

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

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D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

What constitutes a call?

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1. The Lutheran Church of Australia [LCA] has adopted the following statement, which indicates what, in its view, constitutes a call:

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 steward 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 ('Theses on the Office of the Ministry', VI,7 in Theses of Agreement).

2. The position of the LCA in regard to the nature of the call is also indicated in its Letter of Call. The call is the invitation extended to a pastor by a congregation, parish or other authorised body which has chosen and elected him to be their pastor.
3. The statements from the Theses of Agreement and the Letter of Call itself show that certain groups have the right to call certain persons to exercise certain functions in their midst.
4. Who can be called to the office and functions of the public ministry (that is, to publicly preach the gospel and administer the sacraments)? Answer: Those who have been set apart and 'publicly declared to be ministers of the New Testament' by the rite of ordination (compare 'Theses on the Office of the Ministry', VI,8).
5. By the rite of ordination the church sets a person apart and says that he is fit and authorised to be a pastor. But the fact that the pastor has been ordained does not give him the authority to impose himself on any congregation or any group of people in a congregation or in the church. He has to be invited, called.

6. Likewise, a person who has been elected to a particular office of the church or district (such as a president, mission director, or seminary lecturer) does not automatically have the authority to enter uninvited into a congregation to preach, administer the sacraments, or perform any other ministry or function (unless the person is performing a duty specified by the constitution of the church or congregation).
7. A call always rests with those who have the right to call. This is true, whether the call is for an unspecified period of time (for example, a congregation's call to a pastor to be its pastor), or for a limited time (for example, a call to a youth worker to minister for two or three months), or an invitation to an officer of the national church or district, or a seminary lecturer to perform a particular task (for example, lead worship, conduct a special mission, give a lecture). In all of these situations the right to call may be exercised by the congregation as a body, or by the appointed representative(s).