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AN EXEGETICAL, HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL STUDY
OF NEW TESTAMENT TERMS FOR
PASTOR AND PEOPLE AT TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

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AN EXEGETICAL, HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL STUDY
OF NEW TESTAMENT TERMS FOR
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A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT

BY

RONALD J. WIESE
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE
MAY, 1995

DEDICATION

TO MY BELOVED WIFE

JUNE

THE GREATEST JOY OF MY LIFE

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PREFACE

I have served as a parish pastor for twenty-five years. The first six years were spent as the pastor of three mission congregations in Mississippi and Alabama. For the last nineteen years I have been a pastor of a historic downtown church in the heart of Memphis. During this quarter-century, I have been concerned by a continuing confusion on the part of clergy and laity in congregations I served and in some neighboring congregations over the office and function that each one of us has as different members of the Body of Christ.

I have seen myself and other pastors become burdened with so many church duties we were expected to fulfill, while too many lay persons remained on the sidelines and uninvolved when it came to the mission and ministry of the various congregations. I have seen some gifted lay persons become deeply disappointed when their special service was not readily accepted and appreciated by the clergy as well as other laity. I view this problem as greatly hindering the vital work of a Christian congregation in serving one another within the Church and in witnessing to those outside the congregation.

The goal of this project is to explore the meaning and evaluate the effectiveness of the terms which Trinity Lutheran congregation in Memphis uses for its clergy, lay leaders and members, to encourage and enable both clergy and laity to fulfill with joy our God-given mission and service in the Christian Church.

In designing this project, I am assuming the following important presuppositions. First, there are important terms in the New Testament that provide helpful guidance as to how different members of a local congregation are to serve together as different parts of Christ's Body. Second, the Church Fathers of the first three centuries A.D. show how the first generations of Christians applied these terms in their time and how they divided up the work of the Christian Church in their era. Third, there is a lot of confusion and even controversy today over the definition and application of these terms for leaders and people in many Christian congregations and denominations, thus hampering the vital work of the Church. And finally, clear and positive terms for clergy and laity can serve an important role in both describing and encouraging the important work of all members of the Body of Christ.

Through this project I intend to accomplish the following specific objectives:

1. Research the Biblical basis of ten words we use for the members and leaders of a Christian congregation.
2. Research how these terms were used and applied by the Christian Church in the first three centuries.
3. Study with other leaders and members at Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, the basis and meaning of these terms, to see how they enhance and/or hamper our serving together at Trinity.
4. Examine how these terms are being used and understood in various Christian denominations today.
5. Develop some specific conclusions on how these terms can be used to strengthen our God-given roles in the Body of Christ.

The main theological doctrine involved in this project is that of Ecclesiology or Theology of the Church. This theology is rooted in the teachings of Jesus and in the writings of the apostles, especially Matthew, Peter and Paul. The goal of the Church's mission is stated in Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), but the organization of the Church itself can be seen more clearly in the writings of Luke in Acts of the Apostles, and of St. Paul, especially I Corinthians and Ephesians. The Bible word studies selected for this project will be examined in the context of the Early Christian Church, beginning with Easter and Pentecost. These word studies are limited to the following terms: "disciple," "saint," "laity," "priest," "pastor," "elder," "bishop," "deacon," "teacher" and "evangelist".

The first four terms are all-inclusive names, that is, they are special names given to all Christians. The last six terms refer to various offices, special positions of leadership and service in the mission and ministry of the Christian Church. I chose these ten terms because they continue to be used in many Christian congregations in reference to all Christians or to people in special church offices, and because they contain special meaning that can clarify our calling as individual yet united members in the Body of Christ, the Church.

There are other New Testament terms of special persons within the Christian Church that are not included in this study. The term "apostle" was reserved for the most part for the Twelve, the disciples Jesus chose to be his close companions in his public ministry, and to witness His resurrection. They had a unique authority in the life of the Christian Church for they (including also Paul) were chosen by

Jesus personally as faithful witnesses of His words and works. For that reason, their office was not passed on to succeeding generations. Since the office of "apostle", strictly speaking, can no longer be filled, it is excluded from this study.

There is mention of "prophets" in the Acts of the Apostles and in some of Paul's letters. The existence of Christian prophets is also mentioned by a number of Early Church Fathers, but the separate position of "prophet", became, for the most part, non-existent in the Church. Nor does it exist as a separate office in Lutheran churches today, but is considered to be part of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Another New Testament term is "widows". Paul spoke of their important position of service in the Church in I Timothy 5:3-16. And there was a special order of widows in the first three centuries of the Christian Church. The order was abolished by the Synod of Laodicea in 364 A.D. and their function, for the most part, was taken over by the deaconesses.

Another important New Testament term for the entire Christian community is the word "church." It was a Greek word which meant "an assembly". It was used in the Septuagint for the congregation of Israel before the presence of God (Exodus 16:1). In the New Testament the term was used to refer to both the local community of Christian believers (I Cor. 1:2) and the world-wide Christian communion (Col. 1:18). The term "church" is not included in the Bible word studies because it is a term used for the whole Body of Christ rather than the individual members of that Body.

The historical study in this project has been limited to the writings of the Early Christian Church, approximately 33 to 325 A.D. Those were the most formative years for the Christian Church, and in many ways set the direction for the organization of the local and regional Christian communities for the centuries that followed.

The congregational study was conducted this past summer (June to August, 1994), using one of Trinity's Sunday morning Adult Classes. Over twenty congregation members, representing a cross-section of the church, took part in the study. The study included a survey of the participants' understanding of the terms (held in the first session), a ten-week Bible word study, and a sharing session in the final class period to discuss changes in understanding and attitude of both the pastors and the laity toward the different offices and other service positions in the congregation today.

The critical study of present-day usage of these terms focused on how they aided or hampered the work of the various members of a local congregation. My research focused especially on the writings of a variety of denominations, including Lutheran and Roman Catholic. Some Church Growth authors were also consulted as part of this project.

Insights and conclusions from this study will be shared with the leadership and membership of Trinity congregation during 1995. Some specific recommendations will be presented to a newly appointed long-range planning committee which will be working on congregation goals in the coming months. It is my hope and prayer that these recommendations will be evaluated by the lay leadership of Trinity congregation, with the result that as pastors and people, we will work together more

effectively and joyfully in the mission God has given this church. It is also my prayer that this project will become a positive contribution to the ongoing dialogue in our Synod on how we can best serve our Lord and fulfil the mission and ministry He has given each of us.

In conducting this project, I wish to acknowledge the very fine theological education I obtained as a Master of Divinity Student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1965-1969). It provided me with an excellent education in exegetical, systematic, historical and practical theology. In addition, many of the Doctor of Ministry courses I took sharpened my skills as a parish pastor. The course on "Matthew" by Professor Ron Jones and the Independent Study I had under Professor Wesselschmidt provided a good re-entry into the area of Ecclesiology and Church History.

I also want to acknowledge the ongoing support and encouragement I have received from my family and from Trinity Lutheran congregation during the past five years of study and during the development of this special project. And I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn for the many consultations we had during the development of this project.

ABSTRACT

There is a confusion among clergy and laity over their precise function in a congregation. This is an exegetical, historical and practical study of ten New Testament terms used for pastor and people at Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, Tennessee. The conclusions were that the pastor's primary role is the public administration of the Word and Sacraments, that the laity hold a high calling of the Lay Apostolate, and that the office of deacon should be reinstated in the congregation.

CHAPTER ONE

EXAMINING THE TERMS FOR PASTOR AND PEOPLE

When I graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1969, my first call was to two mission congregations. One was a congregation in a community of fifty thousand in Mississippi, and the other was a smaller congregation of ten families located in a small Alabama town some forty miles away. After I arrived, I also became vacancy pastor and then the called pastor for a small black congregation located in the same city in Mississippi as the first church.

To meet the needs of these three very different mission churches, I had to rely quite heavily upon the involvement of the laity in almost all aspects of the congregational work. I personally trained some of the lay leaders to serve in areas of service normally reserved for the pastor, i.e. confirmation instruction, counseling, and even preaching. We also had a number of the laity trained by the Southern District in what was called the LAOS (Lay Assistants of Our Savior) for special church service. But when they returned from their training, most of their fellow laity would not accept their special service. This disappointed and disillusioned those who received the training, and left me in the frustrating position of being an overextended pastor unable to enjoy the full use of some very gifted and well-trained laity.

When I came to Trinity Lutheran Church in Memphis, I had some similar experiences. Here we had fifteen members of the congregation

trained in the Stephen ministry, to give support and counsel to people in times of crisis. But so many of the other members refused their help and stated that the only person they wanted to "minister to them" was the pastor. We also trained twelve people in the Bethel Bible Series. But again, most of the church members wanted only the pastor to serve as their Bible class teacher.

As I looked back on these experiences, I realized that the terms used to describe the roles of special service were so crucial to the success or failure of the venture. Thus I came to the conclusion that a thorough exegetical and historical study of the Biblical terms we use for pastors and people might clear up some of the confusion and resistance that keeps us from being full partners in this exciting Gospel ministry.

Very few books have been written on this specific topic. Charles Mueller's book Words of Faith provided some helpful insights into many of the terms we use in the church today. But his book was written mainly for children. I believe that the following study of key terms for clergy and laity will be a helpful contribution to the on-going dialogue at Trinity Lutheran Church and in the church-at-large regarding the appropriate role of all of Jesus' disciples.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORGANIZING OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is both awesome and challenging to attempt to outline the organizational structure of the Christian Church in the New Testament. George Williams, a famous church historian, described the difficulty of such an undertaking in these words:

Anyone who attempts to give an account of the organization of the ministry in the primitive church and of the the various functions it performed must almost necessarily begin with an acknowledgement of the difficulties which beset his undertaking. These difficulties are so grave, and with our present resources so definitely insurmountable, that a clear picture of the early ministry is simply beyond our reach. This is true partly because of the meagerness of our sources....The New Testament documents are rich indeed in indications of the concrete nature, the quality, the "feel" of the early Christian life itself, but are, for the most part, silent concerning the forms of organization and procedure which prevailed. One may account for this virtual silence by saying either that the writers did not regard such forms as important or that they took them for granted; but the silence itself is undeniable.¹

In addition to the difficulty caused by such limited written sources, there is also the problem of a variety of terms (some of which seem interchangeable) and circumstances of the different authors and local congregations. Eduard Schweizer, in Church Order in the New Testament, wrote:

There is no such thing as the New Testament Church Order. Even in New Testament times circumstances were very varied, and it may be vital for this ecumenical dialogue that we should admit this.²

Although the New Testament gives no detailed constitution and bylaws for the organization of a congregation, it nevertheless has provided some very helpful information on the formation of the church in such places as Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, and other locations. Some New Testament books, such as I Corinthians and Ephesians, offer some theological principles for the organizational structure of a local congregation. Others, including Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, also describe how leaders and people functioned in their different positions in some of the first Christian communities.

The Acts of the Apostles offers some insight into the formation of the church in Jerusalem. The first leaders of the church were the Eleven, the first apostles. Campenhausen described them in these terms:

The apostles are thus the plenipotentiaries of their heavenly Lord; and their authority, therefore, does not derive from any human call or contingent developments, but is based in all probability on a call by the Risen Christ himself...This means that they are not simply preachers and teachers, but also founders of Christian communities, and as such know themselves, as Paul at least clearly indicates, to be permanently messengers, and personal representatives of Christ. The apostles are the principal and most eminent figures in the whole primitive Christian church, and in Jerusalem and among the Gentile congregations alike theirs is the supreme authority³

Even though the apostles were the personal ambassadors of Jesus Christ, the Christian communities as a whole participated in many of the final decisions. In Acts 1, the whole assembly cast lots to see which of the two candidates put forward would be included with the Eleven to bring the number back to twelve (the symbolic number for Israel). And in Acts 6, the whole body of disciples selected the seven men for the apostles to appoint for human care ministry while they continued in the ministry of the Word. In Acts 10, Peter opened the Gospel ministry to

Gentiles with the baptism of Cornelius and his household, but he was then (in Acts 11) called before the Jerusalem church to give account of his actions. Most of Paul's letters were addressed to entire Christian communities, urging them as a body to take needed action on various problems and crises within the communities of believers. The Apostles, especially Peter and Paul, received their special calling directly from Jesus Christ and could call congregations to task, but the entire Christian communities still had a vital part in the final actions.

Acts 13 recorded the beginning of Paul's missionary journeys. An important fact is that it was the church at Antioch, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that set Paul and Barnabas apart, placed their hands on them and sent them on their journey. Rengstorf viewed this as a basis for ordination in the Christian church:

In the final analysis, it is actually of most early Christian origin and has its classical point of contact in the report of the Acts of the Apostles on the sending of Barnabas and Paul into the heavenly mission by the congregation at Antioch.⁴

Although Jesus himself called the original Twelve to be his apostles, it was now the Christian community, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, that "set apart" (Acts 13:2) some people for special ministry as apostles and Christian missionaries. As George Williams wrote:

The choosing in Acts 1:15 of a successor of Judas in the presence of precisely one hundred and twenty of the 'multitude' (this same number was requisite in a Jewish community in order to elect members to the Sanhedrin) and in Acts 6:5 the choosing of the deacons, also by the whole multitude, served as a pattern and apostolic sanction for the lay election of clerics throughout the ante-Nicene period⁵

In Acts we find a number of references to the local Christian community as being a body of "disciples." The word "disciple" appears

250 times in the four Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. In the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Rengstorf said *μαθητής* "always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as *μαθητής*, and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power."⁶ Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, extended the use of the word "disciple" to include these new converts as a way of emphasizing that they also had a close, personal attachment to Jesus Christ through their faith in Him as their own Lord and Savior.

In Acts 15 we find one of the first references to the "elders" in the Christian church. The "elders" formed together with the "apostles" the first Christian church council. They issued a joint decree that outlined the minimum demands of the Law for a Gentile who wished to become a Christian. In Acts 20 we read of Paul calling the "elders" of Ephesus to a meeting with him. Bornkamm described their importance in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament in these terms:

The Holy Spirit has appointed them to be overseers (bishops) and shepherds over the congregation and the apostle has made known to them the whole counsel of God. They have to administer the legacy of the apostle, to follow his example, and to protect the church against the danger of error which threatens from without (v. 29) and from within (v. 30).... Here for the first time, then, they appear in corpore as guardians of the tradition of the apostles, who appointed them and entrusted the guidance of the community to them⁷

Where Luke and the other Gospel writers used "disciple" as a descriptive term for the first followers of Jesus and for even later Christians, the Apostle Paul used the term "saints," Most of the letters he wrote to the churches were written "to the saints." He employed this term even for some believers who were going through some

major difficulties (Corinth), and for a church he had not yet visited (Rome). The word "saint" had its roots in the Old Testament Hebrew word qōdes which meant "holy" or "separate." The Apostle Paul used it to emphasize that Christians were sinful people who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3, Ephesians 2) and were set apart by God to proclaim that new life in Him in their words and their deeds.

While the word "saint" was one of Paul's most frequent terms for individual Christians, one of his most descriptive terms for the whole Christian community was "the Body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27). All Christians have received gifts from God to use in service to Him and for one another and others. They were different people with many different gifts and different functions in the congregation (I Cor. 12) but they all used those gifts for one goal, the building up of "the Body of Christ." John Knox put it this way:

Sometimes a distinction is drawn between the "charismatic" ("Spirit-given") ministry in the early church and the "institutional" ministry. But if such a distinction was made by others in the primitive period - which seems rather dubious - it certainly was not made by Paul. The ministry was in every part charismatic; and if by "institutional" one can mean "contributing to the growth and orderly functioning of the church," it was also in every part institutional.⁸

According to Campenhausen, Paul's emphasis on the ministry of the whole Body of Christ came through in both inreach and outreach of the local Christian community:

It is significant that Paul, both where he is specifically summoning Christians to vigilance in testing the spirits, and everywhere else in his letters, never addresses one single class or group of people as though they were responsible for the spiritual well-being of the others.

Instead, one member exhorts and edifies another. As a matter of principle, there is no "ruling class" in the congregation and even the "spiritual men" are not thought of, by Paul at any rate, as a "pneumatic aristocracy."⁹

This is most clearly seen in I Corinthians, where Paul called upon the whole community of believers to deal with the problem of church disunity, incest, lawsuits, and abuses at the Lord's Supper.

