

**Above Reproach**  
**Preserving the Integrity of the Pastoral Office**  
LCMS Council of Presidents  
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The pastoral office is indispensable in the life of the church. C.F.W. Walther writes in Thesis III regarding the pastoral office, “*The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time*” [*Kirche und Amt*, p. 22].

To fill this Office of the Holy Ministry God calls ordinary men through His church to serve as pastors. There is an inherent weakness in that; not in God or His Office, but in the sinful human beings called to fill the office. Though we are ordained, not one of us is perfect. All pastors are frail human beings, sinners. Each is susceptible to the weakness of his own sinful flesh. Each lives in a world and a culture poisoned by sin. Each is vulnerable to the mischief of the evil one. As we admit in one of our confession of sins, “we sin by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault.” The forgiveness for the sake of Christ that we proclaim is also forgiveness even for our own sin.

In spite of the sinful men who fill the Office, our Lord in Holy Scripture maintains understandably high expectations regarding the teaching, the life and the behavior of those who serve in the Office. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7. And those standards ought never be compromised.

So how do we reconcile the high expectations of the Office with the sinful frailties of those who are called to fill the Office? Can any man serve in the Office regardless of his reputation? Can a man’s sin or his hubris disqualify a pastor from serving in the Office? What if a pastor is faithful in his proclamation of God’s Word and his administration of the Sacraments but is on the wrong side of being “above reproach”? Can a pastor who finds himself on the wrong side of “above reproach” be dismissed from his call, and/or removed from the LCMS roster?

In February 2009 Rev. Dr. Lane Seitz shared the following paragraphs as part of a presentation to the Council of Presidents regarding “above reproach”

On February 11, 1980, Dr. Martin Scharleman delivered a paper to the Council of Presidents, wrestling specifically with the topic of “The Pastoral Office and Divorce, Remarriage, and Moral Deviation.” In his presentation he stated, “Where the high standards [of the pastoral office] have been violated in such a way as to scandalize not only members of the church but even outsiders, confession of wrongdoing and absolution extended suffice to restore such a person to the community of believers. But it does not follow therefrom that they may continue in the office of pastor, or be reinstated to it, as the case may be.” Scharleman continues regarding the concept of “reinstatement” to the pastoral office by stating: “Since the church works with principles that are necessarily infused with Gospel values and since it is hazardous to work with absolutes in dealing with any problems that affect people in their sinfulness, it is conceivable that, under very exceptional circumstances, a former pastor could, so to speak, “work out his salvation” to the point of being in a position to be reconsidered as a person qualified to be entrusted once more with the powers of the pastoral office. Such instances will obviously be as rare as the cases of congregational treasurers being restored to that office after absconding with the members’ contributions, even though they have shown contrition and repentance and are restored to the Christian fellowship.” Thus the pastor must live with the reality that there are consequences for sin.

The issue for those involved in admitting men to the seminary, certifying them for ordination, supervising their doctrine and life, removing them from the roster, or reinstating them to the roster is this: ‘At what point does the behavior of a man disqualify him from being declared ‘fit’ to hold the office or continue in the office?’ There is no easy answer to this question.

As ecclesiastical supervisors, each of us is forced to wrestle with that question, “At what point does the behavior of a man disqualify him from being declared ‘fit’ to hold the office or to continue in the office?” In an attempt to answer that difficult question the following theses are offered.

## Theses on “Above Reproach:

1. Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, His Bride.
2. The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world. Integrity of life and behavior are critical and necessary elements of the pastoral office.
3. The pastor’s life is to model [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; and he dare not be a stumbling block to those inside or outside of the church.
4. Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one’s office disqualifies a man from being considered “fit” for the pastoral office, from being declared “fit” to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, and may keep him from being reinstated to the office of the ministry.<sup>1</sup>
5. It is the responsibility of the calling entity, normally the local congregation, and ecclesiastical supervisor to administer a proper discipline for the sake of the Bride of Christ as well as for the integrity of the Pastoral Office.

## Theses 1. Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, His Bride.

### Testimony of Holy Scripture:

**Ephesians 4:11-14** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers [τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους], to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,], 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- **τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους:** If in Eph. 4:11 the common article makes it plain that the διδάσκαλοι are identical with the ποιμένες, this lies in the nature of the case; for the → ποιμὴν is the one who is responsible for the life of the community, and therefore διδάσκειν in the widest sense is part of his office. This is in agreement with Did., 15, 1, where the congregation is summoned to appoint ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἀξίους τοῦ κυρίου that these may discharge the λειτουργία τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων; the function of the διδάσκαλος is here, too, a function of divine service. It is self-evident, therefore, that in the first instance the διδάσκαλος does what he teaches [*Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **καταρτισμός** is used at Eph. 4:12, in the context of the edifying of the body of Christ, to denote the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. The establishment of the community in work for the kingdom of God in the widest sense thus constitutes for Paul a material precondition of the upbuilding and consequently the actualisation of the community. [*Vol. 1: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (476). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]
- **οἰκοδομή** denotes in the first instance the act of building: [*Vol. 5: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (145). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

**Ephesians 5:25-27** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

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<sup>1</sup> What Does It Mean to be “Above Reproach”? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009

**Revelation 19:6-8** “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, *and his Bride has made herself ready*; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [cf. also Ephesians 5:25ff.]

