

## All God's People

According to the New Testament, all Christians do the work of God. Pastors and lay people (Christians who haven't been ordained) have different roles. They complement one another rather than compete with one another. In fact both share the same baptismal calling, also known as the priesthood of all believers.

We have already spoken about the role of *pastors* in God's mission. The most helpful way to consider what it means to be the *whole* people of God in mission is to reflect on 1 Peter 2:9-12. The people of God are a priesthood in two different, but significant ways.

Firstly, Christians work together in bringing all people and their needs to God. And they work together in bringing God and his Word to all people. Together we are a chosen people. Together we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation.

We work together as God's people to support and encourage one another in the faith and to bring our community to God. We serve one another (1 Peter 4:8-11; Eph 5:1-2; 1 Cor 12:14-26). We pray to God for those who cannot or will not pray for themselves. We pray for government and leadership (1 Tim 2:1-2). We pray the mission prayer, that God's kingdom comes to all people (Matt 6:9-13). We pray for those who persecute the church (Matt 5:44).

Secondly, all Christians do God's work as priests in their daily lives. Being a father or mother, husband or wife, parent or child, employee or employer, or neighbour, carries a special calling which no-one but the person involved can fulfil for God (1 Peter 2:13-4:19).

God is at work caring for his creation and people through us, his baptised people. All Christians use their God-given talents and gifts as God's hands and voice in their various situations. Luther called this being 'masks of God':

All our work in the field, in the garden, in the city, in the home, in struggle, in government .... These are the masks of our Lord God, behind which he wants to be hidden and to do all things (LW, Vol 14, p.114 Commentary on Psalm 147:13)

So we can rightly say that lay people have an office too - the office that comes with baptism. They share their common calling as God's people with pastors. All do the work of God. That doesn't mean that all God's people are pastors - only some are ordained into that particular office. But it does mean all God's people are unique in his sight and that he blesses every one of us as we take up our calling in our families, workplaces and communities.

## Conclusion

We can rightly distinguish the task of pastors. A pastor's calling is to serve God's people by feeding us with the Word and sacraments so that we can each take up our individual callings to be God's 'masks' where he has placed us. Pastors and lay people work together, each with their own calling, playing their part in the mission of God to call all people to salvation through Jesus Christ.

*Dr Andrew Pfeiffer*  
*Pastor, Lutheran Church of Australia*

## Brochures in this 'Ordained by God' series:

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# Let's Be Clear About Pastors





# Let's Be Clear About Pastors

*For those seeking clarity about the Office of the Ministry in relation to the shared baptismal calling of all God's people.*

Have you ever seen pastors being ordained? They vow to be faithful in their ministry, they kneel and are prayed for, the presidents and other pastors lay hands on them, and the national president declares them to be pastors. They are then given a red stole to signify this.

It is a joyful day for the whole church and especially for those closely involved. It also raises a question, however. Why do we have pastors in the church? And what is the difference, if any, between pastors and those Christians who haven't been ordained? This brochure helps us understand that there *is* a difference, but that the difference is not the people themselves but rather their different *callings* and the contribution each calling makes to God's mission in the world.

## Why Pastors?

Jesus Christ instituted the Office of the Ministry (John 20:21-23; Matt 28:18-20). This means it is God's will that the church has pastors. The Office of the Ministry is another name for the Pastoral Office. The Lutheran Church of Australia's *Theses of Agreement* says:

The New Testament ministry is the office instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments, through which as through instruments, the Holy Spirit works saving faith in the hearts of people (TA VI 1).

## The Office of the Ministry

The word 'office' brings to mind large buildings, officials and lots of paperwork. But it's actually a more interesting word than that! It comes from the Latin *officium*, which means to do something for a community of people on someone else's behalf. Because such an 'officer' acts for someone else, proper authorisation is essential (that's what happens in the ordination service). And it's clear that the role, the office, is one of service, duty and accountability.

It follows that pastors do not act for themselves but for someone else. In fact they act on behalf of the *triune God*. They work with him especially when they forgive and retain sin (John 20:21-23), when they baptise, preach and teach the gospel (Matt 28:18-20), and when they follow St Paul in faithfully doing what the Lord has asked - administering the sacrament of the altar for God's people (1 Cor 11:23-25). They work with God to bring his Word to people in all the different situations of their lives. Pastors also act on the *church's* behalf when in worship they lead the church in acts of praise and prayer, offering and thanksgiving.



The church not only needs baptism, preaching and the Lord's Supper - the church also needs *people* to do these things. Today we call these people pastors. In the New Testament they are called variously elders, overseers and teachers.

We can thank God for the Office of the Ministry because by it God ensures that all people can receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in words and actions. Pastors are not better people than other Christians. Pastors don't have special qualities that mean they don't sin. Whether they are worthy (faithful) or unworthy (hypocritical), they do God's work because:

They do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you hears me.' When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ's place and stead (*Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, VII and VIII 28).

## Who can be Pastors?

The New Testament doesn't use the word 'pastor' quite like we do. It talks of bishops (overseers), elders, teachers, and in at least two places shows us that these are different names for the same position - what we call the Pastoral Office (1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:17, 28). The apostle Paul asks Titus to appoint pastors in every church and gives instructions on who can be a pastor (Titus 1:5-9). Paul gives similar instructions to Timothy (1 Tim 3:1-7).

While pastors need to be baptised, not all who are baptised are pastors. While pastors need to have pastoral gifts, being a gifted person does not qualify one to be a pastor.

The triune God appoints pastors through the church according to the criteria he gives us in his Word. The church has always taken seriously the need for pastors to be able to teach and for pastors to give a good example in their personal lives and in the way they care for their wife and family. In agreement with 1 Tim 2:11-14 and 1 Cor 14:33-38, our church stands with the Christian church throughout the ages, confessing that women are not to be pastors.

This is a difficult teaching, especially in today's culture. It is true that many women can do the things pastors do. But the question is not whether a Christian woman is *able* to baptise, preach or administer the Lord's Supper, but whether God *allows it*. As difficult as it is to do, we need to confess with the Christian church throughout history that God's Word actually forbids it, and does so by explicit command (1 Cor 14:33-38).

In recent years this command of the Lord has been challenged in many churches. This is a sign of the influence of feminist theology in churches, and of an increasing reluctance to submit to God's Word as the source of all Christian teaching - especially when it is counter-cultural.

Be shepherds of God's flock under your care. 1 Peter 5:2