraced a new and more joyful approach to celebrating the Lord's Supper. Receiving Communion every Sunday became more desired. This trend was embodied in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, published in 1978. Since 1980 more and more Lutheran congregations celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday, and many Lutherans have come to look forward to receiving Communion at least weekly. We approach the sacrament with a joy and anticipation that our sixteenth century ancestors could not have imagined.

This illustrates one of the crucial elements of the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformers did not believe that they were perfect or that they had completed the ultimate reform of the church. They knew many reform movements had renewed the church before them and they knew that reform movements would need to come after them. They understood that the church must be always reforming itself. And the key element of that continuing reform? The Word of God! At



every point in its life the church must be reformed by the Gospel spoken aloud and celebrated in Baptism and Holy Communion. When that Gospel is at the centre of the life of the church, the church will be on the path of fulfilling its mission in the world.

## DISCUSSION

- *What insights from this Session might be helpful for the ELCIC as we face the challenge of providing Word and Sacrament ministry to all congregations?*

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Study is to help the whole church reflect on our Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacraments, and ordained and diaconal ministry, and to explore how we might provide ministry to people in all congregations of the ELCIC. In Session One we looked at current trends in the ELCIC that are resulting in some congregations being under-served. In Session Two we have reviewed our understanding of the Gospel, and how that Gospel, when spoken aloud and celebrated in Baptism and Holy Communion, forms the church, and will continue to reform the church.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO SESSION THREE

In Session Three, we will be examining the Lutheran Theology of Ministry. How do Lutherans understand what it means to be an ordained or diaconal minister? Once again there is some helpful background reading that we ask you to do, to enrich and inform your participation. If you are unable to complete it, please come anyway... and bring others with you!

## SESSION THREE

### Lutheran Theology of Ministry

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#### SESSION THREE OBJECTIVES

Our hope is that upon completing Session Three participants will

- be able to discuss with others what Lutherans mean by “ministry”;
- have a renewed appreciation for the various expressions of ministry for the mission of the church;
- have an understanding for why Lutherans ordain pastors and consecrate diaconal ministers and how pastors and diaconal ministers are formed and educated for their part in the mission of the church.

#### SESSION THREE PREPARATION

- Read the *Study Material for Session Three*
- Review Articles IV to XIV in the *Augsburg Confession* (Appendix 1).

#### Session Three Opening Prayer

*A member of the study group is invited to offer an opening prayer:*

*Gracious God, your generous goodness comes to us new every day. This day we pray that you would help us to appreciate the importance of the public communication of your Gospel and how our forebears have sought to do your will. Help us to persevere in the journey of Lutheran witness as servants in the mission of your church. Amen.*

#### STUDY MATERIAL FOR SESSION THREE

##### Ministry of the Baptized

Just prior to the beginning of the Reformation at the end of the fifteenth century the situation of the laity, of average Christians, was one of spiritual crisis. After the Black Plague had ripped through Europe in the middle of the fourteenth century people questioned whether God loved or hated them. The church of the time did not offer satisfying answers, so people turned to all sorts of bizarre and hurtful practices in hopes of appeasing God’s anger. At the same time the church put forth a notion of priesthood that set clergy apart as a separate social order with the power to perform sacraments and grant remission from punishment for sin.

One of the original goals of the Reformation was to enable the laity to develop a more helpful piety and to reclaim their ministry as missionaries of the Gospel in everyday life. To achieve this goal Luther and the other Reformers emphasized the “ministry of all the baptized.” Each Christian becomes a minister and missionary at Baptism. Part of this ministry was what Luther called “the priesthood of all believers”—each and every Christian’s “right” to pray directly to God without the necessity of clergy on earth or saints in heaven to mediate and each and every Christian’s responsibility to pray for and support their neighbours in all their needs.