### Testimony of The Lutheran Confessions:

#### **Augsburg Confession: Article V: Of the Ministry**

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel [German: Predigtamt. Latin: ministerium] and administering the Sacraments was instituted* [emphasis added]. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. 4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. [*Concordia Triglotta*]

#### **Augsburg Confession: Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order**

*Of Ecclesiastical Order* [emphasis added] they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. [*Concordia Triglotta*]

### **Theses 2. The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world. Integrity of life and behavior are critical and necessary elements of the pastoral office.**

#### Testimony of Holy Scripture:

**1 Corinthians 4:1–2** This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God [**ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ**]. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

- **ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ**: A person who renders service—‘servant.’ Helper. “The special feature of ὑπηρέτης, however, is that he willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth.” [Kittel, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 8:533]
- **οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ**: Manager. One who has the authority and responsibility for something—one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager, a steward.

**1 Timothy 3:1-7** πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. Εἴ τις ἐπίσκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. **2** δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδακτικόν, **3** μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, **4** τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος **5** (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;), **6** μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθῆις εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου. **7** δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξῶθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν ἐμπέση καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου. [Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). *The Greek New Testament* (27th ed.) (544–545). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft]

**3** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

<sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- **ἐπισκοπῆς** – overseer, bishop, one who watches over. 1 Peter 2:25
  - At a first glance, it would seem that ἐπίσκοπος here merely strengthens ποιμήν, and thus denotes one who keeps watch over the flock.
  - In 1 Tm. 3:1 **ἐπισκοπή** is a distinct office which one may seek. To attain it, certain qualifications must be met. It is to be noted that the passage simply outlines the qualifications and not the duties. The author has clear rules by which the congregation must be guided in its selection. The sobriety with which the requirements are stated, some of them being assumed as self-evident, and the fact that in regard to endowment for the episcopal office there is no further reference to the Holy Spirit but simply to essential human qualifications, show how strongly the development is already affected by everyday needs. [*Vol. 2: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
  - With pastoral wisdom 1 Tm. lists the requirements to be sought in those who bear it. First comes moral reliability. No particular ascetic attainment is demanded. The leader of a Christian community is also exposed to very human temptations. But he must lead an honourable and exemplary life, avoiding excess. This is what is meant when it is said that he must not be intemperate or quarrelsome or avaricious. Secondly, he must give proof in his own home of his ability to direct the life of the congregation. [ *Vol. 2: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
  - **Gerhard:** It (ἐπισκοπή) is attributed in general to *all ministers of the church*. The duty of them all is ἐπίσκοπος, to watch out for the flock entrusted to their protection[fides] and to have diligent care for it. In Acts 20:28 the apostle Paul says to the presbyters of the church of Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops to feed the church of God." [Johann Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1. Pages 35-36]
  - **Gerhard:** Specifically, it is attributed to those ministers of the church who have been entrusted not only with the care of the flock but also have been put in charge of inspecting the shepherds [pastores]; to them has been committed both the duty of teaching the church and of examining the teaching, life, and behavior of the shepherds. [Johann Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1. Pages 36] ed. comment: Today we call them “district presidents”.
- **ὀρέγομαι**: to eagerly desire to accomplish some goal or purpose—‘to strive to attain, to aspire to, to eagerly long for.’
- **ἀνεπίλημπτον** – “inviolable,” “unassailable,” “blameless”. In the NT it occurs only in 1 Tm. 3:2; 5:7: one who cannot be attacked (even by non-Christians) because of his moral conduct. [*Vol. 4: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (9). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **μῆς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα** – the husband of one wife.
- **νηφάλιον** – sober-minded, may be idiomatically rendered as “one who holds himself in” or “one who always has a halter on himself”.
- **Σώφρονα** – self-controlled, pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one’s behavior.
- **Κόσμιον** – respectable, pertaining to being modest in the sense of moderate and well-ordered.
- **Φιλόξενον** – hospitable, showing hospitality to strangers.
- **Διδακτικόν** – able to teach, being able to teach.
- **μὴ πάροινον** – not a drunkard, person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard person.
- **μὴ πλήκτην** – not violent but gentle, pugnacious and demanding—bully, violent person.