At the same time, the Apostle Paul did speak of some who held special offices. One of the classic texts is Ephesians 4:1-16. After emphasizing the unity of Christians (one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc.), Paul said to the congregation at Ephesus that God had given some special offices to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. All of these were offices directly associated with the public proclamation of the Word of God to those within the congregation and to those outside the Church. In Lutheran congregations today, the God-given work of these offices (except for the office of apostle) has been capsulized in the Office of the Holy Ministry.

According to Paul, God gave these special gifts "...for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...."(RSV) Exegetes differ on the interpretation of the three prepositional phrases. Some have concluded that the three prepositions are coordinate, all dependent on the main verb and all referring to the purpose God had in mind for those who were His "gifts" to the Church. Others have reached the conclusion that the second and third phrases were to be taken together and made dependent on the first phrase. Such a view emphasized that God's "gifts" (apostles, prophets, etc.) were to equip all of God's people for their special service in the Church.

Commenting on Ephesians 4:11-12, a 1981 CTCR document on The Ministry concluded:

The emphasis here is on how the saints are prepared for service by apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers. The pastor does this by teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Hence the Lutheran Confessions call his office "the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments."¹⁰

The principle actor in all of this was God. It was He that had given these gifts (apostles, prophets, etc.) to His Church. It was He that used these people to build up the Body of Christ. And the means that they used to accomplish this was the Means God Himself had given - the Word and Sacraments. Commenting on these "gifts," Stevens wrote:

In receiving the grace of Christ we become ministers. We don't have a ministry; we are one. Grace has been given - that is the indicative. You will minister - that is the imperative. God's gifts are people endowed with a special grace from Christ for ministry. Because you have the gift of grace from Christ, you are a gift to the body. Seen this way, ministry is a natural and delightful duty.¹¹

Regardless how one might have interpret the three prepositional phrases, the final goal of God at work in and through these people was clear: "...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (RSV). God gave these gifts to His Church to enable every Christian to become a mature adult in Christ.

The terms Paul used for various leaders in the church are words that appear more often as verbs than as nouns. An "apostle" was one sent as Christ's ambassador of reconciliation. A "prophet" was one who preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. An "evangelist" was one who shared that Good News of Jesus with various people in many areas.

A "pastor" was one who shepherded Jesus' lambs and sheep in His Name. A "teacher" taught others the words of eternal life found in Jesus. Some question whether the "pastor" and "teacher" in this text referred to one or two gifted people, but gifted teachers are mentioned in other places in the New Testament (I Cor. 12:29, James 3:1) as very important leaders in a congregation.

Paul listed all of these special offices in the wider context of the "ministry" of all of God's people. I Corinthians 12 said it so clearly:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service [ministry], but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

(I Corinthians 12:4-7)

The word "ministry" (δουλοῦν) is used in the New Testament in reference to many areas of service. It is used in reference to a waiter at a meal (John 2:5), to a master's servant (Mt. 22:13), to a government official who is God's servant (Romans 13:6), to a servant of the gospel (I Thes. 3:1-3), to a servant to Christ (II Cor. 11:23), and even to a servant of the Church (Col. 1:25). Thus Harrisville could conclude:

First, the verb diakonein means "to serve," the nouns diakonos and diakonia mean "servant" or "service," and it is the context that determines wherein such service consists.¹²

Even Paul's Pastoral Epistles, addressed to individual church leaders (Timothy, Titus), spend little time on the specific duties of the overseers (bishops) and deacons in the Christian communities. Instead, Paul spoke of the spiritual qualifications needed by any

person who was given such a special office within a congregation (I Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:7-9). Lindsay summarized that emphasis in these words:

Hence we are told very little about the spiritual duties of the presbyters or bishops, or whatever their usual name was, and find little mention of qualities fitted for special function. What the apostle insists on is character, and that kind of character which is shown in family relationships.¹³

The fact that the whole Christian community was to be involved in ministry was emphasized by the Apostle Peter in the classic text on "the priesthood of all believers" - I Peter 2:8-9. In this text Peter emphasized that the Old Testament distinction of priests and people had come to an end, that all Christians were part of the "royal priesthood" - having a direct relationship with God the Father through Jesus. This use of the term "priesthood" for the whole church was consistent with the rest of the New Testament, as Lienhard pointed out:

It is worth noting that the word HIEREUS or "priest" in the New Testament is used of Christ, of Jewish religious officials, and of the whole Christian people, but not of specific members of the Christian community; this usage began only later.¹⁴

There were, of course, other individuals and groups who did have special "ministries" within the Body of Christ. In Romans 12, Paul included one who "exhorts," who "contributes," who "gives aid," and who "does acts of mercy." In I Corinthians 12, Paul added "workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues." (I Cor. 12:28) In I Timothy 5, Paul spoke of the special service of widows in the congregation.

There are a number of conclusions which can be drawn from this study of New Testament terms for church leaders and people. One such

conclusion is that there was a variety of special offices and other positions of service within those first churches. They were not just "clergy and laity." There was a rich variety of people using their positions of trust and God-given gifts to serve God and His Church.

A second conclusion is that those first Christian communities placed a high honor on and put a great trust in the people who held those first public offices in the Church. The Christian community in Jerusalem went to great efforts in the selection of a qualified replacement for Judas to join the Eleven. Although the office of apostle was not passed on to succeeding generations, the important office of the public "preaching of the Word" was conferred by the apostles upon the elders, evangelists, pastors and teachers whom they considered gifted by the Holy Spirit and who were approved by the whole Christian community. The first Christians filled those positions of public ministry of the Word with people who were called by the Holy Spirit and found qualified by Christ's Church to speak His Word with faithfulness and love. As Rengstorf accurately put it:

The apostle is an "officeholder" among others, but he also has his special and unique task among them, which of itself is also essential for his consciousness. The apostle is the one sent by Jesus Himself to bring the glad tidings, the real exponent not only of the early Christian proclamation but especially of the powers that shaped the beginnings of the church. At the same time he is of all the "officeholders" of the first period the one of whom we have the clearest picture. Hence our method is also justified if we, in determining the substructure of the early Christian consciousness of office, spend some time with him and his consciousness of office, and all the more so because his task is the administration of the Word.¹⁵

A third conclusion we can reach is that those first generations of Christians, whether they held a special office or not, saw them-

selves as important parts of the "Body of Christ." The Holy Spirit had called them to faith in Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. That same Holy Spirit had blessed all of them with important "fruits" that would enable them to live out their lives as Jesus' disciples in "...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control...." (Gal. 5:22-23 RSV) The Holy Spirit had endowed each of them with different gifts and abilities, as different as the colors of the rainbow, to use in service to Jesus and to one another as important parts of the Body of Christ. As the most recent CTCR document on Spiritual Gifts puts it:

In a sense, the analogy of the body enabled Paul to "level the playing field" when it comes to "ranking" the gifts. Because we all belong to one body, it is finally not important which gift or task a person possesses or exercises. Whatever gift we have, we have received it from God. Thus Paul can rejoice in the marvelous diversity of gifts exhibited in the church at Corinth precisely because they are gifts. He does not revel in some over others - special endowments over natural talents, miraculous over nonmiraculous abilities or offices. Every gift, no matter what its nature or definition, remains a gift of the one God for the purpose of building up the body.¹⁶

CHAPTER THREE
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH
IN THE SECOND TO THE FOURTH CENTURIES

One of the first recorded Christian writers living after the authors of the New Testament was Clement of Rome. Writing to the Christian congregation at Corinth, which had dismissed some of its leaders, Clement began with a picture of the church like that of an army:

Really in earnest, then, brothers, we must march under his irreproachable orders. Let us note with what discipline, readiness and obedience those who serve under our generals, carry out orders. Not everybody is a general, colonel, captain, sergeant, and so on. But "each in his own rank" carries out the orders of the emperor and of the generals.¹⁷

Clement then went on to criticize the church in Corinth for removing some of their leaders from office without just cause:

Now our apostles, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, knew that there was going to be strife over the title of bishop. It was for this reason and because they have been given an accurate knowledge of the future, that they appointed officers we have mentioned. Furthermore, they added a codicil to the effect that, should these die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. In the light of this, we view it as a breach of justice to remove from their ministry those who were appointed either by them (i.e. the apostles) or later on and with the whole church consent, by others of the proper standing, and who, enjoying everybody's approval, have ministered to Christ's flock faultlessly, humbly, quietly and unassumingly.¹⁸

Clement did not disagree with the right of the Corinthian congregation in dismissing their leaders, but he condemned them for putting out of

their leadership position people who were properly appointed and who had been doing faithful work.

It was Clement of Rome who also mentioned the word "laity" in contrast to the "high priests, priests, and Levites":

The high priest is given his particular duties: the priests are assigned their special place, while on the Levites particular tasks are imposed. The layman is bound by the layman's code.¹⁹

Even though Clement was one of the first to differentiate the clergy from the laity, this did not mean that the laity had no special ministry in the church. Indeed, Clement indicated that the laity had special rules and guidelines to follow that were similar to the rules for the clergy - as we will also see in two second century manuals.

Polycarp, in his letter to the Christians at Philippi, followed the pattern of Paul in I Timothy, outlining duties to various groups within the church. He also emphasized the Christian character of the people rather than outlining the authority or position they held:

Then you must teach your wives in the faith delivered to them and in love and purity - to cherish their own husbands in all fidelity, and to love all others equally in all chastity, and to educate their children in the fear of God.

And the widows should be discreet in their faith, pledged to the Lord, praying unceasingly on behalf of all, refraining from all slander, gossip, false witness, love of money - in fact, from evil of any kind - knowing that they are God's altar....

Likewise the deacons should be blameless before his righteousness, as servants of God and Christ and not of men; no slanderers, or double-tongued....

Also the presbyters must be compassionate, merciful to all, turning back those who have gone astray, looking after the sick, not neglecting widow or orphan or one that is poor.²⁰

Another second century writer was Justin, the Martyr. He has been sometimes referred to as a layman, but as Faivre correctly pointed out,

Justin did not differentiate between clergy and laity:

The name "Christian" was enough for Justin. It called for no particular function and no special distinction, responsibility, or ministry. Justin, the master who wore the philosopher's cloak and wrote in the hope that the emperor would read what he had written, regards even his own skill as an apologist as worthless.²¹

Ignatius was the first second century Christian writer who clearly emphasized the high authority of the bishop and presbyters. He wrote to the Magnesians:

Hence I urge you to aim to do everything in godly agreement. Let the bishop preside in God's place, and the presbyters take the place of the apostolic council, and let the deacons (my special favorites) be entrusted with the ministry of Jesus who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end (of the world).²²

Ignatius called upon the Ephesians to be in harmony and accord with their good bishop Onesimus:

Hence you should act in accord with the bishop's mind, as you surely do. Your presbytery, indeed, which deserves its name, and is a credit to God, is as closely tied to the bishop as the strings to a harp. Wherefore your accord and harmonious love is a hymn to Jesus Christ. Yes, one and all, you should form yourselves into a choir, so that, in perfect harmony and taking your pitch from God, you may sing in unison and with one voice to the Father through Jesus Christ.²³

It was Irenaeus who went one step further than Ignatius when he said it was the succession of the elders (presbyters) that guaranteed that the truth of the Gospel was passed from one church to another, from one generation to the next:

But when we appeal again to that tradition which has come down from the apostles and is guarded by the succession of elders in the churches, they oppose the tradition, saying that they are wiser not only than the elders, but even than the apostles, and have found the genuine truth...²⁴

There are two church manuals of the second century which provide helpful information regarding the ministry of bishops, elders, deacons

and other leaders and members of Christian congregations. They are the "Shepherd of Hermas" and the "Didache." Halton described their vital importance in these terms:

The "Shepherd of Hermas," in that it has been classified among the apocryphal apocalypses, requires more critical evaluation of its teachings on the Church. Its importance is that it may be the first authentically lay voice speaking on the Church. The "Didache" may belong to early in the second century but because of the itinerant nature of the ministry which it seems to presuppose, it may be representative of peripheral rather than mainline Church practice.²⁵

The "Shepherd of Hermas" pictured the Christian Church to be like a large building:

Now let me tell you about the stones that go into the building. The square, white stones that fit accurately in their joinings, these are the apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons who walk in accordance with God's reverence by administering with purity and sanctity the office of bishops, of teachers, and deacons for God's elect.... "Where are those that are brought and placed in the building?" "They are young in the faith and faithful."²⁶

Only those inside the building will be saved; the rest of the people (stones) will be rejected and perish.

The "Didache" called upon Christians to elect bishops and deacons who would be faithful leaders and who would be given a place of honor:

You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers, they enjoy a place of honor among you.²⁷

The "Didache" referred to the itinerant apostle and prophet, a position that was dying out at that time, leaving churches with only bishops, presbyters, and deacons as the usual leaders. The "Didache" gave some strict guidelines on how to tell a true apostle from a false one:

Now about the apostles and prophets: Act in line with the Gospel precept. Welcome every apostle on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.²⁸

The decline of such itinerant offices left the leadership of the local congregations in the hands of the local clergy. Wesselschmidt put it this way:

The itinerant offices of apostle/evangelist, prophet, and teacher began to die out because of abuses, such as Montanistic fanaticism, conflicts with localized clergy, and the need of stability and unity within a congregation. The duties of these servants were assumed generally by the bishop, further undergirding his arrogation of powers, or relegated by the bishop to one of his subordinates.²⁹

Lindsay summarized this gradual change in the church in the second century in these words:

The great change in the ministry which we have seen evolving itself in the three documents selected and which belonged to the second and third centuries, was that the ruling body in every congregation changed from being a session of elders without a president and became a session with a president. The president, sometimes called the pastor, but usually the bishop, became gradually the center of all the ecclesiastical life of the local Christian church and the one potent office-bearer. We have not to ask how this came about. In answer one thing only can be asserted with confidence. The change came gradually. It provoked no great opposition. It was everywhere, or almost everywhere, accepted.³⁰

The third century also had two important church manuals which shed light on how the Christian congregations were becoming organized for ministry. One document is the "Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus" - written by a conservative Roman church leader. Although some scholars have questioned whether this manual was broadly accepted in its own day, it does reflect the thinking of at least much of the

church leadership of the third century. Gregory Dix gave the "Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus" this value:

It is now generally recognized that the "Apostolic Tradition" of St. Hippolytus is the most illuminating single source of evidence extant on the inner life and religious polity of the early Christian Church.³¹

This document had two main parts. The first dealt with the ordination of the clergy:

Let the bishop be ordained being in all things without fault chosen by all the people. And when he has been proposed and found acceptable to all, the people shall assemble on the Lord's day with the presbytery and such bishops as may attend. With the agreement of all let the bishops lay hands on him and the presbytery stand by in silence.³²

This document indicated that the bishops were still elected by all of the people, but it went on to say that presbyters were ordained by the bishops, and the deacons only appointed because "...he is not ordained for a priesthood, but for the service of the bishop that he may do all things commanded by him."³³ The document called for the appointment of widows and readers, and recognized the importance of confessors as well as virgins in the ministry of the church.³⁴

Part two dealt with the qualifications of the laity. Strict rules were laid down concerning the examination of people and their lives before they were accepted into the church as laity. Indeed, some were eliminated from consideration as long as they were a sculptor, painter, actor, charioteer, gladiator, soldier, governor, or magistrate.³⁵ All of this indicated that although there was a clear distinction between clergy (bishops and presbyters) and laity, there still were high expectations and strict requirements for both groups within the Christian Church.

