

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 1

D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

Lay-evangelists in the church

Prepared by the joint faculties of Concordia Seminary and Immanuel Theological Seminary in response to a request from Papua New Guinea. Submitted by the Joint Union Committee as an opinion applicable to the projected activity of the church in Australia. Adopted by the Constituting Convention, 1966.

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1. The New Testament speaks of 'evangelists', who together with apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers were members of the ministry of the church in the time of the Apostles (see Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5).
2. There were also Christians who, after the persecution which followed Stephen's death, were scattered 'throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria' and 'went from place to place, proclaiming the word' (Acts 8:1,4 NRSV; compare 11:19). These Christians who preached or taught the word of God (for example, Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 18:26) did not belong to the office of the ministry. They preached and taught simply by virtue of their spiritual priesthood; they were obeying the Lord's command to 'let your light shine' (Matt 5:16).
3. So there is room in the church for 'lay-evangelists'. The tasks assigned to them in the Wabag Lutheran Church [= Gutnius Lutheran Church] include:
 - Personal evangelism
 - Adult literacy
 - Instructing catechumens
 - Teaching evangelists and leadership training courses
 - Assisting in the evangelistic program
 - Administrative tasks as assigned

These tasks, which are to be carried out under the supervision of ordained missionaries, are largely ones which lay-evangelists could perform not only in Papua New Guinea but also in Australia. Like the people mentioned in paragraph 2 above, they too would be instruments of the church, witnessing among the heathen with the goal of bringing them into the church.

4. If, however, these evangelists are to preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments, they should be 'rightly called' (*rite vocatus*), that is, be examined, called, and ordained. They would then become pastors in the full sense of the word. In this way the church would avoid creating a second class of pastors (a *clerus minor* or 'minor clergy').