More important to Luther was the baptized person’s vocation or calling. Prior to the Reformation the word “vocation” was reserved to refer to the decision to become a priest or enter the monastic life. Luther extended the concept to every Christian. Every Christian has a vocation in the world to which she or he is called. That vocation places us in the centre of everyday life in the communities where we find ourselves and focuses on the benefit we add to those communities. No matter how we serve our community—whether as farmer, parent, factory worker, student, accountant, teacher or whatever—we are called by God to that role and that is our primary ministry. Vocation in the world is given to us in our baptism. Remembering our baptism daily focuses us on the importance of our vocation as our participation in God’s mission in the world.

## DISCUSSION

- *What does it mean to you to think of your various roles in life as vocations, as callings from God? In what ways does your congregation equip and support you in living out your vocations in your daily life?*

## Ordination and the Public Office of Ministry

One might ask why Lutherans continued to have ordained pastors. The reason is that the Gospel must be heard. In order for there to be Christians who have vocations the Gospel must be preached and the sacraments celebrated. There can be no baptismal vocation if there are no baptisms. Luther and the other Reformers strongly believed that in situations of chaos it became very hard for people to hear the Gospel. Order is important, particularly because the Gospel must be heard *in public*. Communities of Christians assure that the Gospel will be heard and the sacraments celebrated publicly by calling specific people to fulfil that task. For those people that call of the community is their baptismal vocation, the specific way that they serve the community.

For Luther the most important element of the process by which a person became a pastor was the call from a community of Christians to take up the public ministry of Word and Sacrament in their midst. Luther argued, against late-Medieval theology generally, that ordination is not a sacrament, that is, it does not produce some sort of change in the person being ordained. It is the call from the community that makes a person a pastor, not the rite of ordination. Nonetheless the rite of ordination was continued so that there would be a public recognition that a qualified person has been called by a community.

In the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation the Reformers had no great desire to change the way clergy were ordained and appointed to congregations. That is why in places where the bishops became Lutherans, such as Sweden, the practice of bishops ordaining pastors continued. In Germany this was not possible since only a very few bishops ever embraced Lutheran theology and under the

rules of the Holy Roman Empire they had immediately to resign from office. Thus the Church of Saxony and the other German churches took up the practice of new pastors being ordained by the community of pastors under the authority of the church. The Lutheran Reformers did not make any distinction between the two practices because the crucial element in the process was the call, not the ordination.

Because the public communication of the Gospel is so important, the church takes special care that those who are called to this ministry are both apt and fully educated for the task. Part of the Lutheran heritage is that we are a church founded by a university faculty. The members of the faculty at the University of Wittenberg were quite concerned by the large number of uneducated clergy in Saxony who often preached nonsense and were quite incapable of pastoral care, so a program of education for pastors was put in place in the late 1520s. The Church of Saxony also developed systems for helping congregations obtain qualified pastors and supervising the work of pastor and congregation.

During the time of the Reformation the various churches that became Lutheran each adopted and published its own "church order." These orders contained the liturgy of that church and the structure by which that church was governed. Though these orders were similar they were not identical. The Reformers did not consider uniformity in liturgy and polity (how the church is governed) to be necessary to Lutheran unity. Lutheranism has always been a communion of churches held together by a common confession of the Gospel.

### **How the Lutheran Confessions Express This Theology** (Endnote 4)

Again the sequence of the articles of the Augsburg Confession is important (see Appendix 1). In Article IV the Gospel is confessed. Immediately in Article V the Confessors affirm that the Gospel is connected to the ministry: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving

#### **SIGNS OF THE CHURCH: Offices**

Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer. There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 [8], "He received gifts among people ..."—his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc. The people as a whole cannot do these things, but must entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other? It must be entrusted to one person, and [that person] alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments. The others should be content with this arrangement and agree to it. Wherever you see this done, be assured that God's people, the holy Christian people, are present. (LW 4, 154)

the gospel and the sacraments.” (Endnote 5) The need to communicate the Gospel requires that there be people designated to exercise the ministry of communicating the Gospel.