The other important church manual of the third century was the "Didascalia Apostolorum." It claimed to be compiled by the first apostles and received acceptance in many areas of the Church. It also became the basis for many of the later church manuals. It called for every congregation to have a bishop:

The pastor who is appointed bishop and head among the presbytery in the church in every congregation, it is required of him that he be blameless, in nothing reproachable, one remote from all evil, a man not less than fifty years of age, who is now removed from the manners of youth and from the lusts of the Enemy, and from the slander and blasphemy of false brethren....³⁶

The document went on to say bishops were to be financially supported by the laity:

But be you also nourished and live from the revenues of the Church; yet do not devour them by yourselves, but let them that are in want be partakers with you, and you shall be without offense with God.³⁷

This document commanded the laity to give honor to the bishops and the other leaders of the congregation as to God Himself. Referring to the bishop, the document stated:

This is your chief and your leader, and he is your mighty king. He rules in the place of the Almighty; but let him be honored by you as God, for the bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty. But the deacon stands in the place of Christ; and do you love him. And the deaconess shall be honored by you in the place of the Holy Spirit; and the presbyters shall be to you in the likeness of the Apostles; and the orphans and widows shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar.³⁸

This document outlined the supreme role that the bishop played in the life of the Christian congregation. No longer did the bishop have to give an account to the people regarding his stewardship. Indeed, the laity were not to judge the bishop as to his faithfulness in office.³⁹ The only task the laity had was to provide the financial support and to

be present for the assemblies.⁴⁰ The role of women became more defined and confined. Women were not allowed to teach.⁴¹ The long-honored position of widow was for the most part dropped and replaced by the deaconesses, who were, of course, appointed by the bishops and subject to their control.⁴² Here was a clear hierarchial prescription on how the Church was to organize and operate.

But not everyone in the third century accepted this view of the Christian Church. Tertullian was a controversial church leader and writer in North Africa. Toward the end of his life he was called a heretic by the Catholic Church because of his Montanist views. But he was one who preached the importance of the laity. Faivre said of him:

He was a violent polemicist and a man of sharp and passionate convictions. His views with regard to lay people can be more readily explained if he had himself been a layman and had held them as views directly relating to his own personal position. What is almost certain, however, is that, after breaking with the church, he was in complete solidarity with lay people and used the word "we."⁴³

In his work "Exhortation to Chastity," Tertullian reminded lay people of the fact that they were still "priests", with the power to carry out all of the church's functions even if there was no clergy present, and that they were expected to follow the same strict rules:

We would certainly be foolish if we thought that what was not permitted to priests was permitted to laity. For are not we laity also priests? It is written: "For he made us a kingdom and priests for God and his Father." (Rev. 1:6) It is the authority of the Church that instituted the distinction between clergy and laity and the honor shown the ranks of the clergy made holy for God. Where there is no duly constituted clergy, you offer, you baptize, you are your own priest, for where there are three, there is a church, albeit of laity. ...Therefore, if, in time of necessity, you yourself have the right to be a priest, it is necessary that you also maintain a priestly discipline even when it is not necessary for you to act as a priest.⁴⁴

Another North African Christian leader was Cyprian. Coming after Tertullian, Cyprian held a very high view of the clergy, especially the bishop. It was Cyprian who said:

Every Christian must be clear of this point, namely that not only is the bishop in the Church but the Church is in the bishop. That is to say: without the office of bishop there is no Church.⁴⁵

But as George Williams pointed out, Cyprian still saw the laity as holding a high calling:

A corollary of Cyprian's high view of the clergyman as the steward of God was that the people of God had the power of choosing their bishops, presbyters and deacons and rejecting the unworthy....Thus, even in the middle of the third century the laity preserved their "liturgy" of electing, of bringing the offerings or tithing, of identifying themselves with the prayers of their celebrants in antiphonal amens. Moreover, their consent was sought in dogmatic and formal formulations.⁴⁶

The laity in North Africa still had a vital role, not only in the liturgy, but also in the church administration. As Williams pointed out in his article on "The Ancient Church"

For North Africa we have evidence that primitive usage persisted vigorously and even developed new constitutional forms of lay authority in the realm of discipline and temporal administration. North African writers from Tertullian on mention besides the Presbyteria (seniores ecclesiastici) an apparently collegiate group of SENIORES LAICI. They may have been elected by the whole body of the faithful, or were more likely the most respected of the laity, and, one might add, with sufficient leisure and sufficient means to serve with the bishop.⁴⁷

Another area of the church where Christian leaders and laity argued against the hierarchial view of the Church as proposed by the "Didascalia Apostolorum" was Egypt. George Williams stated:

More significant for our present purpose than the occasional preaching by laics in the presence of certain indulgent bishops and the feats of such learned laics as Origen and the lay succession of brilliant heads of the catechetical school in Alexandria of which he was one, was the role of

the unnamed and less tutored laity who seemed to have participated rather actively, not only in the disciplinary sessions of the Church, but also, in the synods convened for the clarification of the faith and practice received by the Church.⁴⁸

Origen, one of the famous leaders of the important catechetical school in Alexandria, emphasized the "priesthood of all believers" in his many writings. In his "Homilies on Leviticus" he said:

Do you not know that the priesthood has been given to you, that is to say, to the whole church of God and to the people believers? Hear Peter say to the faithful: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an acquired people. . . . (I Pet. 2:9) You, then, have the priesthood since you are a priestly race, and so you ought to offer to God a sacrifice of praise (cf. Heb. 13:15), a sacrifice of prayers, a sacrifice of mercy, a sacrifice of purity, a sacrifice of sanctity.⁴⁹

Origen used the priestly office of the laity as a reason to exempt the Christian lay person from the military service.⁵⁰

By the end of the third century there was a much more definite separation between the clergy and the laity, and there was a more uniform organization of the church on a local and universal basis.

Lindsay summarized these changes this way:

So far as the local "church" is concerned, the Christian thought, which in earlier times had dwelt upon the picture of saints and brethren living together the Christian life, now dwells upon the controlling power of those who governed. The Church, which was in earlier days a "brotherhood of saints," became a community over whom a bishop presided. It was defined, not so much by the manner of life led by its members, as by the government which ruled over them....

The thought of the universal visible Church underwent an analogous transformation. It was no longer the wide brotherhood of all who professed the name of Jesus, and lived the life of new obedience demanded from His disciples. It became a federation of local churches, who believed in the same verities, the (over)truth of which was guaranteed by legitimate rulers, and whose members yielded an implicit obedience to the bishop at the head of every local "church." It was the federation of churches which excluded heretics and rebels.⁵¹

In the fourth century, the hierarchial view of the Church that was proposed by the "Didascalia Apostolorum" became the rule of the Church and eventually the law of the Empire. This process was seen in the wide expansion of church offices created by the Church to administer the work that the Church was now called upon to perform throughout the Roman Empire. John Knox put it this way:

The proliferation of the lower orders below the rank of deacon and the erection of a hierarchy above the level of bishop, accompanying the establishment of Christianity as the moral cement of the Empire in the reign of Constantine, brought about the gradual disaggregation of the corporate ministry in a face-to-face fellowship. Thereupon the various orders of the clergy came to be thought of as the ecclesiastical counterpart of the succession of officers or the "cursus honorum" through which a magistrate normally advanced in the service of the State. Thus the ministry became more of a career than a calling.⁵²

Knox's view is supported by Faivre, who put more of the blame and responsibility for hierarchialism and institutionalization of the Church on the Church itself and not the Roman Empire:

It is often claimed, for example, that it was from this period onward that bishops began to play at being princes, that power phenomena began to figure prominently in the Christian communities, and that the idea of hierarchy and clerical cursus began to absorb men's thoughts. All these "evils" existed, however, before Constantine.⁵³

Lindsay pointed out that the organization of the Church by this time was such that little adjustment was needed for the Christian Church to take over where the old established Roman religions left off:

Thus the ministry of the church of the fourth century had become so closely fashioned after the organization of the imperial state religion that when the time of the Church's triumph came, which it did early in that century, very little change of previous state arrangements was needed to install the new religion in the place of the old.⁵⁴

All of this was reflected in the Church Councils and Synods of the fourth century. The Synod of Ancrya (c. 315 A.D.) forbade placing of bishops in small villages, and instead assigned presbyters to them.⁵⁵ This led to the tradition of having presbyters or priests as pastors of local congregations, and of making the bishops responsible for an entire region. In 320, Constantine increased the power of the bishops when he said that like his authority, the laws of the bishops could not be repealed. Commenting on this authority that Constantine gave the bishops, Faivre said:

The laity must therefore have felt increasingly insignificant and impotent in the presence of the bishop and the clergy, while the latter became more and more like an army of official administrators.⁵⁶

All of this centralization of power in the bishops culminated in the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) and the later Church Councils which made into Church Law (and later Civil Law) the hierarchial view of the Church. Canon Four of this Council said this concerning the appointment of bishops:

The bishop shall be appointed by all (the bishops) of the eparchy (province); if that is not possible on account of pressing necessity, or on account of the length of journeys, three (bishops) at least shall meet, and proceed to the imposition of hands (consecration) with the permission of those absent in writing. The confirmation of what is done belongs by right, in each eparchy, to the metropolitan.⁵⁷

No longer was the bishop elected by the people but now appointed by the other bishops of the area, with the approval of the chief bishop of the region, the metropolitan. Canon Six named the important sees as Alexandria, Antioch and Rome.⁵⁸

Canon Eighteen made it clear that only bishops and priests could administer the Lord's Supper and that deacons could not even sit with the clergy.⁵⁹ The clear distinction between clergy and laity was now complete and made final by Church decree.

Constantine himself was pleased with the results of the Council of Nicea. He called it to bring peace and order to the Church, for he looked to the Church to help him bring peace and order in the Roman Empire. He was reported to say at the conclusion of the Council:

God has instituted you as bishops for everything that forms part of the internal affairs of the church. As for me, I have apparently been nominated to be the bishop of external affairs.⁶⁰

For many centuries to come the formal structure of the Christian Church would be patterned after that of the Roman Empire, as Steele said:

To some degree the church consciously used the secular society of that time as a model for developing its predominant function and source of authority. In the Byzantine Empire the church gave bishops secular titles, insignias and privileges which had previously been reserved for the emperor or other high officials. Among these were candles, incense, a throne, shoes, the maniple, and the pallium. (10)

The western church equated the bishop with Caesar (11) Furthermore, they used the term "kleros" (Latin "ordo"), a common expression for orders of government dignitaries, to distinguish clergy from laity (12). These clergy also assumed the titles of "prefect" and "vicar," originally names of magistrates within the empire.⁶¹

While peace and order were obtained through this centralization of power in the bishops, what was lost was the sense of "priesthood of all believers." What was lost was the ministry of the laity, for they no longer participated in the selection of their own bishops, pastors and other church leaders, nor did they have an active role in the liturgy or in the final decisions of the Church. All this was put into the hands of the clergy, which is where it would remain for many centuries.

And the final result of all this hierarchialism and centralization of power was a decrease in ministry on the part of the laity in the local congregations, as Whitehead and Whitehead said:

As Christianity expanded in the third and fourth centuries, ministry began to shrink. The rich variety of charisms, scattered throughout the earliest Christian communities, was gradually absorbed into the ministry of the priest. The powerful gifts for teaching, healing, prophesying, and community administration were seen as belonging uniquely to the priest and bishop. Other Christians, now called "laity," were told that they lacked these powerful charisms. The abundance of power that Christians had known in Jesus Christ began to dwindle into scarcity.⁶²

CHAPTER FOUR
CONGREGATIONAL BIBLE WORD STUDY

An important part of this project has been a Sunday morning Adult Class that was held this past Summer. I chose this twelve-week summer class because it provided a good cross-section of the congregation as far as age and involvement in the life of the congregation. Some twenty members of the church participated on a regular basis. They included leaders of church as well as people who have never held a church office. They included people who were Lutheran all their life along with some recent converts.

In the first session I distributed to the class a "Word Study Survey" (see Appendix 1) which asked the class a number of questions regarding ten terms used in the Bible. Four of these terms referred to all Christians: "disciple," "saint," "laity" and "priest." The other six were used for various offices and leaders in the church: "pastor," "elder," "deacon," "bishop," "teacher," and "evangelist."

The first question on each term dealt with the New Testament definition of the term. This question was used to see how much Biblical knowledge the class members possessed regarding the selected terms. The second question offered the class members some choices as to what should be the most important work for that person in the Church today. In most cases, all the answers were part of that person's role.

I simply wanted to see where the class members would put the emphasis in such a person's service in the life of today's congregation.

Eighteen members of the class returned their surveys. A summary of their responses is included in the survey found in Appendix 1. An examination of that survey revealed some interesting insights.

When it came to definition of terms, the class members were fairly evenly divided over the possible answers concerning terms that are used for all of the members of a Christian church, i.e. "disciple," "lay person" and "saint." This shows that these lay persons have different perceptions of themselves as members of a Christian church. When it came to the word "priest," the vast majority picked the second definition (one who heard confession) that reflected the image of a typical Roman Catholic priest. This is surprising because most of the class members came from Lutheran or other Protestant households. It does show the impact of TV (with shows portraying Roman Catholic priests) on the perception of our own members.

When it came to the terms used for leaders of the Church, the class members were fairly evenly divided on those terms which are not used that often in Lutheran circles. Those were "bishop" and "deacon." When it came to terms that are used more often in Lutheran churches, the class members were most united on the definition of a Christian "pastor." Most of them knew a pastor is first and foremost that person "...called to preach, teach and administer the Sacraments...." They were almost united on the work of a "teacher" to be a person who is to "...instruct young and old in the Christian faith." But when it came to the terms of "elder" and "evangelist", there was more of a

divided opinion. A little over half (11) saw an "elder" as one "...chosen or elected to assist the pastor of the congregation in providing the spiritual care for a local congregation." This is probably the main work of the elders in most Lutheran congregations today. But a significant number defined an "elder" as "a person or persons appointed to direct the work of a local church in the place of the apostles...." That statement is much closer to the New Testament situation. All of this illustrates the confusion that so many people have when they assume that today's meaning of a word such as "elder" is the same as it was in the Biblical text, rather than understanding the Biblical term in its own right.

The class members were also divided over the definition of an "evangelist." A little over half (11) defined "evangelist" as one who "goes about preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to many different groups of people." Another significant group (6) defined an "evangelist" as "A Christian preacher who went about telling people of Jesus as their Savior and Lord and bring healing to those afflicted with physical and spiritual illnesses." It may have been that the two answers were so close in meaning which caused such a division among those who responded to the question.

The second question on each term also brought a variety of responses from the class members. The greatest diversity in numbers came with those terms ("bishop" and "deacon") which are not used very often in our Synod. The greatest unanimity came on two terms, "disciple" and "elder." Fifteen class members chose as the definition for a disciple - "Using his/her special gifts to serve Jesus as Savior

and Lord in his/her daily life." This reflects the attitude of a Christian lay person who still sees himself or herself as having special gifts from God and special services to perform in His name. For me, this is one of the most thrilling results of this entire survey, one that shows that at least some of the members of Trinity are ready and willing to see themselves also in an important ministry of the Church.

When it came to the word "elder," most all (18) of the class members wanted their elders to "assist the pastor in providing spiritual care of the members of a congregation." They don't want the elders to take the place of a pastor in any of his public duties, but to assist him in the spiritual care of all of the congregation's members. This reflects the customary usage of the elders in our congregation, and probably most other Missouri Synod Lutheran churches.

A clear majority of the class felt that a "teacher" should be "training all members of the congregation in the ways of Christ for their daily life as God's people." This reflects the long-standing tradition in our church which has emphasized that Christian education is something needed by people of all ages. And since Trinity has not had called parochial school teachers for some eighty years, most of the members have had little experience with Lutheran teachers who assist some pastors in some of their pastoral duties.

The class members' opinions were almost evenly divided when it came to the work of a "pastor" today. Over half felt his most important work was to "Preach and teach on Sundays, to visit the sick, and to instruct people for church membership." These actions are all part

of "the public proclamation of the Gospel" and at the heart and core of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Lutheran Church. But almost half said that the chief work of the pastor is to "Equip other members for their distinctive ministry as fellow members of the Body of Christ." This division illustrates a tension felt by many Lutheran pastors and lay persons regarding priorities placed on a pastor's time and energy. How much of my time and energy as a pastor should be focused on my ministry (preaching, teaching, administering the Sacraments), and how much should be spent on training and empowering lay persons for their special service in the Church? But instead of an "either/or", this should have been a "both/and". The final goal of my ministry as a pastor is simply to be God's instrument, sharing His Word and Sacrament that equips His people to be mature disciples of Christ.

When it came to the role of the lay person in today's church, most of the class members picked the answer: "Be equipped by the pastor and other leaders for his/her particular service to Jesus as Savior and Lord." This expressed a deep interest and willingness on the part of those lay persons to be helped in finding their special service and to be trained so they can fulfill their service to Jesus and others.

