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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF CERTIFIED GRADUATE WOMEN TEACHERS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH— MISSOURI SYNOD

Guidelines

A. Ministry belongs to the body of Christ as a whole. Eph. 4:11-13 sets forth diakonia as a function for which all the saints are to be equipped by the gifts Christ gives to His church. 1 Cor. 12 and Rom. 12 plainly indicate the diversity of gifts which are to be recognized and utilized within and for the body of Christ in order that it might function as God's instrument in this world.

B. Because of the shared nature of ministry and the diversity of gifts given to perform it, the members of the body of Christ are to seek out the best gifts and designate persons with those gifts to carry out functions within and for the body. There is no uniformity within the New Testament as to the procedure by which such persons were designated to fulfill certain functions. Acts 6:1-6 speaks of the way in which deacons were selected. Acts 13:2,3 shows the designation of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries for the congregation at Antioch. Other references indicate the selection of leaders for the various congregations of Asia Minor. Some instances even include the services of women as functions of ministry, e. g., Priscilla helping in the instruction of Apollos. (Acts 18:26)

C. The historical development of graduation between clergy, ranks of clergy, and laity also included a definite procedure in the selection of the clergy. The Lutheran confessions speak from the background of this historical development and are anxious to maintain "church polity and various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, although they were created by human authority" (Ap XIV). The admission of the confessions that much is

done by human authority makes them cautious about stating more than may be stated about the procedure in designating persons qualified for the ministry. "Our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called," states Augustana Article XIV. This statement makes reference only to that Office of Word and Sacrament which must always be present if the Gospel is to call the church into being, sustain it, and be used by it as an instrument in the world.

D. The history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod suggests that our forefathers envisioned only one divinely ordained office, namely, the pastorate. Everything else was only a part or a division of that one man's office. It would, however, be better to speak of ministries (Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12) and recognize that there are many functions to be performed in the overall ministry as it is broken down into individual ministries. When persons because of their gifts are invited and authorized to perform the various functions of ministry within and for the body of Christ, it would seem that the only word suitable for this activity of the church is the word "call."

E. The certified graduate women teachers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod constitute a segment of the total ministry of the body of Christ. They include graduates of Synod's teachers colleges and its other colleges that have a teacher training program. They also include graduates of secular colleges who have been certified through a colloquy. They do not include women teachers who have joined our school faculties without academic or theological screening, who in an emergency or due to other circumstances are engaged on a strictly parochial basis. While the appointment of such certified teachers by

the church should properly be regarded as a call, it is appropriate to refer to their induction into office as a "commissioning" or a "consecration." When a new locale of work is begun, it is proper to speak of the "installation" of such certified graduate women teachers.

F. The orderly transfer of certified graduate women teachers from place to place should follow the same procedure as that used by male teachers, namely, acknowledgment of the call from the sending congregation, informing the present congregation of the decision, and requesting peaceful release, notifying present and future District Presidents of the decision. Any certified graduate woman teacher who has stopped teaching for a time and wants to renew her teaching office should follow a similar procedure through the District President.

G. The scope of activity of a certified graduate woman teacher would seem limited only by the abilities which she has and the assignment which the congregation gives her. In the performance of the duties of her ministry she should be able to "equip the saints for ministry" at all age levels and both sexes insofar as she is qualified to do so.

H. In the case of the uncertified teacher with a temporary call the situation is somewhat different. Assuming that the teacher's present congregation has not renewed her appointment for another year, any congregation is free to engage her. Should she accept such an appointment, courtesy demands that she immediately inform her congregation and her District President.

The Committee for Research on
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Feb. 25, 1965