- **μὴ** – a marker of emphatic negation – “by no means, certainly not, God forbid”.
- **ἐπιεικῆ** – gentle, gracious, forbearing.
- **ἄμαχον** – pertaining to a lack of conflict and contention, not quarrelsome, not contentious, peaceful.
- **ἀφιλάργυρον** – not a lover of money, not being desirous or greedy for money, not loving wealth.
- **τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον** – to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—influencing his own household well.
- **τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος** – children being in subjection with all propriety; i.e., with behavior which is befitting, implying a measure of dignity leading to respect—propriety.
- **μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθεῖς** – certainly not a recent convert, to be so arrogant as to be practically demented—“to be insanely arrogant, to be extremely proud, or to become puffed up with conceit.
- **εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου** – fall(**ἐμπέση**) into the condemnation of the devil
- **δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν,** – It is necessary to have a good testimony from those outside.
- **ὄνειδισμὸν**, “insult,” “abuse,” “reproach,”
- **ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν** “lest into reproach”. In 1 Tm. 3:7 blamelessness of walk is required of the ἐπίσκοπος. This is to find expression in the testimony of those who do not belong to the Christian community, lest the ἐπίσκοπος should come under reproach and defamation (ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν ἐμπέση). [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (241). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **παγίδα**, snare or noose. In 1 Tm. 3:7 and 2 Tm. 2:25 f. there is ref. to the παγὶς τοῦ διαβόλου. Acc. to 1 Tim. 3:7 bad conduct on the bishop’s part has two results: the ἐπίσκοπος is rightly despised by the people (→ ὄνειδισμός, 241, 20 ff.), and he is an easy prey for Satan, who thus gets him in his power and renders him unfit for service to the congregation. [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (594). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
  - Footnote to the above: through slanders on the part of the ἕξωθεν the wrongly calumniated bishop “may easily err in his faith and be unfaithful in the discharge of his office.” “In such a situation Satan may with prospect of success cast a snare in his way by which he will come into Satan’s power and fall away completely from the faith.” Cf. also Dib. Past., ad loc.: “ ‘The snare of the devil’ is easy to understand after the ref. to ὄνειδισμός: one should not give the old accuser even the appearance of a reason for complaint (in the form of calumnies by opponents).” H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar z. NT, III, 234 supplies τοῦ διαβόλου with εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν and interprets the v. as follows: “The idea, then, is that a Christian can first fall under slander, then into captivity, and finally under the judgment of the devil.” This is in itself a true thought, but it is not what the verse says. [Theological dictionary of the New Testament. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

### Titus 1:5-9

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διαταξάμην, **6** εἴ τίς ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος, μᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα. **7** δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδῃ, μὴ ὀργίλον, μὴ πάροινον, μὴ πλήκτην, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, **8** ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὅσιον ἐγκρατῆ, **9** ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾖ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—<sup>6</sup> if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. <sup>7</sup> For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, <sup>8</sup> but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- **ἐπιδιορθώση** to cause matters to be ordered in the correct manner—‘to set right, to correct, to put into order.’ ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτη, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώση ‘I left you in Crete for you to put in order the things that still needed doing’ Tt 1:5. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (611). New York: United Bible Societies.]
- **καταστήσης, καθίστημι**, “To set in an elevated position, in an office,” “to install”. [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (444). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **ἀνέγκλητος** This term denotes a person or thing against which there can be no ἔγκλημα and which is thus “free from reproach,” “without stain,” “guiltless”; [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **πρεσβυτέρους** In the NT there are three examples of ordinary usage in the Pastorals. In Tt. 1:6 it is demanded that Titus should see to it in presbyters: εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος ... δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου (v. 7). The predicates which follow show us that in relation to these offices we have a demand for the blamelessness (in the sense of civic ethics) which they must have for their work as that of a θεοῦ οἰκονόμος. [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

### Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

**Luther:** 2. *He must be above reproach.* This is the first quality he must have. The man who wants to investigate, correct, and teach others should be above reproach. To be beyond comparison is shameful for a teacher; that is, that he is beyond accusation and can neither rightly nor justly be accused. After all, there is no one who is above reproach before God. Paul writes: “I am conscious of no evil” (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4). Let the Our Father stand: “Forgive us.” Before God no one is above reproach, but before men the bishop is to be so, that he may not be a fornicator, an adulterer, a greedy man, a foul-mouthed person, a drunkard, a gambler, a slanderer. If he is falsely accused, no harm; he is still above reproach; no law can accuse him before men. Samuel and Moses are good examples. Samuel said, “If I have defrauded anyone, etc.” (cf. 1 Sam. 12:3). There he showed how innocent he was, as far as men were concerned. Moses spoke this way before Korah (cf. Num. 16:15). To live this way, that you do not harm your neighbor by theft or adultery, means that no man can accuse you of anything. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 28: 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (1 Ti 3:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

**Luther:** As for the rest, read what the apostle says in 1 Tim. 3:2 and in Titus 1:7 and 2:7: “For a bishop must be above reproach.” Therefore every priest should know that he is a priest not for himself but for others, and he should strive above all to be endowed with the greatest mercy, in order that he may know how to bear the sins and the ignorance of others. For thus one reads throughout the Book of Judges: “And the Lord raised up a deliverer for them.” Therefore they are pictured as priests, called priests, and commanded to be priests who should have the same reputation that formerly the kings of Israel had, so that even their enemies were confident of their mercy. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 29: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Heb 5:1). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