Some of the other results were not quite as dramatic. The class members were evenly divided over the main mark of a "saint." About half emphasized one who is "a good example" while others picked the answer "One who willingly gives his/her life in service...." The same was true with the word "evangelist." About half picked "a traveling preacher" and about the same number picked "a congregational leader training other members of a local congregation in techniques and ways

for sharing their Christian faith...." And when it came to a "priest," most of the class stayed with the Roman Catholic model of what might be called a "father confessor" - that is one who will "provide spiritual counsel to people who are in some great distress."

If I had the opportunity to rewrite the Bible Word Survey, I would want to make a number of changes that would give better choices and more clarity to the choices offered to the class members. I would change the second section under "Disciple" to read:

2. A Christian shows that he/she is a disciple of Jesus today by:
 - A. Having membership in a Christian congregation.
 - B. Believing in Jesus as his/her personal Savior.
 - C. Believing in Jesus as his/her personal Savior and letting Jesus be the Lord of his/her daily life.

I would want to offer the class members these clearer choices concerning the New Testament definition of the word "Evangelist":

1. The New Testament definition of an evangelist was:
 - A. A Christian preacher called by the Holy Spirit to take the Good News of Jesus to people in different lands.
 - B. A Christian preacher appointed by a Christian community to take the Good News of Jesus to people in other countries.
 - C. The author of one of the four Gospels in the New Testament.

When it comes to the section on the "Pastor," I would change the second section to read as follows:

2. The chief work of a Christian pastor today should be:
 - A. To lead the worship services on Sunday and to visit the sick and troubled members of the congregation.

- ___ B. To direct the work of the congregation so it will grow in membership.
- ___ C. To proclaim God's Word and administer the Sacraments so that God's people under his care will grow in Christian maturity as important members of the Body of Christ.

I would also change both sections under the name of "Priest" to the follow questions and possible answers:

1. The New Testament definition of the "royal priesthood" was:

- ___ A. Persons who were in charge of the worship services for a local congregation.
- ___ B. All Christians who have faith in Jesus as their Savior, and thus a direct access to God the Father.
- ___ C. A Christian who heard the confession of other believers and shared with them God's forgiveness.

2. What indicates that a person today is part of the "royal priesthood" is when such a person:

- ___ A. Has been brought to faith in Jesus Christ and shares with others the marvelous truth of God's love.
- ___ B. Preaches, teaches, and administers the Sacraments as authorized by the congregation.
- ___ C. Prays for other people.

I would also alter the second section of the questions under the topic of "Saint" to read as follows:

2. The chief mark of a Christian saint today is:

- ___ A. A Christian at a time of persecution who sacrifices his/her life as a faithful witness of Jesus Christ.

- ___ B. A Christian who believes and is baptized.
- ___ C. A Christian who is a shining example to others on how to live the Christian life in these modern times.

After the first session (which dealt with the survey), the next ten sessions were devoted to Bible word studies. These are located in Appendix 2. Each Bible word study had three main sections.

The first part focused on the New Testament definition of the term and a study of one or more passages where such persons were mentioned. This part was to help the class members discover the original meaning of the term, and who were some of the people in the New Testament Church that were given such a title. The "Questions for Discussion" in this section were used to help the class draw out the meaning of the text in words and language that Christians today would understand.

The second part focused on how this term was applied by Christians in the centuries that followed the time of the New Testament. The references for this section were taken from the Early Church Fathers. In two of the sessions I also included some very helpful references from Dr. Martin Luther. This section was purposefully included in the the word study because we would lose so much of the meaning of these terms if we simply jumped from the New Testament to today, completely bypassing nineteen centuries of important Christian Church history. We can learn much from how Christians in other centuries interpreted and applied those New Testament terms for God's people in their day. The discussion questions in this section were to help the class come to better understand the application of these terms by the Church Fathers and how it might help us have a better understanding of them today.

The third part of the Bible word study focused on the use of the term under study in the Christian Church today. Taking quotations from various authors, I then took the class through a series of discussion questions. The purpose of the questions was to solicit comments and reactions from the class that would lead us into a positive discussion of a better application of these terms in today's Church.

The concluding session in this twelve-week course was devoted to drawing all ten of these terms together. I described briefly some of the models of organization in various churches today. They included the Roman Catholic model of bishop-priest-deacon (which is used in some other denominations as well) and some of the models mentioned by some of those involved in the Church Growth movement.

Most of the class, however, was devoted to the model that the Apostle Paul gives for the Church in I Corinthians 12 - the Body of Christ. I drew these important truths from that important chapter and from other passages, including Romans 12:1-8 and Ephesians 4:11-15:

1. God has called all Christians into fellowship with Him and with one another, with each one as an important and vital member of His Church, the Body of Christ.
2. God has blessed every Christian with one or more special gifts, talents and abilities to use in fulfilling his/her calling as an important part of the Body of Christ.
3. God has called some people by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Church to fill the special office of pastor to share with the Body of Christ God's Word and Sacraments so every member will grow in Christian maturity.

- 4, God leaves no place among the members of the Body of Christ for selfish pride nor for self-depreciation.
5. God keeps His Church united as one Body in Christ Jesus by the power of His Holy Spirit working through His Word and Sacraments.
6. "Soli Deo Gloria" - To God alone be all the glory!

CHAPTER FIVE

CHURCH ORDERS IN SOME OF TODAY'S DENOMINATIONS

In 1982, the World Council of Churches published Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. This book contained the recommendations of the Faith and Order Commission adopted at Lima, Peru, regarding the divisions and potential unity among the many Christian denominations. This book was studied by many different denominations and congregations. When the various Christian churches responded to the book, the greatest disagreements were not in the areas of Baptism or Eucharist, but in the area of Ministry.

In the section on "The Forms of the Ordained Ministry," the book made this recommendation to all Christian churches:

Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it.⁶³

This recommendation went beyond the Faith and Order recommendation made in 1927, where it had said:

...the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, we therefore recognize that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church.⁶⁴

The recommendations of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry called for all

Christian churches to change to bishops, presbyters, and deacons so their church orders would become more uniform.

The Lutheran Church, from its inception, has never called for a uniform order of church government nor church orders. In fact, Article VII of "The Augsburg Confession" states what are the basics which are needed for "true unity of the Christian church":

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.⁶⁵

One fruit of the freedom of the Gospel that Lutheran Churches have enjoyed down through the years has been the freedom to choose a form of church government and to institute church orders which fit with their specific situation. Thus today we have some Lutheran churches which follow the old Roman order of bishop - presbyter - deacon, while others have district presidents - pastors, or some other form of church orders. This is one freedom of the Gospel that should be maintained.

The ancient order of bishop-presbyter-deacon is one which the Roman Catholic Church has continued to practice. Vatican II, for all of its changes, did not change the basic structure of the Roman Church:

With their helpers, the priests and deacons, bishops have therefore taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are as teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and officers of good order. Just as the role that the Lord gave individually to Peter, the first among the apostles, is permanent and was meant to be transmitted to his successors, so also the apostles' office of nurturing the Church is permanent, and was meant to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops.⁶⁶

Vatican II did try to raise the status of the laity in the Roman Church by saying that the laity also had an "Apostolate":

The laity carry out their manifold apostolate both in the Church and in the world. In both areas there exists a variety of opportunities for apostolic activity. We wish to list the more important fields of action: namely, church communities, the family, youth, the social milieu, and national and international affairs....

As sharers in the role of Christ the Priest, the Prophet and the King, the laity have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness....Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share in the apostolic works of that community. They lead to the Church people who are perhaps far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient.⁶⁷

Since Vatican II, bishops and priests have retained the authority of the public proclamation of the Word and administering of the Sacraments, but the role of the laity has definitely expanded. Roman Catholic lay persons oftentimes serve as lectors and lay assistants in the worship services. Many Catholic parishes in the U.S. now have parish councils, where the laity have a major impact in the plans and programs of their parish. Roman Catholic laity have a role in the instruction of and sponsoring of catechumens. And they have taken a more active role in the areas of human care and social justice. Such changes have led many of the Roman Catholic laity to become much more active participants in the mission and ministry of their churches.

A strong movement among especially Protestant churches that has had a strong impact on the relationship of pastors and people today is the Church Growth Movement. Starting with mainly evangelical and

pentecostal churches, this movement has become accepted by a variety of churches with different polity and church order. Even though the Church Growth movement does not prescribe any certain kind of church government, it places a heavy emphasis on the important leadership role of the pastor. C. Peter Wagner, in Your Church Can Grow, gave these "seven vital signs" for a growing congregation:

1. A pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth.
2. A well-mobilized laity which has discovered, has developed and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth.
3. A church big enough to provide the range of services that meet the needs and expectations of its members.
4. The proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell.
5. A membership drawn primarily from one homogeneous unit.
6. Evangelistic methods that have been proved to make disciples.
7. Priorities arranged in biblical order.⁶⁸

While Church Growth experts emphasize the important leadership role of the pastors, they differ on the actual authority of the pastor as well as the basis of that authority. C. Peter Wagner, in Leading Your Church to Growth, wrote:

Few pastors are pure leaders or pure administrators. Most are a mix of the two. But I have observed that pastors who tend toward being leaders, whether or not they also are administrators, will most likely be church growth pastors. Pastors who see themselves to be administrators and use that kind of a management style tend to be maintenance oriented. Making sure that the church as it is functions smoothly and harmoniously is usually where a manager is. A leader, on the other hand, is willing to take risks and upsets the status quo in order to move out toward new horizons.⁶⁹

Lyle Schaller, on the other hand, wrote in The Middle Sized Church:

The delegation of authority and responsibility is one of the skills many ministers learn in order to facilitate a church growth strategy. This means a willingness to delegate both authority and responsibility. That often includes the

authority to make a decision the minister might not wholeheartedly endorse. The slogan "I trust the people" must replace the desire "to be in on every decision."⁷⁰

The Church Growth Movement, for the most part, emphasizes the role of a pastor to be that of an "equipper." Stevens and Collins are one example of this:

Leadership equals the function of the leader, the followers, and the situation. Here we build on that definition to state that the purpose of this gift in the congregation is to release ministry in others. Christian leadership is the God-given ability to influence others so that believers will trust and respond to the Head of the church for themselves, in order to accomplish the Lord's purposes for God's people in the world.⁷¹

Because of its roots in evangelicalism and pentecostalism, there is little emphasis in the Church Growth Movement on the uniqueness of the Office of the Holy Ministry. Most of the emphasis remains with the congregation as simply a body of believers in a specific location. The pastor is the person chosen (by whatever means each congregation or denomination chooses) to be one of the leaders. In too many churches he is simply the "hired hand" whose main job is to get the congregation to grow in membership so they can become a "great church" in their community. What is missing is the sanctity of the divine call as well as the whole Biblical concept of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

A second deficiency with the Church Growth model is the lack of emphasis on the Means of Grace. Church Growth authors focus on demographics, growth patterns, styles of ministry, strategies for numerical growth, and give precious little emphasis to the public proclamation of the Word nor the administration of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But it is these Means of Grace that are the primary tools a pastor has to apply Law and Gospel in the

lives of the people in his charge. These are the Means whereby they grow spiritually and, by God's grace, also numerically.

A third deficiency of the Church Growth model of ministry is that it often holds a pastor down under the Law, and in this case the "Law of success." It encourages a pastor (and his congregation) to measure his success (and theirs) in terms of numerical and financial growth. It makes a pastor the CEO of a corporation where he is expected to take the corporation to new heights of success or face dismissal. This is turning a Christian congregation into another business corporation, and forgetting it is first and foremost the Body of Christ. The main work of the pastor is "planting the seed." It is God who brings in the harvest. As the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 3:6 - "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

Lutheran congregations and pastors have also been caught up in the debate over the proper role of the clergy and the laity in the Church today. Ever since its formation in 1985, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has been struggling with questions of structure. Some within the ELCA are calling for that denomination to adopt the three-fold office of bishop-presbyter-deacon as outlined in the Lima document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.⁷² The structure of the ELCA has bishops (with oversight as their primary task), presbyters (pastors) and a place for deacons (lay persons' service in special ministries).

John Reuman, on the other hand, has called for a two-fold ministry, one being the Ministry of the Means of Grace (bishops and pastors) and the other being the Ministry of Service.⁷³

Edward Schroeder outlined their different tasks this way:

If clergy can be said to be ordained to do church work, then the laity are commissioned to do world work, whatever it takes to keep the world running. So it really comes as no surprise that the laity are God's ministers for the "care and redemption" of God's world, because out in the world is where they are most all the time - except for those couple of hours each week when they're "at church."⁷⁴

Michael Rogness, however, has argued that any rigid structure will hamper the Church's mission:

In the discussion of the church's mission, the church cannot define itself to a rigid "threefold office of ministry," that is, bishop, priest and deacon, as sufficient to carry out the mission. The church's ministry is far broader and includes many more kinds of persons.⁷⁵

Thus the struggle continues in the ELCA as to how their congregations (clergy and laity) will organize themselves for ministry.

Even though it has not merged with other denominations, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has not been immune to the debate over church order and structure that has been raging in other denominations. Oscar Feucht was one of the ones who began the debate in the Missouri Synod with the publication of his book Everyone A Minister in 1974.

Feucht wrote:

This study does not call into question the office of the pastoral ministry or the practice of ordination. It does deal with the more strategic use of the pastoral office in the deployment of the whole congregation for the fuller exercise of every Christian's God-given priesthood.⁷⁶

In 1981, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations presented a report to the Synod entitled The Ministry. Offices, Procedures and Nomenclature. In that report, the CTCR stated:

Putting it simply, there is only one pastoral office, but the office which we formally refer to as "the office of the public ministry" has multiple functions, some of

which are best handled by another, e.g., the parochial school teacher who is performing that function of the pastoral office. The pastoral office with all of its functions is mandated for the Church. Other offices are established by the church to assist in carrying out pastoral functions.

Thus, we may speak of various "ministries" in and of the church, but we must be careful to distinguish them properly. An office is not defined solely by what one who holds it does (function) but by the duties, responsibilities, and accountability assigned to it. The pastoral office is unique in that all the functions of the church's ministry belong to it.⁷⁷

The CTCR document supported its findings from Scripture and with this quote from C.F.W. Walther's "Theses on the Ministry":

The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching.⁷⁸

But the debate over church offices and church order has continued.

The Epiphany/January 1993 issue of "Logia" focused on "The Holy Ministry." In an article on "Church and Ministry," Jobst Schoene wrote:

The Lutheran Church holds to the fact that the New Testament does not contain an ecclesiastical order divinely commanded or instituted. No ecclesiastical order, therefore, is as such, an article of faith. Consequently the Lutheran Church can exist--and in history has done so--with different forms of organization side by side, making use of different structures as they best suit it. This is part of the freedom given to her by Christ. And it corresponds to the New Testament situation....

Episcopalism and papalism, presbyterialism and congregationalism all claim to be based on the Scriptures as divinely instituted, but they are--closely examined--nothing but constructions and theories of human origin.⁷⁹

The debate has continued also on the meaning of Ephesians 4:1-16.

H.P. Hamann, in the December, 1982 issue of "Lutheran Theological Journal" gave this as his conclusion on the three prepositional phrases in Ephesians 4:

Finally, the context itself--and this is always the most important argument - favours the view that v 12 is the purpose of the gift of the four (five) classes of men (offices) mentioned. One expects to hear in v 12 (the purpose of the gifts) what apostles, etc. are to be and what their task is to be, not what they are to lead others to do or to be: apostles, prophets, etc. are there to perfect the saints and to work in the service, that is, in the edification of the body of Christ. I can't see these officers as teachers of method and bureaucrats telling everybody else what to do so that the great purpose of God may be attained.⁸⁰

The entire spring 1993 issue of "Issues in Christian Education" was devoted to the question "Who Is A Minister?" Mark Schuler, in the article entitled "Ministry: Some New Testament Perspectives" wrote a different conclusion concerning the exegesis of Ephesians 4:

What can be said with confidence is that there is a certain ambiguity to Ephesians 4:12, and perhaps that very ambiguity is the key. One could take the first εἰς as subordinate to πρὸς and the second εἰς as dependent on both. Then those gifted with inspired speech are instituted by Christ to equip individual believers to exercise their gifts (Ephesians 4:7, 16!) to the end that by means of both (the special ministry of the Word and the common service of believers) the body of Christ may be built up. In other words, everyone has a role to play in the work of the church which is rooted in the gifts of the Spirit. But not everyone has the special gift of the ministry of the Word instituted by Christ.⁸¹

All of these periodicals have offered some helpful studies for the ongoing dialogue in The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, giving some insights and guidance in how we can remain faithful to God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, and still organize ourselves effectively for mission and ministry in this new age.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

So, what insightful conclusions have I reached in this exegetical, historical, and practical study of the terms we use for the pastors and people at Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis? There are three main conclusions I have drawn from this Bible word study.