The AC continues to affirm the Christian life, the Church and the Sacraments in articles VI through XII. After Article XIII on the use of the Sacraments the confession turns to church order in Article XIV. There the Confessors state, “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.” (Endnote 6)

The AC next takes up church order in Article XXVIII, which is titled in German “Concerning the Power of Bishops.” This article is in the second part of the confession which discusses the abuses which the Lutheran estates have corrected. As a result the article primarily points to those Medieval practices which the Reformers considered abuses of the authority of bishops and explains how relevant practices have been changed. To begin, though, the AC expresses its basic principle of church order: “According to the gospel the power of the keys or of the bishops is a power and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments . . . . This same power of the keys or of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God’s Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals, depending on one’s calling.” (Endnote 7)

## DISCUSSION

- *The Lutheran Confessions express the pastoral ministry as a ministry of preaching and teaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. What other tasks does your congregation expect your pastor to undertake? Which are most important to you? Why?*

### From the Sixteenth Century to Us

The way in which the ministry of Word and Sacrament was carried out in the churches that adopted the Lutheran Reformation evolved over time and was affected by the context of the particular church. In all cases, as was true throughout Protestant Europe—and even to some extent in Roman Catholic territories—the political authorities took responsibility for governing the church. Thus the Lutheran churches of Europe became state churches. Education of clergy was carried out through the theology faculties of the various public universities. Clergy were appointed to parishes by the state church, which could include royal or parliamentary approval. Clergy were not always well-paid—many rural pastors supplemented their incomes by farming or brewing—but their positions were relatively secure and they held respected positions in the community.

As the social context changed in Europe different forms of ministry were developed to help the churches carry out their mission. In the early part of the nineteenth century Pastor Theodor Fliedner of Kaiserswerth in Germany organized an order of deaconesses to serve in nursing and other ministries. From Germany the orders spread to Scandinavia. In 1849 Pastor William Passavant brought four deaconesses from Kaiserswerth to Pittsburg, thus introducing the

movement to North America. In 1884 a deaconess community was established in Philadelphia, in 1889 a second community was established in Baltimore and in 1890 a third among Swedish Lutherans in Omaha. In the 1960s these communities came together to form the Deaconess Community of the Lutheran Church in America. The work of these communities gave shape to a specific diaconal ministry, the ministry of word and service. Today in the ELCIC, women and men serving as diaconal ministers express their ministries through a variety of vocations including medical work, chaplaincy, music and teaching which focus on situations of need in the church and in the world. These people help to remind us of our own diaconal roles as expressions of our baptismal vocation to serve in God's world.

When the first Lutheran pioneers came to Europe's North American colonies they almost always came into a situation where they were considered foreigners. Lutheran immigrants also had to learn what it meant not to be the state church. In most cases these immigrants had great difficulty in finding qualified pastors to serve in the ministry of Word and Sacrament in their communities. There were never enough pastors sent from Europe to serve the need. Those who came often served many congregations spread over a wide area. More than a few falsely presented themselves as pastors when they were not. Some congregations did without as necessary. Some joined other denominations such as the Anglicans or Methodists who could supply them with pastors. Pastors who were serving would take on apprentices so that local people could be educated. One reason for the founding of the earliest North American Synods was for the supervision and examination of these early candidates for ministry.

In 1820 the General Synod, a federation of regional synods, was formed and set as its first task the organization of a theological seminary. This was a new institution for Lutherans who had always relied on public universities for the education of pastors. The new school opened in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and a program for educated clergy in North America was initiated. Other seminaries were founded and in 1911 the first Canadian Lutheran seminary was begun in Waterloo, Ontario.

With the establishment of theological seminaries in North America the Lutheran tradition of educated clergy which dated back to the Reformation could be continued. Lutherans had always believed that before a person could be eligible for a public call such a person needed to have an aptitude for and be qualified to pastoral ministry. The structure of synodically-supported theological seminaries provided the churches with a way to test the aptitude of candidates and provide the sort of education which combined theological knowledge and the skill to apply that knowledge to ministry. While the form was new, in the beginning the content of what was taught in North American seminaries was similar to what was taught in the ancient theological faculties of Europe. As time went on and new situations made new skills necessary and required pastors to interpret the Gospel in new situations, the curriculum of the seminaries evolved to address the changing needs of communities.