**Luther:** But St. Paul, I Timothy 3[:1–7], describes what a true bishop is like: “This is indeed sure: Whoever desires a bishopric seeks a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt preacher, no drunkard, one who does not curse, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church, or the common good? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the slanderer. Moreover he must be well thought of by unbelievers, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the slanderer.” Now see whether it is not a noble task to be a bishop in whose office are so many noble virtues! St. Paul does not want him to be a recent convert who has just come to the faith or one who is young in the faith, so that the slanderer may not have good cause and reason to judge him and to say, “See how they put a fool over the eggs.” Instead, he should be an experienced and brave man so that the slanderer must be ashamed to speak evil of him. [Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 39: Luther’s works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (254–255). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

### Testimony of the Church Fathers:<sup>2</sup>

**Gerhard:** Now that we have explained why God ordinarily wants to use the work not of angels but of men in the ecclesiastical ministry, it still remains for us to explain *what sort of persons are to be selected from among men for the ministry*. On this topic we said earlier in the chapter on the Examination of Ordinands that they are required to have “sincerity of confession, dexterity in teaching, and integrity of life and behavior.”...To say it briefly, persons to be selected for the ministry out to be *right in faith, approved in life, and equipped with the gifts of teaching*...The common virtues are expressed, first, with general words: that he should be “blameless and without reproach[1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6}. They are expressed, second, with a specific list of some of them, [in two ways] *Through affirmation*: ...Then, *through negation*. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 264-265]

### Theses 3. The pastor’s life modeling [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; and dare not be a stumbling block to those inside or outside of the church.

#### Testimony of Holy Scripture:

**Luke 17:1-3** And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.

**John 10:12-13** He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

**1 Peter 5:1-4** Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός· **2** ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως κατὰ θεόν, μὴδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, **3** μὴδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου· **4** καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομεισθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

<sup>2</sup> “Patres fuerunt lumina, non numina, indices, non iudices, ministri, non magistri” (the fathers were lights and not gods, teachers and not judges, servants and not masters). [Walther, C.F.W. *Walther’s Works: Church Fellowship* (Kindle Locations 3599-3601). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

- **ἐπισκοποῦντες**, exercising oversight. The official work of presbyters, who are obviously the same as the ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι of communities in the Gk. world (→ 615 f.), is thus to follow the pattern of the ποιμὴν καὶ ἐπίσκοπος Jesus Christ, consisting in ποιμαίνειν and ἐπισκοπεῖν, in feeding the community and in responsible care for it, in watching over its eternal welfare. The comparison of this responsibility of the elders in the individual church with the work of Jesus Christ in relation to the universal Church conveys to us the dignity of the office as it was understood by early Christianity. Luther says concerning this passage: “To be an *episcopus* or bishop is to give good heed, to be honest, to watch diligently.” [*Vol. 2: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (604). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς**, not out of obligation, because it is a must, by compulsion
- **μηδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες**, Domineering: 1 Peter 5:4 κατακυριεύω, overpower, gain dominion over, subdue. In the 6th cent. A.D. it came to mean “to have title to something.” 2 Cor. 1:24
  - i.e., the elders, each over his portion, are not to exercise their power for themselves and therewith against those entrusted to them. [*Vol. 3: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (1098). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **τῶν κλήρων**, the κλῆρος is the portion allotted to each individual elder [*Vol. 3: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (764). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Τύποι**: a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided— The more a life is moulded by the word, the more it becomes τύπος, a model or mould. It is not a mould which forces nor is it an example which can be imitated. It can just be lived out again in freedom, namely, by faith. Along the same lines as in Paul, the exhortation in 1 Pt. 5:3 admonishes those who represent the word to become τύποι ... τοῦ ποιμνίου, “examples to the flock.” The word cannot just be recited; it can be attested only as one’s own word which shapes one’s own conduct. The office-bearer is thus admonished: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word (i.e., preaching), in conversation,” 1 Tm. 4:12; cf. Tt. 2:7: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern (in the doing) of good works” [*Vol. 8: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (250). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]
- **ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου**: “but becoming models or visible patterns for the flock to imitate.” Cf. Philippians 4:8-9, Titus 2:7

### Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

**Luther:** For it does not become a pastor to live in a dishonorable manner or to administer his household and home in a disgraceful manner. It is far better to bear the contempt and hatred of adversaries than to fall into reproach and into the snare of the devil, as Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:7. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ge 37:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

**Luther:** Away now with those who want to be shepherds of many places, yes, shepherds of many shepherds; and let them glory in their own power, though meanwhile they fail to provide pasture even for themselves! In fact, so thoroughly corrupt are men’s attitudes today that they take what Christ said to Peter—“Feed My sheep” (John 21:17)—and interpret it to mean: “Be a superior over My sheep, and lord it over them.” This is all it means today to feed Christ’s sheep, even if they have not seen a syllable of the Gospel, which alone is the pasture of the sheep. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 27: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ga 5:7). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

**Luther:** So that our office may not be slandered. [2 Cor. 6: 3] 9.

Who can prevent our office from being slandered, since the Word of God must be persecuted, just as Christ Himself? We cannot prevent God’s Word from being slandered by the unbelievers who



do not understand faith in God, for it is “a rock of offense” (Isaiah 8 [: 14]; Romans 9 [: 33]). That is the offense of faith, which goes its own way and is not our fault.