First of all, this study has helped me to clarify my God-given role as a pastor, a "called and ordained servant of the Word." It would be difficult for me to help the laity of our congregation to see what is their God-given role in the life of the Church if I don't have a clear picture of my own position in Christ's Body, the Church.

Article V of "The Augsburg Confession" said this concerning the "Office of the Ministry":

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.⁸²

As the pastor of a congregation, I have many different expectations placed upon me by the members of our church, by other people in our community, by my own family. All of this is in addition to my own expectations of what I want to accomplish in my own pastoral ministry at Trinity. Many more demands are made of my time and my attention

than I can humanly handle. I am in a position of great trust and responsibility where I must constantly make choices as to what I can do and what I must leave to others.

Thus it is so crucial that I remain focused on the special ministry God has entrusted to me as a Christian pastor. And I would describe the primary role of that ministry to be this: to preach and teach God's Word and administer His Sacraments to His people for the purpose of equipping them as fellow members of Christ's Body to become mature disciples of Christ. Martin Luther described the primary work of pastors in these words in his commentary on Psalm 110:

Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary....Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion. If everyone were to preach to his neighbor or if they did things for one another without orderly procedure, it would take a long time indeed to establish a congregation. Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belongs to the public office which is performed in behalf of those who are priests, that is, Christians.⁸³

God has saved me by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God has also through the Holy Spirit given me a special call, a call confirmed by the Church, to hold the Office of the Holy Ministry. The primary work God has given me is to share His Word and Sacraments with His people

so they become mature adults in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16). The primary Means God has given me to accomplish this is the Word of God and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And all of this (the gift of salvation, the office, the work, the means) are given to me by God's grace. If I keep this as the main focus of my pastoral ministry, the rest will fall into proper order.

A second important conclusion I have reached in this study is the high and holy calling of the laity. Francis Ayres stated in his book The Ministry of the Laity that there is a common but misguided perception concerning the status and role of clergy and laity. He wrote:

....There are, it would seem, three levels in the church. At the top are the clergy. Lower down are professional lay workers, who give "full time" for the church. At the bottom are laymen. If a man wants to "give his life to God," he can do it only by being a clergyman or a professional lay worker.⁸⁴

Ayres went on to point out the most critical need in the Christian Church today regarding the role of the Christian laity:

Therefore the Church, as a whole and in its component parts, needs to be challenged and helped to change its direction, structure, and daily life. An integral part of such change - just now the most important part - is a demonstration of the ministry of the laity and of the slow, organic growth necessary to achieve a real ministry. The first step in the renewal of the church is to encourage as many laymen as possible to see themselves as ministers. The gap between talk and action will continue until a vivid demonstration of a true ministry is given.⁸⁵

So, how will this happen? How will the laity and the clergy in today's Christian congregation experience such a vital ministry that goes beyond the clergy doing the professional church work and the laity merely supporting them emotionally and financially in their ministry? It begins by helping lay persons experience the truth that they are

a vital part of the Body of Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit with a variety of special gifts and abilities to use in their own ministry both with in the Christian Church and in the world around them.

What is needed is a new emphasis and honor for the Lay Apostolate - to use a term borrowed from the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has done a better job in recent years than the Lutheran Church in raising the status of the laity, and in training and releasing them to a variety of special ministries in the Church. We need a new Order of the Laity, similar to that of the early Christian Church, as it was described by George Williams:

To sum up, the laic in the ancient Church has an indelible 'ordination' as priest, prophet and king, no longer in bondage to the world, but freed through Christ to know the truth in the illumination of the Spirit, to exercise the sovereignty over the inner temple of self, to join in the corporate thanksgiving of the redeemed, and to forgive the brethren in Christ's name. The laity was a true order (taxis) with its own often distinctive liturgical, constitutional, eleemosynary and witnessing role in the gradual differentiation of the People of the Mission into laity and clergy.⁸⁶

This can and will happen as pastors use the Means of Grace to help the laity experience that they are also "full-time" disciples and saints, and just as much a part of the priesthood of all believers as are the clergy. By using Law and Gospel, we pastors can enable them to see that the sufficiency of their calling remains in God's grace in Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit - the same sufficiency we have in our calling as public servants of the Word.

How is all of this played out in the ministry of a pastor to his people? Oscar Feucht gave these specific recommendations:

What then is the pastor's role? He is a member and leader of the Christian community. In a democratized society such

as we have in our age, he can be authoritative, but not authoritarian. He will serve as inspirer, moderator, animator of the congregation. He will discover and liberate the hidden talents and energies of his people. He will inspire confidence and arouse enthusiasm. He will not simply issue orders. He will not be an "answer man." He will make Jesus Christ Lord always.⁸⁷

Stevens and Collins give a helpful description of the kind of church growth that can and should result from such "equipping":

...But the Ephesians passage on equipping gives us a systematic definition of church growth: growth into unity (4:13); growth into maturity as a community (4:13); growth into individual theological maturity as a community (4:13); growth into individual theological maturity so the members are able to distinguish truth from error for themselves (4:14); growth in love-motivated truth-speaking (4:15); growth in dependence on Christ the Head of the church (4:15-16); and growth in mutual enrichment (4:16). The question "Did the church grow under your leadership?" now takes on a new perspective.⁸⁸

A third conclusion I have reached is the critical need for re-establishment of the ancient order of the lay diaconate. Too often the Christian Church has borrowed terms from the business world to use in describing various positions of lay leadership in the congregation, and has forgotten or neglected the rich heritage of Biblical terms that can become so helpful in guiding and strengthening some of the special lay ministries in today's Christian congregation.

One such term is that of "deacon." The Biblical pattern for "deacons" was established by the apostles in the Jerusalem in Acts 6. The first three centuries of the Christian Church saw an extensive use of deacons. Martin Luther recommended the use of deacons in congregations. In his lectures on I Timothy, Luther said:

There ought to be deacons for the church - men who should be of service to the bishops and at his recommendation have control in the church in external matters.⁸⁹

Professor Jeannine Olson wrote in One Ministry - Many Roles, Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries:

At present, the role of deacons in many denominations is under consideration. There are at least four models alive, coexisting in some denominations: (1) There are deacons elected within individual congregations to serve at the local level. (2) deacons transitional to the priesthood, (3) "permanent" deacons of the sort that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, and (4) communities of deacons or deaconesses that came out of the Inner Mission movement. There is historical precedent for these and other possible forms of the diaconate to inform and enrich discussion on the shape of the diaconate today.⁹⁰

It would be helpful, I believe, if the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod would reestablish the order of deacons as a full-time lay ministry in the Church. We have had deaconesses for years in some congregations. It's time, I believe, to reinstate the office of "deacon", not as a stepping-stone to the pastoral office, as is the case in the Episcopal Church today, but as a permanent lay position, replacing the term "Lay Ministers." A full-time deacon could help in relieving a pastor of many duties that can get in the way of his remaining focused on the Word and Sacraments. A full-time deacon could be the lay director of a congregation's human care ministry. A deacon could also serve as the business manager or chief financial officer of a congregation. A deacon could hold the position of a congregation's properties manager. Such positions could be filled by some dedicated, experienced lay persons who have worked in the health care industry or the business world, who have retired from their company and are free (financially and family-wise) to use their gifts and talents in a special lay ministry in their congregation. Thus the office which the Early Christian Church used to involve lay persons in some

specialized ministries could be recovered and employed in such a way that would remain faithful to the Scriptures and also place competent lay persons in crucial ministries in the local congregation.

We are different parts of the same Body of Christ, some of us with special offices and all of us with various gifts. But as St. Paul pointed out so clearly in I Corinthians 12, every part of the body is needed to be functioning properly for the whole body to be healthy and to grow to maturity in Christ Jesus. Stevens put it this way:

The climax of Ephesians 4:1-16 is also the goal of the equipping ministry. This goal is much more than gaining a skill or accumulating knowledge; it is nothing less than maturity in Christ. "We will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (4:15) "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the full measure of the fullness of Christ." (4:13) Equipping has no less a goal than this: the maturity of both individuals and the whole church. Maturity is the master concept of the Christian life and the ultimate goal of equipping.⁹¹

POSTSCRIPT

Over twenty years ago, Dr. Oswald Hoffmann delivered a sermon on "The Lutheran Hour" that was entitled "Difference is beautiful." In that sermon he said this:

Difference can be terrible and difference can be beautiful. It depends on how you look at it. It also depends on what you do with it. We can all blow our own horns, and we can play our own violins as if we were the only ones in the whole world. A lot of people are doing that, and they are the unhappiest people in the whole world. They think they are getting somewhere, and they are: farther and farther away--away from God who is the center of all things, and away from other people without whom they cannot possibly live. There is a lot of noise around, but not very much music....

It is on the inside that the Spirit of God does His work. That is where the difference really blooms, and it is beautiful. The body of Christ is not a melting pot. It does not produce a lowest common denominator. Faith in Christ produces uncommon men, gifted with charisma from the Holy Spirit of God. They are different, one from the other, and they don't mind at all. The difference is a gift. They can't brag about as if it were something special. They just take it and use it for the good of all.

The gifts of the Spirit are many. Not just one or two, but many. The end product is something like an orchestra, with a lot of different instruments, together producing beautiful music. Having a common purpose with only one conductor, the difference becomes beautiful.⁹²

With Jesus Christ as the conductor, the pastors and people of Trinity Lutheran Church can rejoice in the different gifts we have, and in the different parts of the Body of Christ we have become by God's grace. And following His direction every day, we will produce wonderful music together. "Soli Deo Gloria!"

ENDNOTES

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"TEN WORDS FOR THE CHURCH"

A WORD STUDY SURVEY

prepared by

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Memphis, Tennessee

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INTRODUCTION

Names are very important. Just ask the corporate executives at McDonalds, or Coca-cola, or Northwest Airlines. These and countless other companies spend millions of dollars every year on putting their names before the public, so that when people are hungry, or are thirsty or need to travel somewhere, they have the name of a company that is ready, willing and able to meet their individual needs.

Names that are given to various people in a Christian congregation are also very important. Different denominations use different terms for various people within their organizations. In the Lutheran Church, we often use terms such as pastor, teacher, lay person. Some other Christian churches use such terms as bishop, deacon, presbytery, saint, father, brother and rector. Many churches have added terms taken from the business world: president, secretary, treasurer, chief administrator, executive secretary.

On the following pages you will see a number of questions that focus on ten terms used in the New Testament for various people in the Christian Church. All of the questions have multiple choice answers. The first one in each section will focus on a basic New Testament definition of these terms, to see what is your understanding of the basic work or ministry of these various people in New Testament times. The second question in each part will ask for your opinion on the role that these people ought to have in today's Christian Church.

Please answer the questions as best as you can. Don't sign your name. That way you can be free as possible with your answers.

Thank you for your participation in this important survey.

"BISHOP"

1. The New Testament definition of a "bishop" was
 - 6 A. An appointed leader of a Christian congregation or a group of congregations.
 - 7 B. An elected leader who was in charge of the ministry of other leaders and people of a number of churches in a geographical area.
 - 5 C. One or more people elected and/or appointed to make the major decisions for a congregation or a group of congregations in regards to the church's authorized beliefs and practices.

2. The most important role of a bishop in the church today is to:
 - 3 A. Be an example of what it means to follow Jesus Christ in all of one's life.
 - 11 B. Be the chief administrator of a church or a group of churches.
 - 4 C. Be a pastor for the pastors, teachers and other leaders in a group of churches.

"DEACON" - "DEACONNESS"

1. The New Testament definition of a deacon or deaconness was:
 - 7 A. One who basically took care of the physical needs of members of a Christian congregation, especially the widows, orphans, and other poor people.
 - 5 B. One who assisted the apostles and elders in the preaching and teaching, helping congregations to grow in their spiritual life.
 - 6 C. One who took care of any specialized ministry that was authorized by a congregation or group of congregations.

2. The primary role of a deacon or deaconness in a congregation today ought to be:
 - 8 A. Directing the human care or social ministry work in a congregation or other church agencies.
 - 5 B. Assist the pastors and teachers in the spiritual care of all of the members of the congregation.
 - 5 C. Perform any ministry which is authorized by a local congregation and its leaders.

"DISCIPLE"

1. In the New Testament, a disciple of Jesus Christ was:
 - 7 A. A person who personally met Jesus, came to believe in Him as one's personal Lord and Savior, and followed the teachings of Jesus in one's whole life.
 - 8 B. Any Christian who believed and was baptized.
 - 3 C. The original twelve apostles who were called by Jesus in the Gospels to be trained by Him to carry on His work in this world.

2. A Christian shows himself/herself as a disciple of Jesus Christ today by:
 - 1 A. Being an active member of a Christian congregation.
 - 2 B. Simply believing in Jesus as his/her savior.
 - 15 C. Using his/her special gifts to serve Jesus as savior and lord in his/her daily life.

"ELDER"

1. The New Testament definition of a church elder was:
 - 1 A. An older person in a local congregation who was an example of Christian faithfulness and love.
 - 11 B. A person chosen or elected to assist the pastor of the congregation in providing the spiritual care for a local congregation.
 - 6 C. A person or persons appointed to direct the work of a local church in the place of the apostles and the other missionaries who began the congregation.

2. The role of an elder in the Christian Church today ought to be:
 - 6 A. Assist the pastor in providing spiritual care of the members of a congregation.
 - 1 B. The spiritual leader for a limited number of people in a congregation.
 - 1 C. Preaching, teaching, and administering the Sacraments as needed and as authorized by the local congregation.

"EVANGELIST"

1. The New Testament definition of an evangelist was:
 - 10 A. A Christian who goes about preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to many different groups of people.
 - 2 B. A Christian who was a foreign missionary, authorized by a congregation or a group of congregations to spread the Good News of Jesus to people in other lands.
 - 6 C. A Christian preacher who went about telling people of Jesus as their Savior and Lord and bringing healing to those afflicted with physical and spiritual illnesses.

2. The primary work of an evangelist today ought to be:
 - 3 A. Using television, radio and other mass media to bring to all people the Good News of God's love in Jesus.
 - 7 B. That of a traveling preacher, going to various places on behalf of the church to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people that the Christian Church seldom reaches.
 - 8 C. A congregational leader, training other members of a local congregation in techniques and ways of sharing their Christian faith with others effectively.

"LAY PERSON"

1. The New Testament definition of a lay person was:

- 2 A. Every person who participated in a Christian congregation.
- 6 B. Every Christian who was a part of a Christian church who was not a clergyman.
- 8 C. Everyone who professed faith in Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior in both his/her words and in his/her deeds.

2. The primary work of a lay person in a congregation today should be to:

- 2 A. Give support and encouragement to the pastor in his important ministry to the congregation.
- 4 B. Support the work of the local congregation and of the church at large.
- 11 C. Be equipped by the pastor and other leaders for his/her particular service to Jesus as savior and lord.

"PASTOR"

1. The New Testament definition of a pastor was:
 - 0 A. One who equipped other members of the congregation for their special ministries.
 - 15 B. An appointed or elected leader of a congregation who was called to preach, teach, and administer the Sacraments on behalf of the local congregation.
 - 3 C. One who was chosen to provide leadership for a fellowship of believers and direct the work of a local congregation.

2. The chief work of a Christian pastor today should be to:
 - 10 A. Preach and teach on Sundays, to visit the sick, and to instruct people for church membership.
 - 0 B. Administer the work of the local congregation and to help the church grow in membership.
 - 7 C. Equip other members for their distinctive ministry as fellow members of the Body of Christ.

"PRIEST"

1. The New Testament definition of a Christian priest was:
 - 2 A. A worship leader who was in charge of the worship services for a local congregation.
 - 9 B. A Christian who heard the confession of other believers and who shared with them the forgiveness of sins that comes in and through Jesus Christ.
 - 3 C. A special Christian who mediated between other Christians and God Himself.

