

“THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE WORD” RESTATED IN THETICAL FORMAT

SALVATION WON BY CHRIST AND RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH

1. “We teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God accounts as righteousness in His sight, Rom. 3 and 4” (Augsburg Confession IV, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 9).

SALVATION DISTRIBUTED

2. “That we may obtain this faith, the office of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel. That is, God, not because of our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ’s sake” (AC V, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 9).

3. We reject the teaching that “the Holy Spirit comes without the external Word but through their own preparations and works” (AC V, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 9).

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SALVATION DISTRIBUTED: THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

4. God has given to His church on earth the Office of the Keys (Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18-20, John 20:21-23; also see Smalcald Articles, Part III, Art. VII, 1). “The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth, to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners and to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent” (*Luther’s Small Catechism*, “The Office of the Keys and Confession,” ELS 2001 ed.; “Doctrine of the Church,” Thesis III, *ELS Synod Report*, 1979, p. 31 and 1980, p. 76).

5. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): The church uses the keys to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and practice church discipline.

6. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): When we speak of the private or unofficial use of the keys we mean the duty and authority belonging to individual believers (the Universal Priesthood of All Believers) which is their personal responsibility toward their neighbor.

7. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): The keys are used privately or unofficially when individual Christians, on behalf of Christ, speak the Gospel of forgiveness to others; when they forgive the sins of those who sin against them; when they retain the sins of those who do not repent, e.g., when they confront in a brotherly way those who need to repent of their sins; and when in “the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren” they comfort one another with the words of the Gospel (1 Peter 2:9, Matthew 18:15-18, Matthew 6:12 – The 5th Petition of the Lord’s Prayer; SA Part III, Art. IV).

8. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): We reject any teaching that denies individual Christians the use of the keys privately in their calling as the Universal Priesthood of All Believers.

9. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): When we speak of the public

or official use of the keys we are referring to the duty and authority of those who are called to act on behalf of Christ and His believers.

10. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): Christians also use the keys publicly or officially when scripturally qualified individuals, who have been called by Christ through the church, forgive and retain sins on behalf of Christ and His church (Romans 10:14–17, Acts 14:23, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 67).

11. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): We reject any teaching that treats the Universal Priesthood of All Believers and the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys) as one and the same thing.

12. Regarding the Office of the Keys (i.e. the authority to forgive and retain sins): Christians also use the keys to judge the teaching of their pastors and teachers; they are to beware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15-16, 1 John 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:16).

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SALVATION DISTRIBUTED: THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE WORD

13. The public (or official) use of the keys is the Public Ministry of the Word.

14. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): “That we may obtain this faith, the office of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted” (AC V).

15. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): The divine institution of this preaching and teaching office is not located in just one particular passage. Rather, throughout the New Testament, a divine ordering, establishment, and institution of the preaching and teaching office is indicated and presupposed (John 20:21-23, John 21:15ff, Matthew 28:18-20 [NKJV], Matthew 9:36-38, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 4:1; see also Treatise 10).

16. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): Those in this office by virtue of God’s call through the church perform their duties on behalf of the church and in the name and in the stead of Christ, so that whenever we hear Christ’s servant we hear Christ Himself speak (Luke 10:16, AC XXVIII, 22, Apology of the Augsburg Confession VII & VIII, 28, 47).

17. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): We reject any teaching that the Public Ministry of the Word is a development of the church and not a divine institution.

18. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): We reject any teaching that holds that the Public Ministry of the Word is established merely by the orderly carrying out of the Universal Priesthood of all Believers according to 1 Corinthians 14:40.

19. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): This divinely instituted Public Ministry of the Word includes both a narrower sense and a wider sense.

20. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: The Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys) in the narrower sense refers to a presiding office, which is indispensable for the church.

21. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: The term “pastoral office” is not being used according to a meaning that refers only to those men who are called to the pastorate of a local congregation, but it is being used according to a meaning

that refers to all those men who are called to a ministry of pastoral oversight, in local congregations as well as in other specialized fields of labor.

22. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: “By divine right” refers to something that is commanded by God.

23. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: The church is commanded to appoint ministers who will preside over the churches (2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5, Ap XIII, 12), who must have the scriptural qualifications for a full use of the keys: “The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. ... [T]his power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters or bishops” (Treatise 60-61).

24. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: God commands that properly called men publicly preach, teach, administer the sacraments, forgive and retain sins, and have oversight of doctrine in the name of Christ and the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Therefore a presiding office, whether it is called that of pastor, shepherd, bishop, presbyter, elder or by any other name, is indispensable for the church (Luke 10:16, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 5:1-2).

25. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: We reject any teaching that denies the exercise of spiritual oversight by the pastoral office.

26. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the pastoral office in its various manifestations: We reject any teaching that the apostolic authority of the Public Ministry of the Word (in the narrower sense) or the validity of the sacraments depends on or is derived from ordination by a bishop standing in an unbroken chain of succession from the apostles, or the necessity of maintaining a “historic episcopate.”

37. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the division of the labors of the pastoral office: Christian freedom is given to the church by God.

28. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the division of the labors of the pastoral office: Every incumbent of the pastoral office must be qualified for a full use of the keys.

29. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the division of the labors of the pastoral office: Not every incumbent of the pastoral office must be responsible for a full use of the keys.

30. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the division of the labors of the pastoral office: The church is free to divide the labors of the pastoral office among qualified men (1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Missionary, assistant pastor, professor of theology, synod president (who supervises doctrine in the church), and chaplain are some examples of this.

31. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding the division of the labors of the pastoral office: We reject the teaching that the Public Ministry of the Word (in the narrower sense) is limited to the ministry of a parish pastor.

32. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding women doing things that are intimately related to the pastoral office: Scripture clearly teaches that women are not to be in the pastoral office, because this presiding office includes the exercise of authority over men (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy

2:11-12).

33. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding women doing things that are intimately related to the pastoral office: When Scripture refers to one who officiates at the Word and sacrament liturgy it speaks in male terms (1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 4:13).

34. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding women doing things that are intimately related to the pastoral office: Therefore women shall not read the Scripture lessons in the divine service, preach the sermon, administer Baptism or distribute the Lord's Supper, for these things are intimately related to the pastoral office (1 Timothy 4:13-14, 1 Corinthians 4:1).

35. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a narrower sense, and regarding women doing things that are intimately related to the pastoral office: Certainly emergency situations may arise, such as when our catechism states "Q: Who should administer baptism? A: Ordinarily the called minister of Christ should administer Baptism, but in emergency any Christian may and should do so" (ELS Catechism, p. 182). (For further discussion of emergency situations, see the 1862 Lay Ministry Theses, parr. 5-7, in *Grace for Grace*, p. 139.)

36. The Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys) in the wider sense refers to a presiding office, which is indispensable for the church; and, in addition, to offices having a limited public use of the keys, which the church in her freedom may establish.

37. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: Christian freedom is given to the church by God.

38. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: The church has freedom in dividing the labors of the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys) – for example: vicars, principals, Lutheran elementary school teachers and other teachers.

39. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: The church must not go beyond the bounds of God's commands when calling men or women to carry out a limited public use of the keys (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12ff, etc).

40. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: The extent to which one is authorized by the call of the church to exercise the keys publicly is the extent to which one is in the Public Ministry of the Word.

41. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: Authorization to exercise a limited part of the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys) does not imply authorization to exercise all or other parts of it (1 Corinthians 12:5, 28, Romans 12:6-8, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8, 5:17).

42. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: We reject the teaching that only those qualified to carry out a full use of the keys are in the Public Ministry of the Word (in the wider sense).

43. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: We reject the teaching that the Public Ministry of the Word (in the wider sense) is limited to any one divinely fixed form, that is, limited to the pastoral office to the exclusion of other teachers of the Word.

44. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited

public use of the keys: We reject any teaching which would conclude that the means of grace are effective only when used by a pastor.

45. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding other offices that have a limited public use of the keys: We reject any teaching that makes the office of the Lutheran elementary school teacher, Sunday school teacher or any other limited office in the church equivalent to the pastoral office.

46. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding teachers of children in Christian schools: In the Old and New Testaments our Lord commands parents to train their children in the fear of the Lord.

47. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding teachers of children in Christian schools: Our Lord has also commanded His church and the Public Ministry of the Word to feed the lambs of His flock with His saving Word.

48. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding teachers of children in Christian schools: Teachers of children in Christian schools established by the church therefore have their authority from both the divinely established estate of parents, and the divinely established estate of the church and the Public Ministry of the Word (Deuteronomy 6:1-7, Matthew 15:4, Ephesians 6:1-4, John 21:15-17, Large Catechism I, 141).

49. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding teachers of children in Christian schools: Extending calls to teachers who have spiritual care of children in Christian schools is not merely a laudable custom, but is in accordance with Romans 10:14-17 and Augsburg Confession XIV.

50. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding teachers of children in Christian schools: Extending calls to teachers who have spiritual care of children in Christian schools is in accordance with Romans 10:14-17 and Augsburg Confession XIV, not only for the sake of good order, but also because these teachers carry out a specific part of the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys).

51. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding the distinction between that which is by divine right and that which is by human right: “By human right” refers to those things neither commanded nor forbidden by God which Christians may arrange according to their needs and circumstances (Acts 6:1-7, 15:22-29, 4:32, 5:29, 1 Cor 3:21, 22, 14:40, Gal 5:1).

52. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding the distinction between that which is by divine right and that which is by human right: It is by human right that the church separates to one individual a limited portion of the office (or work) of the Public Ministry of the Word.

53. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding the distinction between that which is by divine right and that which is by human right: “By divine right” refers to those things which are commanded by God.

54. Regarding the Public Ministry of the Word in a wider sense, and regarding the distinction between that which is by divine right and that which is by human right: It is by divine right that one to whom a limited portion of the office (or work) of the Public Ministry of the Word has been separated exercises that work on behalf of the Christians through whom the call has come.

55. Regarding qualifications for the Public Ministry of the Word (i.e. the public or official use of the keys): Those in the Public Ministry of the Word by virtue of a regular call are to conform to the specific and general qualifications given in Scripture (see especially 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, as well as directives such as Matthew

28:19, 20, John 21:15-17, Acts 14:23, 20:28, and Romans 12:6-8).

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SALVATION DISTRIBUTED: THE DIVINE CALL INTO THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE WORD

56. One cannot hold the office of the Public Ministry of the Word unless called by God (Romans 10:14-17, AC XIV).

57. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: Some men, such as the apostles, were called immediately, directly by God, to the Public Ministry of the Word.

58. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: Since the time of the apostles God calls mediately (Acts 1:15-26) through the church so that there will always be qualified individuals who have been set apart to administer publicly His means of grace for the salvation of souls.

59. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: The church in an orderly way extends divine calls in the name and stead of Christ and on behalf of the believers.

60. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: Those who possess divine calls are serving in the Public Ministry of the Word in either a narrower sense or a wider sense (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23, 20:28; 1 Corinthians 3:4-9, 21-23).

61. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: We reject the teaching that every Christian is a public minister of the Word.

62. Regarding the divine call into the Public Ministry of the Word: We reject any teaching that one may publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call (AC XIV).

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SALVATION DISTRIBUTED: ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

63. In the Lutheran Confessions ordination is understood as the rite by which the church confirms a man to be suitable for a call to the pastoral office (SA Part III, Art. X, Treatise 66–69). Historically the Lutheran Church has reserved this rite for those entering the pastoral office.

64. The church has used rites of installation for all those called into the Public Ministry of the Word, in both the narrow sense and the wide sense. Through such rites, the church makes clear that those installed in office have been properly called to it and invokes the Lord's blessing on them. At the same time those who are called to serve the people of God give public testimony to their submission to the Word of God as it is taught in the Lutheran Confessions.

65. Rites of installation also have been used among us for congregational officers and occasional teachers in Christian congregations (Sunday school teachers, etc).

*This document, as such, has no official standing in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.
It has been prepared as a private effort to promote a clearer understanding
of the synod's officially-adopted doctrinal statement.*