But the offense in love which happens on our account in our works and in the fruits of our faith—which we are to let shine before others, so that they may see them and be enticed to faith through them [Matt. 5: 16]—these are our fault. *We are to avoid [faults] there, so that the heathen, the Jews, the weak, and the rulers of the world need not say: “Look at what scoundrels and immoral people they are! Their doctrine must be incorrect.” Then our evil name and reputation and hindering of others overflows onto the holy, innocent Word which God has given us to know and to preach, and it must bear our shame; moreover, it becomes unfruitful and unprofitable in those who are offended. That is a terrible sin.* (emphasis added) [Luther, Martin. Luther's Works, Volume 76: Church Postils II, (Kindle Locations 8778-8786). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

[Personal commentary: What is in italics is at the crux of the matter which defines when a worker is no longer “above reproach”.]

### Testimony of the Church Fathers:

**Gerhard:** 182. The apostle mentions those common virtues for this reason: integrity of life and honorable behavior are required chiefly and especially of a bishop, not just because of those general reasons that demand these from all other Christians but also particularly for this reason; that they may be “examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3), that in all things and in every respect they may offer themselves as “a pattern of good works” (2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7), that they not, because of their wickedness of life, expose their ministry to the reproaches of enemies and set up an impediment or hindrance to the Word’s fruit-bearing, and thus cause the name and doctrine of the Lord to be blasphemed. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 265-266]

**Walther:** Finally, let the following from Seidel’s Pastoraltheologie be included here: The apostles of the Lord have not prescribed such emphatic rules of behavior for any estate besides the office of teaching (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). If we summarize everything that constitutes the content of the apostolic admonitions, it comes down to the following items:

(1) A preacher must present himself to his congregation as a model and example of discipleship and must therefore never do something that he has presented to his congregation as wrong; otherwise he would certainly lead them to think that something must be wrong with his teaching and that he is only preaching in order to earn his bread...

(3) *A preacher must arrange all his actions so that his congregation recognizes that his only and true purpose is their salvation. Whoever thinks only about how he may collect something of temporal goods or indulge his comfort will very soon lose the trust of his congregation.* [emphasis added.]

(4) A preacher must most seriously guard against giving offense to anyone and must therefore constantly examine his words, mannerisms, and actions so that nothing punishable is found in them.” Pastoraltheologie, pp. 330ff. [Walther, C.F.W. Walthers Works: Pastoral Theology (Kindle Locations 10966-10970). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

**Theses 4. Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one’s office disqualifies a man from being considered “fit” for the pastoral office, from being declared “fit” to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, and may keep him from being reinstated to the office of the ministry.<sup>3</sup>**

### Testimony of Holy Scripture:

**Exodus 2:14** Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.”

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<sup>3</sup> What Does It Mean to be “Above Reproach”? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009

**1 Corinthians 8:9** But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

- **πρόσκομμα** cause of falling, the stone on which there is the stumbling, which leads to a fall, destruction.
- **πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν:** that which provides an opportunity or occasion for causing someone to sin—“that which causes someone to sin” or “that which provides an occasion for someone to sin.” In other words, this action or lifestyle gets in the way of the Gospel, handicapping the pastor’s ministry, preventing people from hearing the Gospel.

**2 Corinthians 6:3ff** We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry [**Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**], <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way [**ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῇ ἡ διακονία** ]: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; <sup>7</sup> by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

- **Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**, lit. “Not once in nothing”. Paul lays down for himself as an apostle the principle: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῇ ἡ διακονία, 2 C. 6:3. According to the context προσκοπήν διδόναι has to be an act which makes reproach possible, and this Paul wants to avoid for the sake of the cause whether the offence be well-founded and justified or not,... Here too, however, the ultimate concern is the salvation of the community. [*Vol. 6: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (754). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Προσκοπήν**, “occasion of falling, of taking offence,” also “reason for antipathy”: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, 2 C. 6:3. [*Vol. 6: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (747). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- **ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῇ ἡ διακονία** to find fault with someone by implying blame—‘to criticize, to censure, to find fault with.’ ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῇ ἡ διακονία ‘we don’t want anyone to find fault with our work’ 2 Cor 6:3. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (435). New York: United Bible Societies]

### Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

**Luther:** Paul’s frequent use of the word “stewardship” or “household,” “ministry,” “minister,” “servant,” “one serving the gospel,” etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers. In this view of the ministry, the so-called “indelible character” vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. A minister may be deposed if he proves unfaithful. On the other hand he is to be permitted in the ministry as long as he is competent and has the favor of the church as a whole; just as in civil matters any administrator is treated as an equal among his brethren. In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. [*LW*, volume 40, p. 35]