2. The primary work of a priest today should be to:
 - 1 A. Provide spiritual counsel to people who are in some great distress.
 - 10 B. Preach, teach and administer the Sacraments in behalf of the local congregation.
 - 5 C. Bring people and God together.

"SAINT"

1. The New Testament definition of a saint was a:
 - 4 A. Christian who lived a near-perfect life, who could perform miracles and other great acts of faith, all as example for other Christians to follow in their lives.
 - 9 B. Christian who knew he/she was a sinner who also had forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ.
 - 5 C. Christian who died as a martyr for Jesus, professing his/her faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord all the way to the end of one's life.

2. The main work of a saint today should be:
 - 9 A. One who is a good example to others on how to live a good Christian life.
 - 2 B. One who rescues others from their problems and trials, sharing with them the love and life found in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
 - 7 C. One who willingly gives his/her life in service to other people in Christ's name.

"TEACHER"

1. The New Testament definition of a Christian teacher was:
 - 4 A. Any person who instructed others in the congregation, especially the children, in the teachings of the Bible.
 - 12 B. A person chosen or appointed by the apostles or elders to instruct young and old in the Christian faith.
 - L C. A Christian leader who had the answers to the many religious questions which people often had.

2. The primary work of a Christian teacher today ought to be:
 - 2 A. Training the children of our congregation in our church's beliefs and practices.
 - 12 B. Training all members of the congregation in the ways of Christ for their daily life as God's people.
 - 4 C. Work with the pastor in the preaching, teaching and administering of the Sacraments for the benefit of the whole congregation.

BIBLE WORD STUDY

A TWELVE-WEEK ADULT BIBLE STUDY

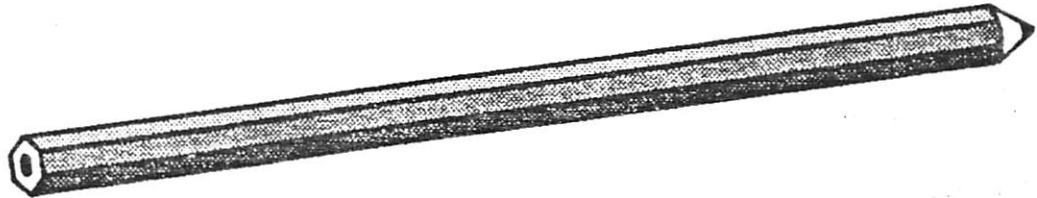
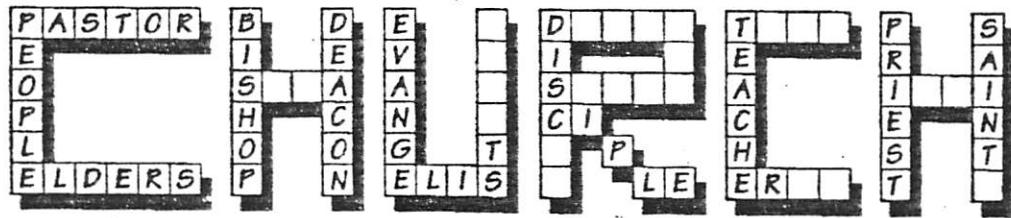
CONDUCTED IN JUNE - AUGUST

1994

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

MEMPHIS

10 WORDS FOR THE



"DISCIPLE"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

How many of Jesus' original twelve disciples can you name by memory?
 READ Matthew 10:2-4 for the complete listing of those first disciples.

USE OF THE WORD "DISCIPLE" IN THE FOUR GOSPELS:

The word "disciple" appears 250 times in the four Gospels and in the Book of Acts. The Greek word is *μαθητής*, which "always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as *μαθητής*, and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power."

- Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, pg. 441)

The word "disciple" refers to the Twelve only in some 30% of the references in the Gospels. There are a few references to the disciples of John the Baptist, the disciples of Moses and of the Pharisees. The majority of references are to a wider number of followers of Jesus.

READ John 6:60-71:

The first part of chapter six records Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand. On the other side of the lake Jesus began to teach the crowd that he was more than a "bread king," that He was the living bread who came to give people eternal life.

Questions for discussion:

1. Who were the disciples who stopped following Jesus?
2. Who were the disciples that kept following Jesus?
3. Why did some continue to believe in Him and follow Him?

READ John 8:31-38:

These words are part of the debate Jesus had with the Pharisees in the temple court.

Questions for discussion:

1. To whom was Jesus addressing these words?
2. What, according to Jesus, are the marks of his disciples?
3. What is the true freedom that a disciple of Jesus experiences?

USE OF THE WORD "DISCIPLE" IN THE BOOK OF ACTS:**READ Acts 14:12-28:**

Chapter thirteen and fourteen describe Paul's First Missionary Journey. The end of chapter fourteen describes the results of their missionary work in the towns of Galatia (modern-day Turkey).

Questions for discussion:

1. What was it that led many of the citizens in Antioch to become Christians?
2. What did Paul and Barnabas do to help the disciples in the Galatian towns to remain faithful followers of Jesus Christ?
3. Were these new disciples only Jews?
4. To whom did Paul and Barnabas report when they returned to the home base of their First Missionary Journey (Antioch - Syria)?

USE OF THE WORD "DISCIPLE" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

We continue to see the word "disciple" being used by various writers in the first three centuries of the Christian Church, especially for those who were willing to sacrifice everything, including their own life, for the sake of Jesus.

One of the most graphic descriptions of early Christian disciples is that made by Eusebius, the Church Bishop and Historian, who lived at the time of Emperor Constantine. Describing the work of some of the Christians at the end of the first century, Eusebius wrote:

"Very many of the disciples of the time, their hearts smitten by the word of God with an ardent passion for true philosophy, first fulfilled the Savior's command by distributing their possessions among the needy; then, leaving their homes behind, they carried out the work of evangelists, ambitious to preach to those who had never yet heard the message of the faith, and to give them the inspired gospels in writing. Staying only to lay the foundations of the faith in one foreign place or another, appoint others as pastors, and entrust to them the tending of those newly brought in, they set off again for other lands and peoples with the grace and cooperation of God, for even at that late date many miraculous powers of the divine Spirit worked through them, so that at the first hearing whole crowds in a body embraced with whole-hearted eagerness the worship of the universal Creator."

- The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, pg. 148

Questions for discussion:

1. What were the outward actions of these "disciples" of Jesus?
2. What was the motivation for giving up so many comforts of life?
3. What were the results of their witnessing?

USE OF THE WORD "DISCIPLE" IN TODAY'S CHURCH:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book The Cost of Discipleship, wrote about the difference between "cheap grace" and "costly grace" for a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.....

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life." (Pg. 47)

Questions for discussion:

1. How would you define the word "disciple of Jesus" in today's world?
2. What motivates a person to want to be a disciple of Jesus?
3. What does a person have to give up to be a disciple of Jesus?
4. What does a disciple of Jesus receive for all of his/her sacrifice?
5. What are the outward marks of a disciple of Jesus today?

NEXT WEEK:

An interesting fact is that the word "disciple" is never used by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the various churches in his Epistles. The most common word which he used for disciples of Jesus was the word "saints." That will be the focus of next week's study.

CLOSING PRAYER: (from the hymn "Abide With Me")

"Not a brief glance, I beg, a passing word,
But as Thou dwelst with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, condescending, patient, free.
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me." Amen.

"SAINT"**OPENING PRAYER:****INTRODUCTION:**

The word "saint" (^{ἅγιος} in Greek) has its roots in the Old Testament Hebrew word ^{קֳדֹשׁ}, meaning "holy" or "separate". The word implied anything or anyone who was associated with or consecrated to God.

Alan Richardson, in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, defined "saint" in these words: "Christians as persons who are consecrated to God, professing Christ and sanctified by the Spirit, are described as 'holy' in many passages where the EVV render 'saints.'" (Pg. 215)

USE OF THE WORD "HOLY" IN THE GOSPELS:

In Mark 1:24, Jesus is described as the "Holy One of God." In Mark 6:20, Jesus referred to John the Baptist as "a holy man." Mark 8:38 spoke of the "holy angels." Matthew 27:52 reported that at the death of Jesus: "The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life."

USE OF THE WORD "HOLY" IN PAUL'S EPISTLES:

The vast majority of passages which spoke of Christians as "saints" are in the Epistles of Paul. In fact, most of his Epistles are addressed to the "saints" in the various communities (Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae).

READ Romans 1:1-17:

This letter was written by Paul to a group of Christians in the capital city of the Roman Empire, a city he had not yet visited. In this epistle, Paul introduces himself to these fellow Christians by outlining his Christian theology, with its central message being: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

Questions for discussion:

1. Who called the Christians in Rome "saints"?
2. What was the basis for their being God's "saints"?
3. What did Paul want to share with these fellow Christians?
4. What was it that made these people "saints" - people that Paul had not yet had a chance to meet in person?

USE OF THE WORD "SAINT" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

The word "saint" appears quite frequently in the writings of the Early Christian Church in the first three centuries. With the rise of Constantine, the Christian Church is referred to as the "Communion of Saints," a term that is included in the Apostles' Creed.

One classic text from Clement that spoke of the "saints" said: "Brothers, we must follow such examples (Daniel, three men in fiery furnace). For it is written: 'Follow the saints, because those who follow them will become saints.' Again, it says in another place: 'In the company of the innocent, you will be innocent; in the company of the elect, you will be elect; and in a crooked man's company you will go wrong.' Let us, then, follow the innocent and the upright. They, it is, who are God's elect." ("Clement's First Letter")

- Library of Christian Classics, Vol. I, Pg. 65

Questions for discussion:

1. What, according to Clement, made a person a saint?
2. What, according to Clement, is the value of "saints" in the Bible?
3. Did Clement believe people of his day could also be saints?

USE OF THE WORD "SAINT" FOR MARTIN LUTHER:

One of Luther's disagreements with the Roman Catholic Church was over the "saints," especially the Catholic teaching on saint worship which Luther saw as idolatry. Luther emphasized the Biblical truth: "There is only one intercessor between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. 2:5). Jesus alone was to be worshipped as Son of God.

One of Luther's favorite expressions was that a Christian was "*simul iustus et peccator*" that a Christian was both a "saint" and a "sinner" at the same time. Luther wrote: "Since, then, God sanctifies you in Baptism, you must surely be holy by grace. Only beware of the ambition to make yourself holy by your own works and then to step before God and teach Him holiness too. He will cast you into hell as a blasphemer. He wants to sanctify you and will have no directions about sanctification from you." (What Luther Says, Vol. III, Pg. 1247)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What makes us a "saint" before God?
2. What keeps us a "sinner" before God?
3. Why is it important that we see ourselves as both "saint" and "sinner" in our own eyes and in the eyes of God?
4. What is the peace we have by being "saint and sinner"?

USE OF THE WORD "SAINT" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

When the Church of God in Christ has its annual meeting in Memphis every fall, the billboards announce: "The saints are coming." The word "saint" is used very freely in the COGIC denomination and other Pentecostal churches as a way for members to refer to one another. But when we use the word "saint," what are we usually referring to?

1. The author of one of the Gospels or the Epistles in the Bible.
2. A famous Christian in history who performed great works of faith.
3. A faithful Christian who is now dead.
4. A New Orleans football team.

R. Paul Stevens, in his book Liberating the Laity: Equipping the Saints for Ministry, wrote: "I am convinced that the liberation of the laity is not merely marginalia of New Testament Christianity but one of its central themes. And the purpose of liberating or equipping all the saints for ministry is not so that the load on pastors' shoulders will be eased through delegation of THEIR ministry. Each believer needs to be equipped for HIS or HER OWN ministry in the church and the world."

- Liberating the Laity, Pg. 9-10

Questions for discussion:

1. Whom would you name as a living "saint" today?
2. What keeps many of us from referring to ourselves as a "saint"?
3. What would be the benefit of seeing ourselves as a "saint"?
4. What might be our "own ministry in the church and in the world."?
5. How is the Christian Church a "Communion of Saints" today?

NEXT WEEK:

The third word in our Bible Word Study is "Laity" or "People," a word which today usually means those who are not members of the clergy, but a word which at first was all-inclusive, meaning all Christians, no matter what their office or position in ministry.

CLOSING PRAYER:

"Savior, since of Zion's city, I thro' grace a member am,
 Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name.
 Fading is the worldling's pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show;
 Solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion's children know."
 Amen.

"LAY PERSONS"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

One of the most common divisions made in most Christian churches today is that between the "clergy" and the "laity."

USE OF THE WORD "LAITY" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The word "laity" came from the Greek word λαος which occurs 140 times in the New Testament, especially in the book of Luke. It could refer to simply a "crowd" or "people", or to "the people of Israel," or to "the Christian community."

READ Titus 2:11-14:

Titus was a Christian leader that Paul had left behind in Crete to name and train church leaders in the various towns. In Chapter two, Paul gave Titus some guidance on how he was to instruct the various people in the Christian congregations.

Questions for discussion:

1. How are Christian people supposed to act in their daily life?
2. Who do the laity (people) belong to?
3. What are the leaders of the congregations supposed to do?

USE OF THE WORD "CLERGY" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The word "clergy" comes from the Greek word κληρος which meant the "portion allotted to someone." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) It was something given by God. Acts 1:17 referred to a fact that Judas once had a "share in this ministry." (New RSV) In Acts 26:1-18, the Apostle Paul told King Agrippa that the Lord met him on the road to Damascus to rescue him and send him to Jews and Gentiles "...so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." In I Peter 5:2, Peter instructed the elders to "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve...."

There is no passage in the New Testament which used κληρος to refer to the "clergy" as we have come to understand that term today.

USE OF THE WORDS "LAITY" AND "CLERGY" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:
 Clement, the third Bishop of Rome, wrote a letter (First Clement) about 96 A.D., giving the first recorded passage that indicated a growing differentiation between the "priests" and the "laity":

"The high priest is given his particular duties: the priests are assigned their special place, while on the Levites particular tasks are imposed, The layman is bound by the layman's code. 'Each of us,' brothers, 'in his own rank' must win God's approval and have a clear conscience. We must not transgress the rules laid down for our ministry, but must perform it." (Pg. 62 in Early Christian Fathers)

Lindsay, in his book The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, wrote: "Even in the Primitive Church in Jerusalem, where the presence of an apostle was seldom lacking, the community was self-governing, and acted on the conviction that the authority bestowed by Christ on His Church belonged to the whole congregation of the faithful and not to an apostolic hierarchy. The assembly of the local church appointed delegates and elected office-bearers. . . . The assembly of the local church summoned even apostles before it, and passed judgment upon their conduct. The apostles might suggest but the congregation ruled."

Faivre, in his book The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church, wrote: "At the beginning of the third century, then, the impression that we have from all the Christian authors - Tertullian writing for the church of Carthage, Hippolytus writing for the Roman church and Clement and Origen teaching and writing for the church in Alexandria - that there was at that time a frontier within the baptized people of God dividing the Christian social group into two - clergy and laity." Indeed, various canon documents in the third century begin to define the duties of the "clergy" and the "laity."

Questions for discussion:

1. What might have been some of the reasons for this differentiation between the "clergy" and the "laity"?
2. What are the advantages of such a differentiation?
3. What are some of the disadvantages of such a differentiation?

USE OF THE WORD "CLERGY" AND "LAITY" IN TODAY'S CHURCH:

Faivre, in The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church, wrote:

"From this period (third century) onward, the layman's function was to release the priest and Levite from all his material concerns, thus enabling him to devote himself exclusively to the service of the altar, a task that was necessary for everyone's salvation. It is here that we can find the true and concrete foundation for the distinction that came to be made between the laity and the clergy.

In fact, all the Christian teachers writing at the beginning of the third century took pains to relativize the titles and dignities common in the church on earth and to remind their readers that everyone is called to be one of the community of the righteous."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How would we define the word "clergy" today?
2. How would we define the word "laity" today?
3. What makes the "clergy" different than the "laity" today?
4. How important are these differences?

NEXT WEEK:

Another term we often hear in the Church today is "the priesthood of all believers." Who are the true "priests of God", the clergy or the laity or both? Next week we will study the Bible's understanding of "priest" and "priesthood of all believers," with the hope that it will increase our understanding of the biblical role of the "clergy" and the "laity" for the Christian Church today.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's head, You are her one foundation;
 In you she trusts, before you bows, and waits for your salvation.
 Built on this rock secure, your Church shall endure
 Though all the world decay and all things pass away.
 Oh, hear, oh, hear us, Jesus!