As well as developing new forms for educating pastors, Lutherans in North America also needed to learn how to integrate different and sometimes divergent ideas of what it meant to be

Lutheran. This resulted from the fact that Lutheran immigrants came here from different places in Europe with different traditions. Lutherans who came from Bavaria where the Roman Catholic presence was dominant practiced their Lutheranism differently from Lutherans from Norway where, in the nineteenth century, the Pietist movements had become important parts of the desire for independence from Sweden. These are just two examples of a great variety!

This variety had led in Europe to different approaches to ministry. Some Lutherans emphasized the need for order and organization. These came to North America with a sense for the connection of the local congregation and pastor to a legitimate authority and the dignity of liturgical worship. Other Lutherans emphasized the need for personal initiative and expressive piety. These came to North America with a sense of the need for local communities to make their own decisions and for the laity to take the lead in practising the faith. Of course, each of the myriad expressions believed that their way of being Lutheran was the best. While all agreed that the main task of pastors is to preach the Gospel and celebrate the Sacraments, they could disagree significantly about what that meant, about the relative weight of sacraments in worship and about the way in which worship ought to be led. A major theme of our Lutheran history in North America is learning how to make this diversity a positive contribution to our life together and this is nowhere more apparent than in our approach to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

## DISCUSSION

- *How has the diversity of Lutheran traditions in Canada shaped your congregation?*

### **Preparing for Ordained or Diaconal Ministry in the ELCIC Today**

In preparation for ordination as a pastor of the ELCIC, a person is required to engage in a comprehensive program which includes: 1) theological education; 2) formation for ministry; 3) supervised pastoral education; and 4) a nine to twelve month internship overseen by an ELCIC seminary. Candidates for ordained ministry in the ELCIC are normally expected to be graduates of a recognized college or university and earn a Master of Divinity or Bachelor of Theology at one of the seminaries of this church. The process takes at least four years.

Candidates for diaconal ministry must have a demonstrated area of expertise with an undergraduate degree or specialization certification. Their formation includes: 1) a year of theological education; 2) supervised field experience; and 3) participation in a diaconal formation event. The process takes at least 2 years.

Every candidate for lay diaconal or ordained ministry in the ELCIC is approved by a specific Synod Council but must be qualified for service throughout the ELCIC. To find out more about the candidacy requirements for Ordained ministry, Diaconal ministry and the Alternate Route to Rostered Ministry, see the Candidacy Manual (Appendix 2).

## DISCUSSION

- *Lutherans have always expected pastors to be well-educated in theology and the practice of ministry. Are there other fields of study that might be important to pastors today?*

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Study is to help the whole church reflect on our Lutheran understanding of a ministry of Word and Sacrament, and to explore how we might provide this ministry to people in all congregations of the ELCIC. In Session One we looked at current trends in the ELCIC that are resulting in some congregations being under-served. In Session Two we reviewed our understanding of the centrality of the Gospel, preached and celebrated in the Sacraments, in the formation and ongoing reformation of the Church. Session Three laid out a Lutheran theology of ministry and reviewed how our Lutheran history has shaped the structure of our church and content of preparation for ordained or diaconal ministry today.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO SESSION FOUR

In Session Four of this Study, we will be describing various existing options for providing Word and Sacrament ministry for congregations in the ELCIC for whom calling a pastor is difficult or impossible. Some of these are familiar and some may be new to you. You will also be introduced to some additional options that National Church Council has been asked to consider. Together we will reflect on these in light of the context described in Session One and the Lutheran theology explored in Sessions Two and Three. Once again there is helpful background reading that we ask you to do, to enrich and inform your participation. If you are unable to complete it, please come anyway... and bring others with you!



## SESSION FOUR

### Provision of Word and Sacrament Ministry

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#### SESSION FOUR OBJECTIVES

Our hope is that upon completing Session Four participants will

- be able to describe to others the variety of options currently available for the provision of Word and Sacrament ministry to small and remote congregations;
- understand the implications of choosing to license or locally ordain lay people to preach and administer the sacraments in specific congregations; and
- be able to explain to others the benefits and challenges of each alternative that NCC has been asked to consider.