**Luther:** “This blood, which flowed from the side of the crucified Christ and spilled on the ground, is not merely the blood of an ordinary man, but God’s own blood.” St. Paul does not say this thoughtlessly, but he makes this admonition in the highest matter of all with great seriousness to remind us of the high office of governing the Church and feeding it with God’s Word. We are not to make a joke out of it, but to know that

to Him it is precious and great, as precious to Him as His dear Son's blood, which all creatures cannot repay. If we are not diligent or faithful, then we sin and become guilty of the blood of God, so that it must have been spilled in vain for the souls whom we are to oversee. [Luther's Works, Volume 78 (Church Postil IV) (Kindle Locations 568-573). Concordia Publishing House.]

#### **Testimony of the Church fathers:**

**Walther:** Right now my nephew Robert Engel is visiting here, who was a former Saxon pastor But who had to resign his office because he had written a love letter to a girl although he was already married, at a time when he was overburdened with work. It is truly regrettable for him as a person. He is as good as useless for our church since this case has become known in our circles. He was unusually well grounded in doctrine and besides is a philologist and an accomplished dialectician. Thus the devil takes those few who have the gifts and the desires to serve the church and makes them useless. [C.F.W. Walther, Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther, Letters CPH, vol 6, pages 117-118.]

#### **Theses 5. It is the responsibility of the calling entity, normally the local congregation, and ecclesiastical supervisor to administer a proper ecclesiastical discipline for the sake of the members of the Bride of Christ, as well as for the integrity of the Pastoral Office.**

#### **Testimony of Holy Scripture:**

**Jeremiah 10:20-21,** My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are not; there is no one to spread my tent again and to set up my curtains. For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.

**Ezekiel 34:8-10** “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.”

**James 3:1** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

**3 John 9–11** I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority [ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς]. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

- **ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης:** to like or love to be first in rank or position—“to desire to be first, to desire to order others.” “love to have the preeminence”
- **οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς:** to listen or pay attention to a person, with resulting conformity to what is advised or commanded—to pay attention to and obey.
- **ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς:** “but Diotrephes, who always wants to order others, will not pay any attention to us”.

#### **Testimony of The Lutheran Confessions:**

**60]** [In our Confession and the Apology we have in general recounted what we have had to say concerning ecclesiastical power. For] The Gospel assigns to those who preside over churches the command to teach the Gospel to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent.

**61]** And by the confession of all, even of the adversaries, it is clear that this power by divine right is common to all who preside over churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops. **62]** And accordingly Jerome openly teaches in the apostolic letters that all who preside over churches are both bishops and elders, and cites from Titus 1, 5f.: *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city* [and afterwards calls these persons bishops]. Then he adds: *A bishop must be the husband of one wife.* Likewise Peter and John call themselves elders [or priests] 1 Pet. 5, 1; 2 John 1. And he then adds: *But that afterwards one was chosen to be placed over the rest, this was done as a remedy for schism, lest each one by attracting [a congregation here or there] to himself might rend the Church of Christ. For at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist to the bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the elders always elected one from among themselves, and placed him in a higher station, whom they called bishop; just as an army would make a commander for itself. The deacons, moreover, may elect from among themselves one whom they know to be active, and name him archdeacon. For with the exception of ordination, what does the bishop that the elder does not?*

**63]** Jerome, therefore, teaches that it is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct. And the subject itself declares this, because the power [the office and command] is the same, as he has said above. **64]** But one matter afterwards made a distinction between bishops and pastors namely, ordination, because it was [so] arranged that one bishop should ordain ministers in a number of churches.

**65]** But since by divine authority the grades of bishop and pastor are not diverse, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine law [if a pastor in his own church ordains certain suitable persons to the ministry, such ordination is, according to divine law, undoubtedly effective and right].

**66]** Therefore, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Church, or are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right. [Because the regular bishops persecute the Gospel and refuse to ordain suitable persons, every church has in this case full authority to ordain its own ministers.]

[*Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (electronic ed., pp. 521–523). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.]

### **Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther.**

**Luther:** Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, p. 55)

**Luther:** “In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else.” [*LW*, volume 40, p. 35]

### **Testimony of the Church Fathers:**

**Martin Chemnitz:** It is the work of God to remove a person from the ministry. Therefore as long as God endures His minister, who is teaching correctly and living blamelessly in his ministry, the Church does not have the authority to remove this servant. But when he no longer edifies the Church with his doctrine or his life but is destroying it, then God Himself will remove him... There are two reasons for God's removing ministers from their office: 1. because of their doctrine when they teach error; 2. because of their life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed... For just as God calls, so also He removes through means. [Chemnitz, *The Locus on The Church, Loci Theologici*, Translated by Dr. J. A. O. Preus (CPH) – 1989 Volume II, page 698ff.]