O Lord, let this your little flock, your name alone confessing,
 Continue in your loving care, true unity possessing.
 Your sacraments, O Lord, and your saving Word
 To us, Lord, pure retain. Grant that they may remain
 Our only strength and comfort. Amen.

"PRIEST"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

The word "Priest" is a common word in the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament it usually referred to those people of Israel who were involved in the tabernacle or temple worship. In the New Testament it is used of Jesus, of the Jewish religious officials and of the whole Christian church, but it is never used to refer to some special persons within the Church. That usage came later in the Christian Church.

Read Exodus 19:1-8:

The people of Israel had left Egypt in the Exodus and were now in front of Mount Sinai. In these verses God instructed Moses in what to say to the people before He shared with them the Ten Commandments and the other laws they were to follow as God's special people.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What did God remind the people of?
2. What did God mean when He called the nation of Israel "...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."?
3. What was the special work of the temple "priests" in the Old Testament?
4. In what ways were all Israelites still "priests"?

Read I Peter 2:4-12:

This Letter was written by the Apostle Peter to Christians in what is modern-day Turkey, Christians who were facing some very hard times. In chapter two, Peter reminded them of their identity as God's people.

Questions for discussion:

1. What did Peter mean when he said these Christians were "...a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..."?
2. In what ways are all Christians to be "priests"?
3. Why, do you think, did the New Testament authors refrain from using the word "priest" in reference to some individual Christians?

USE OF THE WORD "PRIEST" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

Tertullian (who lived around 200 A.D.) was the first recorded leader in the Early Christian Church who referred to the persons who consecrated the Sacrament of Holy Communion as "priests." It seems this special title was applied as a result of the developments of the liturgy in the churches.

The "Didascalia Apostolorum", a third century book on Church Order, gave these instructions to the laity concerning the leaders in the Christian Church:

"Hear these things, then, you laymen also, the elect Church of God. For the former People also was called a church; but you are the Catholic Church, the holy and perfect, "a royal priesthood, a holy multitude, a people for inheritance" (I Pet. 2:9), the great Church, the bride adorned for the Lord. Those things then which were said beforetime, hear ye also now. Set by part-offerings and tithes and firstfruits to Christ, the true High Priest, and to His ministers, even tithes of salvation to Him the beginning of whose name is the Decade...

"Then were firstfruits and tithes and part-offerings and gifts; but today the oblations which are offered through the bishops to the Lord God. For they are your high priests; but the priest and Levites now are the presbyters and deacons, and the orphans and widows; but the Levite and high priest is the bishop. He is minister of the word and mediator; but to you a teacher, and your father after God, who begot you through the water."

Questions for discussion:

1. In comparing the Old Testament to the New Testament church, who were now the - "true Israel"?
 - "high priests"?
 - "priests and Levites"?
2. What is the context of this reference to "priests"?
3. What are some of the advantages of using the word "priests" for the worship leaders of a Church?
4. What are the disadvantages of using the word "priests" for only some of the members of the Christian Church?

USE OF THE WORDS "PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS" BY MARTIN LUTHER:

In his commentary on Psalm 82, published in 1530, Luther spelled out the distinction between a "priest" and a "pastor" this way:

"It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For to be a pastor one must be not only a Christian and a priest but must have an office and a field of work committed to him. This call and command make pastors and preachers. A burgher or layman may be a learned man; but this does not make him a lecturer and entitle him to teach publicly in the schools or to assume the teaching office, unless he is called to it."

In 1535, in his commentary on Psalm 110, Luther wrote that every Christian has an important "priestly" duty:

"Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen or peasant for the other....Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion."

Questions for discussion:

1. In what ways are all Christians to exercise "the priesthood of all believers" in the Church today?
2. How is the "priesthood of all believers" different from the "office of the public ministry"?
3. What are some of the tensions that can occur between the people of God who are "priests" and those called to be "pastors"?

Next Week:

The next term that we will focus on is that of "pastor," one of the terms most commonly used today for those who have been called and ordained into the public ministry.

CLOSING PRAYER: (Lord's Prayer)

"PASTOR"**OPENING PRAYER:****INTRODUCTION:**

One of the most common terms used for an ordained clergyman who leads a Christian congregation is the term "Pastor." Its basic meaning is that of a "shepherd." In the Old Testament, God is described as "shepherd of Israel" (Genesis 49:22, Ps. 23:1, Ps. 80:1). In the New Testament, the word ποιμαίνω was used to refer to a shepherd, to Jesus Christ, and to leaders in the Early Christian Church.

Read John 10:11-21:

This is part of the dialogue that Jesus had with the religious leaders and with his own disciples in the temple in Jerusalem. In chapter nine Jesus had healed the man born blind. In this chapter Jesus spoke of himself as the "gate for the sheep" and as "the good shepherd."

Questions for discussion:

1. What was Jesus claiming to be in these verses?
2. What were some of the qualities of a "good shepherd" that Jesus applied to himself?
3. What effects did the actions of the "good shepherd" have on the sheep?
4. What were the reactions of many of the people to Jesus' words?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16:

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians expressed how the Christian Church was composed of people made alive in Christ Jesus. In Chapter four, Paul spoke about the unity in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Questions for discussion:

1. According to the first verses, what has united all Christians in the Body of Christ, the Christian Church?
2. What is the "grace" that Christ has apportioned to each Christian?
3. What are some of the leaders of the Church listed in these verses?
4. What is the basic work of all of these key leaders?
5. What is to be the ultimate goal of the leadership and the people of a Christian congregation?

USE OF THE WORD "PASTOR" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

In Acts 20:28, Paul told the Elders at Ephesus to "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Peter told the Elders the same thing in I Peter 5:2. Thus Elders were called upon to care for the congregation as a shepherd cared for his sheep.

The "Apocalypse of Hermas"-written before the middle of the 2nd century in Rome - spoke of an angel (shepherd) that was sent by Christ to be a "teacher, instructor, guardian angel and companion of Hermas, whose task is to proclaim the summons to repentance revealed to him." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, Pg. 498) The office of the Shepherd (angel, teacher, pastor) is described this way:

"Then he said to me: 'Acquit yourself manfully of this office. Tell every human being of God's wonders and you will find favor in this office. Thus, everybody who walks in these commandments will live and will be happy in his life. But anyone who disregards them will not live and will be unhappy in his life. Tell all who can perform charitable acts not to lag in good works and that this is helpful to them....'" (Pg. 250 in Fathers of the Church, Vol. 1)

Pastoral Life and Practice (Pg. 26) said this concerning the selecting of pastors in the second and third centuries:

"By this time (200) there was an emerging consensus on the selection of clergy. The church looked for those who gave evidence of an aptitude for ministerial functions, which included a virtuous life as well as fidelity to the apostolic tradition. The possession of these gifts was acknowledged through ordination....At the beginning of the third century the authority of the pastor did not derive from his office or the rite of ordination, but it was largely associated with interior qualities of aptitude, moral example, and the natural endowments (gifts of the Spirit) of the holder. The ordination rite was a recognition of these gifts."

Questions for discussion:

1. In the Early Christian Church (first three centuries) which came first, ordination or spiritual character, in making a person a pastor of a church?
2. According to the Shepherd of Hermas, what were some of the marks of a virtuous life of a pastor?
3. What was the church's purpose for establishing ordination?
4. What qualities should a church look for in a pastor today?

USE OF THE WORD "PASTOR" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

R. Paul Stevens, in his book Liberating the Laity: Equipping the Saints for Ministry, said this (Pg. 34) about the work of pastors and people in a local congregation:

"The two principles that undergird this entire book are these: First, church leadership is called primarily to an equipping ministry. This is not a sideline to preaching or counseling, but the *raison d'etre* of the pastor-teacher. Second, equipping the saints does not mean harnessing the laity for the felt needs or institutional tasks of the church nor harnessing the laity to assist the pastor with certain delegated ministries. The saints are to be equipped for their own ministry. The pastor should not be trying to replicate his or her own ministry but to release theirs. In the process, the laity, as a separate category of ministry in the Body of Christ, is abolished."

Questions for discussion:

1. What would you list as the order of work for a pastor, according to importance?
2. Where does "equipping" fit into this list of activities for a parish pastor?
3. What is the difference between a pastor equipping lay persons for the work of the church and for their own ministry?
4. What is the role of the Elder in connection with the role of the Pastor?
5. What does this do to the distinction between clergy and laity?

Next Week:

Our word study next week will focus on the leaders of the church in the New Testament that are called "Elders." What is their relationship with the pastor, with each other and with their fellow members? What is the primary work of an Elder today?

CLOSING PRAYER: (Ordination/Installation hymn)

Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit, on Your servant now, we pray;
 Let him prove a faithful shepherd that no lamb is led astray.
 Your pure teaching to proclaim, to extol Your holy name,
 And to feed Your lambs, dear Savior, make his aim and sole endeavor.

You, O Lord, Yourself have called him for Your precious lambs to care;
 But to prosper in his calling, he the Spirit's gifts must share.
 Give him wisdom from above, fill his heart with holy love;
 In his weakness, Lord, be near him, in his prayers, Good Shepherd,
 hear him. Amen.

"ELDER"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

An important part of Presbyterian Church government is the Presbytery, which is composed of pastors and lay leaders of local churches. They approve who will be accepted as a pastor in their area, and where new churches will be started. The word "Presbyter" in Greek was the New Testament word for "elder." It was the "elders" in the New Testament who probably functioned closest to what we today refer to as "pastors." Yet our church today has both "pastors" and "elders".

Read Acts 15:22-35

This is the letter which the Jerusalem Church Council sent back with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, a letter answering the question on which Jewish commands Gentiles still had to follow in becoming Christians. Did they have to be circumcised? Did they have to avoid meat that was offered to idols? How many of the Jewish traditions did they still have to follow?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who were listed as the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem in the letter sent to the Church in Antioch?
2. How did they answer the question that was addressed to them?
3. How was the letter received by the Church in Antioch?
4. What lessons in leadership can we gain from this text?

Read I Peter 5:1-11

Elders were usually the leaders appointed by the Apostle Paul and other apostles for guiding the local congregations (Acts 14:23, James 5:14). In Acts 20:17, Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him in Miletus so he could give them some instructions before he went to Jerusalem at the end of his third Missionary Journey. Peter, in his first Epistle, gives elders some basic advice in leadership.

Questions for discussion:

1. What specific advice did Peter give to the elders of the church?
2. How were the other members of the church to treat the elders?
3. What reward would the elders receive for their work?
4. What other guidance did Peter give to these fellow Christians?

USE OF THE WORD "ELDER" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Church at Corinth when they had dismissed some of their elders (presbyters) without just cause. In his letter, Clement urged the Christians at Corinth to follow their elected leaders: "You see, dear friends, how well protected they are whom the Master disciplines. Yes, he is like a good Father, and disciplines us so that the outcome of his holy discipline may mean mercy for us. And that is why you who are responsible for the revolt must submit to the presbyters. You must humble your hearts and be disciplined so that you repent. You must learn obedience, and be done with your proud boasting and curb your arrogant tongues. For it is better for you to have an insignificant yet creditable place in Christ's flock than to appear eminent and be excluded from Christ's hope."

(Pg. 69 in Volume One of Library of Christian Classics)

The common forms of leadership in many of the first Christian churches were presbyter-deacon, or bishop-presbyter-deacon. With either form, the presbyters (elders) were usually the leaders of the worship, doing most of the preaching, teaching, and administering the Lord's Supper. The deacons assisted the presbyters in the services and did more of what we would call "human care" work. And when a crisis hit, they all laid their lives on the line for Jesus Christ, for other Christians, and for their neighbors. Eusebius, the Church Historian, quoted a bishop's letter that described what many Christians did in one city when a severe epidemic broke out: "Most of our brother-Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of the danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains....The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of presbyters, deacons and laymen winning high commendation, so that death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in every way the equal of martyrdom. (Pg. 305 in The History of the Church)

Questions for discussion:

1. How were the presbyters called to be examples for the laity?
2. What kind of obedience were the laity to give the presbyters?
3. How did the Christian leaders and people deal with the epidemic as recorded by Eusebius?
4. What impact do you think this might have had on other people?

USE OF THE WORD "ELDER" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

There are some churches today who still address their congregation's pastor as "elder." (c.f. Church of God in Christ) But many other denominations (including the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church and others) have adopted the plan where "elders" assist the pastor in the spiritual care of the congregation. Eyres, a Presbyterian, described the plan in these words: "An excellent system for this purpose (and one with a long history among Presbyterians) is to assign a proportionate share of the church's families to each ruling elder, to whom and for whom he is responsible to minister. It will be his duty to visit in their homes, to exhort them personally on all sorts of questions when he discerns their need for it. They in turn will be taught to expect this sort of ministry, even to seek it out when they feel a need for it." (Pg. 19 in The Elders of the Church)

Questions for discussion:

1. This is the sort of plan which Trinity congregation adopted years ago. Do you think this is still a good plan?
2. What are some of the advantages you would see with such a plan?
3. What are some of the disadvantages with such a plan?
4. What other plans or systems of spiritual care could be used?

Eyres also gave six propositions regarding the office and the ministry of elders. How many of these would you agree with, or disagree with?

1. Elders are made by the Holy Spirit of Christ.
2. Adult (confessing) Christians are endowed with the spiritual capacity to discern those whom the Holy Spirit has made elders.
3. Elders, in the fulfillment of their holy calling, hold the key to health of the congregation under their rule.
4. Biblical submission to elders cannot be expected except where the congregation has exercised its choice as to who its elders should be.
5. No man can safely be ordained to the office of elder who does not possess all the biblically stated qualifications for that office.
6. The elders of the church are co-pastors, and every use of the office should reflect this fact.

(Pg. 3 in The Elders of the Church)

Next Week: We look at the role of the bishop, one of the other main leaders in many of the early Christian congregations. We will look at how bishops became some of the most important leaders in the Church.

CLOSING PRAYER: For leaders of the Church

"BISHOP"**OPENING PRAYER:****INTRODUCTION:**

One of the questions which people often ask when they step into a church for the first time is: "Who is in charge here?" One of the words of the Bible that came to mean the person in charge is the word "bishop".

USE OF THE WORD "BISHOP" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The Greek word for "bishop" is ἐπίσκοπος. It occurs only five times in the New Testament: Acts 20:28, Philipians 1:1, I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:7, and I Peter 2:25. The office of bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) is found only in I Timothy 3:1 and Acts 1:20. The basic meaning of the word is "overseer."

At first there seems to be little distinction between "bishop" and "elder" (Acts 20:17-28), but as time went on, the "bishop" gradually became recognized as the "head elder" in a Christian community.

Read I Timothy 3:1-7

This letter of Paul was addressed to Timothy, one of the young men that Paul had trained to work as a proclaimer of the Gospel. In the letter, Paul shared with Timothy instructions on such issues as dealing with false teachers, prayer, asceticism, and qualifications of a bishop and of deacons.

Questions for discussion:

1. List the qualifications that Paul gave for a person who desired the office of bishop?
2. Are these more internal or external qualifications?
3. Are these more personal or institutional qualifications?
4. What qualifications do you think no longer apply?
5. What qualifications would you wish to add to this list?

USE OF THE WORD "BISHOP" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

In the first several centuries of the Christian Church, bishops were chosen by the whole congregation or community of believers. Hippolytus a church leader at Rome who lived in the third century, said this about the ordination of the priest: "That man should be ordained a bishop who was chosen by the whole people, and is without reproach. When his name has been brought forth and he is acceptable, the people will assemble on Sunday with the presbytery and the bishops who are present. With the consent of all, the bishops impose hands on him; the presbytery stands by without doing anything."

But by the fourth century this had changed. Bishops were now appointed by the other bishops rather than elected by the people. And they now started to assume more of the power of the church. At the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) Canon #4 said this about the appointment of bishops: "The bishop shall be appointed by all (the bishops) of the eparchy (province); if that is not possible on account of pressing necessity, or on account of the length of journeys, three (bishops) at least shall meet, and proceed to the imposition of hands (consecration) with the permission of those absent in writing. The confirmation of what is done belongs by right, in each eparchy, to the metropolitan." Not only were bishops now appointed by other bishops, but their appointment had to be approved by the metropolitan or archbishop.