#### SESSION FOUR PREPARATION

- Review any notes or highlights from Sessions One, Two and Three.
- Read the *Study Material for Session Four*

#### Session Four Opening Prayer

*A member of the study group is invited to offer an opening prayer:*

*Gracious God, we give you thanks for the gifts of the Spirit working in and through us during this study. We give thanks to you for the opportunity to consider our Lutheran identity in our present context. We give you thanks for the opportunity to share these conversations as we look to the future with excitement and hope. We ask your blessing on this fourth session as we work to discern your will for the whole body of Christ. Stir in us, O God, faithful and discerning hearts. This we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.*

#### STUDY MATERIAL FOR SESSION FOUR

##### Highlights of Previous Sessions

On Sunday morning, when we open the doors of the church and prepare for worship, we never know who will enter and what needs they may bring with them. We preach the Gospel and celebrate Holy Communion because we trust God's promise that those means of grace will speak to people in all their joys and their sorrows. Even when we don't feel particularly sorrowful or particularly joyful, hearing the Gospel and receiving the bread and wine—that is the body and blood of Christ—forms us and shapes our lives.

In Session One of this Study, we saw that a growing number of small, rural or remote congregations are no longer able to support or find a pastor. At the same time, we deeply value the weekly celebration of the Eucharist. We saw a variety of ways in which congregations balance these realities.

Session Two reaffirmed the importance of the Word preached and embodied in the sacraments in our Lutheran understanding of how God is at work. The Holy Spirit creates faith in us when we hear the Gospel and when we celebrate and receive the Sacraments. The Gospel and the sacraments create the Church. At the same time, the church is that community whose mission is to make sure the Word is spoken and heard in the world. When we reflect on the trends presented in Session One in light of this theology, we see the motivation for and the challenge and importance of finding alternative ways of providing Word and Sacrament ministry in our congregations.

Lutherans have a long tradition of well-educated, well-prepared and well-formed clergy. It is our belief that those who lead the public ministry of Word and Sacrament should be properly called by the community. It is also our understanding that those who are considered for call should have an aptitude for ministry and be appropriately educated so that they are capable of carrying out this ministry. Those who preach must be able to understand the context well enough to discern whether people need to hear a Word of Law or a Word of Gospel. They need the skill to bring the Word to the situation.

As might be expected, there are exceptions. Although the *Augsburg Confession*, Article XIV, indicates that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper call, it is quite common for lay people to teach in congregations and in the seminaries. Non-ordained people preach and, in some synods, lay people have been trained and approved to preach. With respect to presiding at Holy Communion, the ELCIC Administrative By-laws (Part II, Section 2b) and the *Statement on Sacramental Practices* (see Appendix 2) permit a bishop to license non-ordained people for administration of the sacraments in particular settings and for a limited time. A few lay people have been licensed in this way, but the ELCIC's bishops have agreed to suspend further licensing until the ELCIC can come to a common understanding.

## **Existing Options for Providing Word and Sacrament Ministry**

There are a number of alternatives to the traditional model of a called and resident pastor in each congregation that already exist and that are consistent with Lutheran teachings. As you heard or read the vignettes of congregations that were part of Session One, you may have identified some of the ways in which congregations too small to call a full-time pastor provide for Word and Sacrament ministry. With the co-operation of the Bishop, neighbouring congregations, and nearby clergy, congregations can find creative ways to work together. Some of the ways that congregations could and already do provide Word and Sacrament ministry for their members are described below.

## **Existing Option 1: Interim or Vice Pastors**

These are usually appointed to arrange for Word and Sacrament ministry between clergy calls, and to provide pastoral care and funerals. Generally congregational leaders assume responsibility for other ministries in the interim. Some of these interim ministries remain in place for long periods of time. Vice and Interim Pastors are paid by the congregation on a contract or fee-for-service basis.