**Quenstedt:** The right to call qualified ministers and to remove wicked ministers belongs to the whole Church. [*The Holy Ministry*, 1696 edition translated by Poellot, 1979]

**Walther: 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”:** So when [our thesis] says: The Synod should protect the congregations, one should not think this means that a congregation may not do it—that, for example, a congregation cannot judge anything at all [and] that the

Synod must judge whether the pastor is teaching true or false [doctrine]. [Nor should we think] that the congregation cannot depose anyone because of godless living and that it cannot get rid of one who oversteps his authority and proves to be domineering, that only the Synod could free them. No; the congregation has full power to depose as well as to install and to judge regarding its pastor's doctrine....

Finally, according to Thesis II, a synod that is faithful to the Confessions should...c. protect the congregations against pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle and are domineering in their office. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

**Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*:** But, of course, the congregation must proceed properly. The Synod cannot sit idly by if the congregation proceeds improperly. Then the Synod also has the right to say: "If you do so and so with a pastor, then you can no longer be in the Synod." For example, *if a pastor is dismissed by a congregation because he proclaims the truth to it, the congregation would be admonished by the synod: and if that would do no good, one would have to say: "you can no longer belong to us."* But no more. That would be all. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

**Walther:** Therefore, when a pastor uses God's Word in his congregation, whether by teaching, admonishing, reproving, or comforting, either publicly or privately, then the congregation hears Jesus Christ Himself out of his mouth. In that case it owes him unconditional obedience as the one by whom God desires to make known to it His will and lead it to eternal life, and the more faithfully a pastor administers his office, the more highly it should esteem him. A congregation has no right to depose such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, it rejects Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name he ministers to it. A congregation can depose an incumbent of the holy ministry only if it is clear from the divine Word that God Himself has deposed him as a wolf or hireling. Of this we read in the Holy Scriptures:

"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16).

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). [Walther, C. (1999). *Church and Ministry: Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry* (electronic ed.) (pp. 303–304). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

**Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*:** There are also pastors who cause a great deal of annoyance. But the congregations should not require the pastor to live like an archangel; that he cannot do. He has flesh and blood like other Christians, and so weaknesses appear here and there. Then, if mature Christians are present, they will say to their pastor, "Dear pastor, it was not right to do what you did." If they are merely weaknesses, one must bear with them and not demand perfection [*nicht Alles auf der Goldwage wagen*] "and with the measure you use it will be measured to you" [Matthew 7:2]. But this should not be used to defend a pastor who lives in sins that dominate [him]. *If he refuses to be instructed, one should show no mercy.* If the congregation members of such a pastor then come to the [District/Synod] President and tell him, "This is the situation; will you agree with us if we dismiss him?" he will then reply, "Of course, that is right; such a rascal doesn't belong in the Holy Office." But the opposite also occurs, that [some] individuals make the sin greater than it is. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 6223-6230). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

**Walther:** Congregations shall not be so presumptuous as to arbitrarily depose their pastors and others who administer an ecclesiastical office. But if they fall into pernicious errors and are found guilty by lawful procedure (1 Timothy 5:19; "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses") and refuse to accept instruction from God's Word either by the congregation or by the pastors called in for this purpose; or if they become manifest as contumacious impenitent sinners; or if they have committed an offense by which they have lost their good report among those who are without and by which they cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, then Christian congregations in Christian order(to which under

circumstances belongs a provisional suspension) must remove them from office as such as God Himself has put out. (Matt. 7:15: Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Hos 4:6: Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest to Me. John 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. 1 Tim. 3:7: He must have a good report from them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.) [*The Form of a Christian Congregation*, CFW Walther, p. 128]

**Walther's 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*:** You see, a Synod will always support the congregation if it can prove that its pastor is unfaithful to his office, lazy, indifferent, immoral, power-hungry stubborn, or is living in manifest sins. Through the District President the Synod will visit the congregation and will support those who are right. He may know best how to disarm those who support the unfaithful, wicked pastor. From John's Third Epistle, verses 9 and 10, we learn that already in apostolic times a congregation was provided help by a District President, even though that title was not in use at that time. John writes: "I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who lives to be their leader, won't listen to us. So, when I come, I'll bring up what he's doing when he talks such wicked nonsense about us." [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 36]

**LCMS Constitution, Article XII, 7.** The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit visitors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president. [page 14]