It was Constantine (and the Christian emperors after him) who affirmed that the bishops were the real leaders of the churches. He said this at the Council of Nicea: "God has instituted you as bishops for everything that forms part of the internal affairs of the church. As for me, I have apparently been nominated to be the bishop of external affairs."

Questions for discussion:

1. How important is it that the bishop is elected by the people rather than by other bishops?
2. How much authority should a bishop have in the work of a church?
3. Who really gives the bishop the authority he has?
4. What are the advantages to having a bishop as the head of a church or group of churches?
5. What are the disadvantages to having a bishop as the head of a church or group of churches?

USE OF THE WORD "BISHOP" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

In 1982, the World Council of Churches came out with a document that was called Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. It was the section on "Ministry" that ended up the most controversial. In that section the document stated: "Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it.... These three aspects need to be kept together. In various churches, one or another has been over-emphasized at the expense of the others. In some churches, the personal dimension of the ordained ministry tends to diminish the collegial and communal dimensions. In other churches, the collegial or communal dimension take so much importance that the ordained ministry loses its personal dimension. Each church needs to ask itself in what way its exercise of the ordained ministry has suffered in the course of history." (Pg. 25-26)

Different churches have different practices. The Roman Catholic Church along with the Episcopal and ELCA churches have bishops. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Presbyterian churches, and Baptist churches do not. There is a lot of conversation today on the advantages and the disadvantages of churches having bishops.

Questions for discussion:

1. How does having or not having bishops affect the unity of a church?
2. How do having bishops change the makeup of a church?
3. How should bishops today be chosen?
4. What other names can or should be used for the chief leader of a church or group of churches?
5. How important is the name we chose for our church leaders?

NEXT WEEK: We will look at the other historic office that was often connected with the office of bishop, that of deacon.

CLOSING PRAYER: (taken from Lutheran Worship)

Lord of the Church, in whose name all who oversee and serve your flock have been called, grant your servants all the gifts necessary to the godly administration of their duties, for the upbuilding of your Church and the glory of your name; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

BIBLE WORD STUDY

SUMMER, 1994

"DEACON"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

At Trinity we have had a "deaconess", but we have not had a "deacon." Why is it that The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has women called to congregations as "deaconess" but very few men called to the position of "deacon"?

USE OF THE WORD "DEACON" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The Greek word for "deacon" is διακονος. It is found 29 times in the New Testament. Its primary meaning is one who "serves at table." It is also used as a servant of God, of Christ, of the Gospel, and servant of the church. The word "deaconess" appears in Romans 16:1 in reference to Phoebe in Rome.

Read Acts 6:1-7:

This is the first recorded "division of labor" in the New Testament Church. Even though the word "deacon" does not appear in the noun form, it is found in the verb form in verse 2: "...to wait on tables." Irenaeus (second century) and other Church Fathers understood Acts 6 as the appointing of the first "deacons" in the Church.

Questions for discussion:

1. What was it that caused the Twelve to ask the congregation in Jerusalem to appoint some others to help with the work?
2. How were the seven selected for this special service?
3. What was the result of this first "division of labor"?

Read I Timothy 3:8-16:

This is a list of qualifications that the Apostle Paul gives to Timothy regarding those who serve as "deacons" in the congregations.

Questions for discussion:

1. Are these personal or institutional qualifications?
2. Why, do you think, did Paul include qualifications for the deacons' wives?
3. What makes these qualifications important for Paul?
4. How does Paul picture the church in these verses?

USE OF THE WORD "DEACON" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

The first three centuries of the Christian Church have been sometimes called "the golden age of the diaconate." So many of the Early Church writings refer to the usual leaders of the church as the "bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons. Even though the deacons were not often ordained, they frequently helped in the worship services and even took the Lord's Supper to the sick. They also were involved in the "human care" ministry of the congregations as well as in the supervision of the finances of the church. Deaconesses are also frequently mentioned as having an active role in the first centuries, working especially with the women and children of the congregation.

The "Didascalia Apostolorum" (third century) told deacons to imitate the example of Christ in their works of love and charity:

"If then our Lord did this, will you, o deacons, hesitate to do the same for those who are weak and infirm, you who are the workmen of the truth and carry the likeness of Christ? Do you therefore minister with love, and do not murmur or hesitate; otherwise you will have ministered, so to speak, for men's sake, and not for the sake of God, and you will receive your reward according to your ministry in the day of judgment."

After the fourth century, the diaconate was turned into simply a "steppingstone to the priesthood." This is what is called a "transitional diaconate" where a person remains a deacon only until he was ordained into the priesthood. This became the common practice in the Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Orthodox churches. With Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church restored the "permanent diaconate," which made it possible for married men to serve especially in human care ministries and in "Word" ministries in congregations which had no regular priests. A third form of the diaconate, similar to the order of charitable service in Acts 6 was developed in Germany in the 1840's where rescue homes were established for neglected children.

Questions for discussion:

1. What, do you think, caused the position of "deacon" to become only a "steppingstone to the priesthood"?
2. What, do you think, caused the position of "deaconess" to almost die out in the Christian Church after the fourth century?
3. Which of the three forms of the diaconate ("transitional" or "permanent" or "charitable order") is today's Lutheran deaconess program patterned after?

USE OF THE WORD "DEACON" AND "DEACONESS" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

Jeanne Olson, in the book *One Ministry - Many Roles*, said this about the various roles of deacons in the church today:

"At present, the role of deacons in many denominations is under consideration. There are at least four models alive, coexisting in some denominations: (1) There are deacons elected within individual congregations to serve at the local level. (2) deacons transitional to the priesthood, (3) "permanent" deacons of the sort that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, and (4) communities of deacons and deaconesses that came out of the Inner Mission movement. There is historical precedent for these and other possible forms of the diaconate to inform and enrich discussion on the shape of the diaconate today."

Questions for discussion:

1. Mr. Elwood Bush served in the position of "deacon" at Eternal Mercy Lutheran Church for the Deaf. Should the position of "deacon" be established on a more wide-spread basis in our Synod?
2. There are less than one hundred "deaconesses" in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod serving in congregations today. How could this position be expanded in use in our Synod?
3. Who should train and certify "deacons" and "deaconesses" in the Church today: Synod, districts, congregations?
4. What ministries should deacons and deaconesses be doing in today's congregations?
5. How would a "deacon" or "deaconess" help Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, in its various ministries?

NEXT WEEK: Another important position in congregations today is that of "teacher." We need teachers in our Sunday Schools and in our Christian day schools. Some teachers are trained through our Synod's colleges; others receive their training at secular institutions. We have the largest system of Protestant parochial schools in this country (over 250,000 students enrolled). What is the position of "teacher" in the Bible and what should it be today?

CLOSING PRAYER: (Ignatius Loyola)

Teach us, good Lord, to serve You as You deserve, to give and not count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do Your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"TEACHER"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

Most of us can recall special "teachers" in our lives, dedicated people who opened our minds and hearts to a vast wisdom and knowledge of life. They may have been Sunday School teachers, teachers in Christian Day Schools or public schools, or college professors. In their teaching, they have left a lasting mark upon our lives. Today we will focus on special "teachers" in the Bible and in the history of the Church.

USE OF THE WORD "TEACHER" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The Greek word for "teacher" is διδάσκαλος. It occurs 58 times in the New Testament, 41 of those times in reference to Jesus. Most of the rest refer to leaders in the early Christian Church who shared the truth of the Gospel with others people of faith.

Read Luke 18:18-30

Jesus has been often called the "master teacher." His Sermon on the Mount and His parables are some of the famous examples of His teaching. This text gives an example of Jesus' basic style of teaching.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What initiated Jesus' teaching on the Commandments?
2. How did Jesus respond to the ruler's self-righteousness?
3. What was the message Jesus wanted to leave with the hearers?

Read I Corinthians 12:27-31

In this chapter the Apostle Paul addressed the question of "spiritual gifts," by reminding the Christians at Corinth that all Christians are part of the "body of Christ" and that each member should simply be that part of the Body that Christ made him/her. In the closing verses, the Apostle named some of those members.

Questions for discussion:

1. Who are some of the people that God has appointed as parts of the Body of Christ?
2. Why would "teachers" receive such an important place in this list?
3. What is the purpose of a "teacher" and any other special member of the Body of Christ? (See I Cor. 12:1-7)

USE OF THE WORD "TEACHER" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

"Teachers" played an important role in the spreading of the Christian faith. The Catechetical School in Alexandria was led by teachers, the most famous ones being Clement and Origen. They not only taught other Christians the truths of the Gospel, but their writings became classic instructional guides for Christian leaders and people for centuries to come.

Origen wrote a treatise "On Prayer" around 233 A.D., in which he said this about the petition "...and lead us not into temptation":

"The whole 'life,' therefore, 'of man upon earth is temptation,' as we have said before. Accordingly let us pray to be 'delivered' from temptation, not in the sense of not being tempted (for that is impossible, especially for those 'on earth') but in the sense of not being overcome when we are tempted. In my opinion, he who is overcome in being tempted 'enters into temptation,' being held fast in its meshes. These meshes, because of those who were caught in them aforetime, the Saviour entered: 'Glancing through the meshes,' as it is said in the Song of Songs, 'he replies' to those who were caught by them aforetime and who 'entered into temptation,' and 'he says to her who is his bride: 'Rise up, come, my dear one, my fair one, my dove.' And I will add the following to show that every time is a time of temptation for men: not even he who 'meditates' on 'the law' of God 'day and night' and exercises himself to fulfill the saying 'the mouth of the righteous will meditate wisdom,' is delivered from being tempted."

(In Alexandrian Christianity, Vol. 3 in Library of Christian Classics, Pg. 314)

Questions for discussion:

1. What is Origen's point concerning the petition "And lead us not into temptation"?
2. What does Origen use for his authorities in his teaching?
3. How did Luther make use of Origen's teachings in Luther's instructions on this petition in the "Small Catechism"?
4. What makes a good teacher today?
5. How important are good teachers today?

USE OF THE WORD "TEACHER" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

A report on "The Ministry" by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the LCMS said this concerning "auxiliary" offices in a Lutheran congregation:

"What is an 'auxiliary office'?"

We have indicated this in various places, but we can state it succinctly here. An auxiliary office is an office that is auxiliary to the office of the public ministry and specifically to the uniquely ministerial functions of that office. The offices of teacher, director of Christian education, parish worker, and other offices recognized by the church and for which the church provides training are auxiliary offices. In general their functions are functions that would be performed by the man who holds the office of the public ministry and that relates to his responsibilities as teacher and spiritual guide and overseer. The most obvious assurance for a controlled and uniform definition of these offices is for the church itself to name them and list those who hold them. New and different auxiliary offices may be designated from time to time and their prerequisites spelled out. Individual congregations should not use these distinctions indiscriminately or assign to such offices people who are not currently eligible. As in the case of the public ministry, those called to these offices should receive the recognition of the whole confessional fellowship. People who are not eligible for these offices should not assume the offices or titles, nor should they be encouraged to think they hold such offices when they are not.

Questions for discussion:

1. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has the largest number of teachers of any Church, except the Roman Catholic Church. What position should these teachers have in comparison to the pastor of a local congregation?
2. Should Missouri Synod teachers have a vote in district and synod conventions?
3. How could we "lift up" the important calling of a "teacher"?
4. How can we influence more people to choose a teaching profession?

NEXT WEEK:

Our study next week will focus on the "evangelist," another position mentioned in I Corinthians 13 and in other places. Who were the "evangelists" in the New Testament and who are they today?

CLOSING PRAYER: (for teachers of the faith)

"EVANGELIST"OPENING PRAYER:INTRODUCTION:

When you hear the word "evangelist," who is the first person that comes to mind? Who are some of the prominent "TV evangelists" today? How would you describe their work? What makes them different from parish pastors?

USE OF THE WORD "EVANGELIST" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The Greek word for "evangelist" is *εὐαγγελιστής*, which is similar to the word *εὐαγγέλιον*, which is the New Testament word for "gospel." The word "evangelist" occurs only three times in the New Testament: Acts 21:8 (reference to Philip), Ephesians 4:11 (in list with apostle, prophet, pastor - teacher), and II Timothy 4:5 (reference to Timothy).

Read Acts 8:26-40

This describes the actions of Philip (the evangelist) who was sent by the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian. This Philip is probably the person mentioned in Acts 6:1-7.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why would God send Philip to get involved with a person who wasn't even Jewish, much less a Palestinian Jew?
2. How would you describe Philip's approach to witnessing to the Ethiopian?
3. What was the result of Philip's gospel testimony?
4. What does this show the work of an evangelist to be?

Read II Timothy 4:1-5

This letter has been called "Paul's Last Will and Testament." It is one of his last letters, containing less doctrine and more personal matters than I Timothy or Titus.

Questions for discussion:

1. What charge does Paul give Timothy in these verses?
2. What kind of response will Timothy receive from some of the people he witnesses to?
3. What do you think is the "work of an evangelist" that Paul talks about in this text?

USE OF THE WORD "EVANGELIST" IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

The "Didache" or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" is a first or second century church manual that lists some of the teachings and practices in the Early Christian Church. One of the chapters says this about how the Christian churches should treat traveling teachers and evangelists: "Now, you should welcome anyone who comes your way and teaches you all we have been saying. But if the teacher proves himself a renegade and by teaching otherwise contradicts all this, pay no attention to him. But if his teaching furthers the Lord's righteousness and knowledge, welcome him as the Lord.

Now about the apostles and prophets: act in line with the gospel precept. Welcome every apostle (evangelist) on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet." (Pg. 176 in Early Christian Fathers, Volume one in Library of Christian Classics)

Questions for discussion:

1. What criteria were given on how to judge traveling teachers and others who claimed to be special spokesmen for Jesus Christ?
2. How were the Christians to treat those who were true teachers of the gospel and those who were false teachers?
3. What criteria should we use today in judging true and false prophets when it comes to TV evangelists and other traveling Christian speakers?

The word "evangelist" also became associated with the writers of the four Gospels in the New Testament. Hippolytus referred to Luke as an "evangelist," and Tertullian referred to John in the same way. Later Christian leaders began to associate the term with all four of the gospel writers.

Questions for discussion:

1. How would Matthew, Mark, Luke and John meet the criteria of a Christian "evangelist"?
2. How can the four Gospels and the other parts of the Bible be used effectively in Christian witnessing today?
3. Can you name some modern day authors who might qualify as Christian "evangelists"?

USE OF THE WORD "EVANGELIST" IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

With many people today, the word "evangelist" would be associated first with the "TV evangelists." Some of them, such as Billy Graham, have a good reputation and a good following. Others, such as Jim Baker and Jim Swaggart, have fallen into ill repute. In his book World Aflame Billy Graham said this is what a person must do to accept Jesus Christ as Savior:

"First, you must recognize that God loved you so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross. (John 3:16, Gal. 2:20)....Second, you must repent of your sins. (Luke 13:3, Mark 1:15)....Third, you must receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. (John 1:12)....Fourth, you must confess Christ publicly (Mt. 10:32)....It is important that you make your decision and your commitment to Christ now. (II Cor. 6:2)....If you are willing to make this decision, if you have to the best of your knowledge received Jesus Christ, God's Son, as your own Saviour, then according to the preceding statements of Scripture, you have become a child in whom Jesus Christ dwells. Altogether too many people make the mistake of measuring the certainty of their salvation by their feelings. Don't make this serious mistake. Believe God. Take Him at His Word." (Pg. 137-138 in World Aflame)

Questions for discussion:

1. Would you agree that these are the steps to receiving Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord?
2. How would you evaluate the "evangelistic ministry" of Dr. Graham?
3. How does the work of an "evangelist" fit into the work of a local congregation?
4. Some congregations now have a DCO (Director of Christian Outreach), a person who is a Commissioned Minister. How could such a special staff person serve as an "evangelist" in a congregation?

NEXT WEEK:

We have now completed Bible word studies on ten different terms that are used for Christians in congregations: Disciple, Saint, Priest, Laity (and Clergy), Pastor, Bishop, Elder, Deacon, Teacher, Evangelist. Our final session will conclude with various models of how all of these special people can work together effectively in the Christian Church today.

CLOSING PRAYER:

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