## **Existing Option 2: Multi-point Parishes, and Companion or Yoked Congregations**

These have been common in the ELCIC for many years. Two or more congregations agree to jointly call a pastor or team of rostered leaders. Each congregation retains its own identity, Congregational Council, finances and programs, while the pastor provides Word and Sacrament ministry. Often the ministries of teaching, visitation and administration are shared with lay leaders, or may be offered as combined ministries in the parish.

## **Existing Option 3: Wide-area Parishes**

Through a covenant, several congregations agree to share ministry staff and/or programs. The arrangement usually includes a schedule of Sunday or weekday services to enable Word and Sacrament ministry in each place on a regular rotation based on the availability of called and supply pastors.

## **Existing Option 4: Arrangements with Anglican Congregations**

These can provide Word and Sacrament for ELCIC congregations where no Lutheran pastor is available. Because of our full-communion agreement with the Anglican Church of Canada, our congregations can enter into interim, yoked or joint arrangements with local Anglican clergy and congregations. There are currently as many as 80 settings where Lutherans and Anglicans are providing a joint witness, and in many of these, ministry of Word and Sacrament is offered by an Anglican priest to Lutherans, or by a Lutheran pastor to Anglicans.

## **Existing Option 5: Assistance from our United or Presbyterian Partners**

Such partnerships have led to the development of Ecumenical Shared Ministries in some areas. In Ecumenical Shared Ministries a pastor of any one of the participating denominations provides ministry to all congregational members using worship practices from one or more of the denominations represented in the shared parish.

## **Existing Option 6: "Circuit riders" or Itinerant Ministers**

These could be called (and possibly paid) by a Synod or by a group of congregations to serve a number of small wide-spread congregations on a regular, less-frequent basis. This is a model that is not currently in use, but that was prevalent in the past among Canadian Lutherans.

## **Existing Option 7: Alternative Route for Admission to the Roster of Ordained Ministers**

This is an opportunity for mature individuals (normally over 40 years of age) to enter into a shorter process leading to ordination. Existing lay leaders in communities that have experienced a lengthy pastoral vacancy are invited to prepare for ordained service in congregations. Upon completion of the alternative route, the candidate would be issued a special limited call by the Synod to that community. To date, no one has been ordained following this route.

### **Further Possibilities**

There may be a few communities in each Synod where, because of remoteness, lack of partner congregations, or special language requirements, none of the options described above is deemed to be workable. The question has been put to National Church Council whether or not the ELCIC might consider other options for providing Word and Sacrament ministry beyond those that are listed above.

Specifically, two options have been suggested. One is that ELCIC synods license qualified lay people to preach and preside at communion in certain limited situations. The other is that lay leaders who already live in a community might, under certain circumstances, be ordained for Word and Sacrament ministry in that community. Specific qualifications and preparation for these two options would have to be worked out. Neither is obviously the better choice. Both have benefits and challenges, and both may have implications for our ongoing ecumenical relationships.

#### **Licensing Lay People for Word and Sacrament Ministry**

What is meant by licensing qualified lay people to preach and/or preside at the Eucharist (and perhaps Baptisms) in a specific ministry or context? Since the time of the Reformation, Lutherans have understood that under certain circumstances, a congregation may call a member from within to serve the congregation by preaching or administering the sacraments. A 20<sup>th</sup> century example would be the licensing of lay people to preach and preside during World War II. The ELCIC could clearly identify the circumstances that might necessitate licensing a lay person, and could specify the types of training, mentoring, oversight and support required. A community would identify one or more members within their congregation who have gifts for ministry. Our sister church, the ELCA, chooses to use licensing in certain circumstances, and limits the license to one-year terms. If the need for licensed ministry will be long-term, the person is linked to an Alternate Route to ordination while continuing to provide ministry in her/his community. There would be no mobility for the person who is licensed, that is, the license is limited to the identified ministry.