### Concluding Thoughts:

- 1) The issue surrounding the words "above reproach" is the integrity of the Office of the Holy Ministry.
- 2) "Above reproach" is an umbrella term under which the biblical writers list specific qualifications that one must possess to pursue the pastoral office, be declared "fit" for the pastoral office, remain in the pastoral office, or be reinstated to the pastoral office.
  - Gerhard from page 7: The common virtues are expressed, first, with general words: that he should be "blameless and without reproach[1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6}. They are expressed, second, with a specific list of some of them, [in two ways] ***Through affirmation:... Then, through negation.*** [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 264-265]
- 3) Those who occupy the Office of the Holy Ministry must be moral, ethical, spiritual, and exemplary individuals. (ed. comment: Men of character and good report.)
- 4) We dare not confuse "forgiveness" and "fitness for ministry". They are two different things. One needs to be "fit" to hold the pastoral office. Though forgiven, a pastor may not be fit for the Office.
- 5) Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one's office disqualifies a man from being considered "fit" to pursue the pastoral office, from being declared "fit" to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, or to be reinstated to the office of the ministry.
- 6) Most important of all, a person is not "above reproach" if his specific sin, his lifestyle, or the administration of his office genuinely causes people to stumble in their faith, hinders the spread of the Gospel, or causes people to reject it. [What Does It Mean to be "Above Reproach"? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009]

With the ebb and flow of life in the church this requirement that those who fill the pastoral office are to be "above reproach" is especially important now as we find ourselves in this post-modern, post-Constantinian culture. That true, we find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right,

where the gross sins formerly scorned by society are now not only accepted but paraded for all to see, and where morality has been replaced by immorality as accepted norm for society, at times even within the church.

The culture in which we live can easily taint and even corrupt our understanding of “above reproach”. We live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, our Law and Gospel proclamation, and where our Christian morality, are increasingly challenged, even despised. That pressures us to temper our confession, to compromise our ethical standards, to turn a blind eye to a worker’s sinful behavior. But that dare never happen. This is about the integrity of the Office and the honor of the Bride.

For those reasons, it bears upon us as church workers and ecclesial supervisors to be exceptionally diligent to be “above reproach”. There is much at stake: the salvation of the people we are called to serve, our own salvation, as well as the standing of the church in the eyes of the world around. It is essential that pastors be “above reproach”.

SDG

Respectfully  
Rev. John C. Wille  
COP Clergy Call and Roster Committee

#### **Addendum:**

While not an exhaustive list, **C.F.W. Walther** mentions the following in his 1879 essay *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* as reasons for a congregation to admonish its pastor and even remove its pastor from his divine call. These are items that may move a pastor into the area of reproach under “administration of the office” or malfeseance.

- Offensive lifestyle
- Domineering in office
- unfaithful
- indifferent
- immoral
- living in manifest sins
- lazy
- careless about official acts
- falling into sins of drunkenness and other great vices
- becoming obstinate, so that no one can get along with him
- becoming power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way
- taking the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled
- becoming lax about visiting the sick and snapping at people when they come to see him

#### **The BPE Adopted Motion on Above Reproach Issues**

The Board for Pastoral Education adopted the following motion during its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, 22 January, 2009:

The following is a list of items, that, in the opinion of the BPE, fall short of the "above reproach" standard for those who seek to serve in the office of the pastoral ministry. The items are offered, not as an exhaustive list, but rather as an example of items that should be discussed by the Council of Presidents and the two seminaries.

- Two or more divorces, though candidates with one divorce may be declined admission based upon the details of that divorce;
- Convicted of a felony;

- Convicted of a sex offense (felony or misdemeanor);
- Recent (within five years) conviction of drug or substance (including alcohol) abuse, and/or selling and trafficking in the same;
- Recent (within five years) acknowledged substance abuse;
- Recent (within five years) addictive behavior (e.g., gambling, pornography, internet pornography);
- Homosexuality.

It is understood that extremely rare and exceptional cases may present themselves, and under extremely rare circumstances may constitute possibilities for exceptions. Care should be taken that the extremely rare does not become the commonplace.

**The 2016 Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS state:**

**1.2.1(i) Ecclesiastical supervision:** The responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies. Such supervision, subject to the provisions of the Synod’s Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions, includes visitation, evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures to assure that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are followed and implemented. Thus, ecclesiastical supervision is also the presenting, interpreting, and applying of the collective will of the Synod’s congregations. Ecclesiastical supervision does not include the responsibility to observe, monitor, control, or direct the day-to-day activities of individual members of the Synod, whether in the conduct of their work or in their private lives (cf. Bylaw 2.14.1 [a]). Further, those constitutional articles and bylaws pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision.

**2.14.1** Termination of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of those to whom it has been granted. Such action should only be taken as a final step when it is clear that those who are being terminated after previous futile admonition have acted contrary to the confession laid down in Constitution Art. II or the conditions of membership laid down in Constitution Art. VI or have persisted in offensive conduct (Constitution Art. XIII 1). For this reason the Synod establishes procedures for such action including the identification of those who are responsible for ecclesiastical supervision of its members. Such supervision includes not only suspension or termination of membership but also advice, counsel, encouragement, and, when necessary, admonition regarding teaching and/or practice. Furthermore, the procedures that may lead to termination of membership also provide for the protection of members by including provisions for challenging the decisions of ecclesiastical supervisors in these matters as well as provisions for restoration of membership that has been suspended or terminated.

**4.4.5** Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision, and shall inquire into the prevailing spiritual conditions of the congregations of his district.

SDG