## DISCUSSION

- *How well does the option of licensing lay people to preach and preside fit with ideas from Session Two, such as the importance of the Word, the increased desire for Holy Communion, etc.? What about the ideas presented in Session Three?*
- *Would you have different expectations regarding preaching by a licensed lay person versus preaching by an ordained person? What about having a licensed lay person preside at Holy Communion?*
- *The licensed lay person would be doing the work of an ordained pastor, at least for a period of time. What would be your expectations of such a person? Would that person be treated with the same respect and care in your congregation as an ordained pastor? What would be your expectations regarding the lay person's preparation and oversight? Can you anticipate any problems or new opportunities in the community using such a model of ministry?*

### Ordaining Local Leaders for Word and Sacrament Ministry

The other option is that lay leaders who already live in a community might under certain circumstances be prepared, examined and approved for ordination to Word and Sacrament ministry in that specific context. Again the community would call a member from within. And the church could clearly identify under what circumstances this option could be used. The ELCIC could provide training, mentoring, oversight and support for this person, but again there would be no mobility – the ordination is to a specific local ministry.

## DISCUSSION

- *How well does this option fit with the ideas from Sessions Two and Three?*
- *Pastors would be of two types if this option were used. The one type with which we are familiar is someone who completes a certain level of preparation and is eligible for call anywhere in the church. The other type completes a lesser level of preparation and is ineligible for call outside of their original context. How might this change our understanding of call?*
- *Can you anticipate any problems or new opportunities in the community using such a model of ministry?*

### Full-Communion Considerations

In our dialogue with the Anglican Church of Canada leading to the Waterloo Declaration, our churches affirmed that only persons who are properly ordained and duly authorized may preside at the Eucharist. Anglican Bishops may ordain people to a local ministry in some communities. For Anglicans, it is important to recognize that only ordained clergy can administer the sacraments.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Study has been to reflect on our Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament and ordained ministry, and to explore how we might provide ministry to people in all congregations of the ELCIC.

In Session One we looked at current trends in the ELCIC that result in some congregations being under-served. In the Sessions Two and Three we reviewed our Lutheran understanding of the theologies of Word and the Sacrament and of ministry. Session Four has brought it all together and challenged us to consider how we might shape new options for ministry to small, rural or remote communities or those with special language requirements in the ELCIC.

## ENDNOTES

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1. One example of this can be found in *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520): The Word of God is the Gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God...(*Luther's Works*, volume 31, page 346). Another example comes from *On the Councils and the Churches* (1539): But we are speaking of the external word, preached orally by men like you and me, for this is what Christ left behind as an external sign, by which his church, or his Christian people in the world, should be recognized. We also speak of this external word as it is sincerely believed and openly professed before the world...(*Luther's Works* volume 41, page 149).
2. Augsburg Confession, Art. IV. German, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), pages 38 & 40.
3. AC V, German, *Ibid.*, 40.
4. For a more complete discussion the reader is referred to Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.)
5. AC V, German, Kolb-Wengert, p. 40.
6. AC XIV, German, Kolb-Wengert, p. 46. The addition of "public" in square brackets is in the original to indicate that it was present in the 1531 edition and in the 1580 original edition of the *Book of Concord*.
7. AC XXVIII, German, Kolb-Wengert, p. 92

## APPENDIX 1

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### Augsburg Confession—Articles IV–XIV

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#### **[IV. Concerning Justification]**

Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3 [:21–26] and 4 [:5].

#### **[V. 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.

#### **[VI. Concerning the New Obedience]**

It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded for God's sake but not place trust in them as if thereby to earn grace before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things] . . . , say, 'We are worthless slaves.' " The Fathers also teach the same thing. For Ambrose says: "It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit."



## **[VII. Concerning the Church]**

It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere. As Paul says in Ephesians 4[4–5]: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

## **[VIII. What Is the Church?]**

Likewise, although the Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even public sinners remain among the righteous, the sacraments—even though administered by unrighteous priests—are efficacious all the same. For as Christ himself indicates [Matt. 23:2–3]: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat. . . .”

Condemned, therefore, are the Donatists and all others who hold a different view.

## **[IX. Concerning Baptism]**

Concerning baptism it is taught that it is necessary, that grace is offered through it, and that one should also baptize children, who through such baptism are entrusted to God and become pleasing to him.

Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the baptism of children is not right.

## **[X. Concerning the Lord’s Supper]**

Concerning the Lord’s Supper it is taught that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper and are distributed and received there. Rejected, therefore, is also the contrary teaching.

## **[XI. Concerning Confession]**

Concerning confession it is taught that private absolution should be retained and not abolished. However, it is not necessary to enumerate all misdeeds and sins, since it is not possible to do so. Psalm 19[12]: “But who can detect their errors?”

## [XII. Concerning Repentance]

Concerning repentance it is taught that those who have sinned after baptism obtain forgiveness of sins whenever they come to repentance and that absolution should not be denied them by the church. Now properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace. Then improvement should also follow, and a person should refrain from sins. For these should be the fruits of repentance, as John says in Matthew 3[:8]: "Bear fruit worthy of repentance."

Rejected here are those who teach that whoever has once become righteous cannot fall again. However, also condemned are the Novatians, who denied absolution to those who had sinned after baptism.

Also rejected are those who do not teach that a person obtains forgiveness of sin through faith but through our own satisfactions.

Also rejected are those who teach that "canonical satisfactions" are necessary to pay for eternal torment or purgatory.

## [XIII. Concerning the Use of Sacraments]

Concerning the use of sacraments it is taught that the sacraments are instituted not only to be signs by which people may recognize Christians outwardly, but also as signs and testimonies of God's will toward us in order thereby to awaken and strengthen our faith. That is why they also require faith and are rightly used when received in faith for the strengthening of faith.

Rejected, therefore, are those who teach that the sacraments justify *ex opere operato* without faith and who do not teach that this faith should be added so that the forgiveness of sin (which is obtained through faith and not through work) may be offered there.

## [XIV. 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.

## APPENDIX 2

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### Accessible Resources

These resources permit Study participants to look at the primary sources for items mentioned in the *Study Material*.

1. ELCIC Constitution is available at

<http://elcic.ca/Documents/documents/2013-ELCIC-Constitution.pdf>

See especially...	Article VI	Congregations
	Article VII	Ordained Ministers
	Article VIII	Diaconal Ministers

2. ELCIC *Administrative Bylaws* are available at

<http://elcic.ca/About-the-ELCIC/documents/2011-ELCICAdministrativeBylawsOct312.pdf>

See especially...	Part II	Congregations
	Part III	Rostered Ministers - Ordained
	Part IV	Rostered Ministers - Diaconal

3. ELCIC's *Statement on Sacramental Practices* is available at

<http://elcic.ca/What-We-Believe/Sacraments/Sacramental-Policy.cfm>

4. ELCIC *Candidacy Manual* is available at

<http://elcic.ca/documents/documents/ELCICCandidacyManualSeptember2013.pdf>

See especially...	Section B-1	Candidacy for Ordained Ministry
	Section B-11	Alternative Route for Admission to the Roster of Ordained Ministry
	Section C-1	Candidacy for Diaconal Ministry

5. Luther's *Small Catechism* is available in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pages 1160-1167.

## APPENDIX 3

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### Tell Us About Your Experience of This Study

At the conclusion of this Study, leaders and participants are invited to let the Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee know how they experienced this Study using the survey tool located at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MinistryStudyGuide>. Responses must be in by Monday, December 15, 2014. In addition to some identifying information, the following questions are included in the survey.

1. How many Sessions of this Study were you able to attend?  
(1 / 2 / 3 / 4)
2. How much of the prepared material did you read?  
(all / more than half / half / less than half / none)
3. How did you find the information and ideas presented in each Session?  
(too much / about right / too little)
4. How did you find this Study?  
(very helpful / somewhat helpful / neither helpful nor unhelpful / somewhat unhelpful / very unhelpful)
5. How do the issues presented in this Study affect you and your congregation?  
(constantly / much of the time / occasionally / not at all)
6. What have you learned through this study that was new to you?
7. How have your views changed about the various options for the provision of Word and Sacrament ministry in under-served or unique situations?