



2013 RESOLUTION 4-06A  
TASK FORCE ON LICENSED LAY DEACONS

# FAQs on Task Force Report and Recommendations



The Task Force on Licensed Lay Deacons (2013 Res. 4-06A) has received feedback through a variety of sources over the past four months since it released its report to the Synod. Individuals, deacons, supervising pastors, congregation members, district officials and others have communicated many different reactions: agreement, gratitude, disagreement, dismay and many helpful questions and suggestions. We want to express our appreciation to all those who have shared their perspectives with us. To encourage further thoughtful conversation about the matter of Licensed Lay Deacons (LLDs), we have created the following FAQs. Some of the questions are direct quotations from correspondence; others are attempts to capture ideas and questions with brevity and accuracy. Additional reactions may be shared with the task force in care of its chairman, Rev. Larry M. Vogel, associate executive director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations at [larry.vogel@lcms.org](mailto:larry.vogel@lcms.org).

## General/Theological Questions

**Q1.** *The report refers to the “transparochial” or “whole church” dimension of the office of preaching (or, as we often refer to it, the office of the public ministry). Why is this an issue with LLDs?*

**A.** Because the office of preaching and administering the Sacraments (the public ministry) belongs to the whole church, it is and has always had a transparochial dimension that should not be ignored. Whatever one thinks of ordination, the laying on of hands by fellow pastors testifies to the fact that the public ministry does not simply belong to a given local congregation (or even a district since those from outside are invited to participate).

Moreover, the transparochial dimension of the office of preaching is also seen in the training, examination, and authorizing of pastoral candidates. Thus, each seminary is an institution of the church at large, whose Board of Regents (BOR) is elected by the church at large (not simply by the district in which that seminary resides), and whose BOR contains representatives of the church at large (i.e., not simply from the district in which the seminary resides). The faculty is drawn from the church at large, as well. Furthermore, in the placement process, the church at large is also active. One district president does not do all the slottings, not even the chairman of the Council of Presidents, under the theory that he “represents the whole church.” No, the whole set of district presidents is involved in, and finally must approve of, all of the placements.

Still further, the colloquy process is not under the aegis of only one man. No district president does the colloquy interview by himself; indeed, neither does the first vice-president of the Synod (though he is elected by the church at large). Instead, representatives from around the church take part.

Contrast this with the procedure for the LLDs. Here, everything is under the aegis of one man, who is elected by his district alone. The program is under his aegis, and the placement and tenure is under his aegis. This is something fundamentally other than what is done in all other pastoral training and placement contexts, and it raises fundamental questions about the transparochial nature of the ministry being conducted. Such questions should be eliminated.

**Q2.** *Relatedly, the report refers to the “transparochial” recognition of calls, which is conveyed by ordination, when the whole church affirms the validity and legitimacy of a call, even though it is extended by a congregation. But Lay Deacons are already licensed by a district in a process the Synod approved in 1989. Isn’t that transparochial recognition?*

- A. Christ gives the Office of the Holy Ministry to the whole Church (John 20: 19–23; Eph. 4:11–12). It provides transparochial *recognition* in specific ways. In the rite of ordination, the calling congregation is asked, “Will you, the faithful of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church, according to the Church’s public confession, and speaking for the whole Church, receive \_\_\_\_\_ as a servant of Christ and minister of Word and Sacrament? If so, answer, We will.” (Italics and underlining added.) Though the significance of ordination can be exaggerated and misunderstood, the congregation’s response to this question and the laying on of hands by fellow pastors testify to the fact that the Office of the Ministry does not simply belong to a given local congregation, or even a particular district, as noted in the first FAQ, since pastors from other districts and even other church bodies with whom we are in fellowship are invited to participate. Ordination, therefore, makes clear both to the man set apart for the pastoral office and to the congregation what he is to be and to do in their midst (by means of a serious vow). The rite *also* makes clear the recognition of the wider church that the man has legitimately been called and placed into the Office of the Holy Ministry (by means of Scripture, prayer and the laying on of hands).

Such church-wide *recognition* does not exist for deacons. For this reason there are questions and confusion about the service of deacons. Because their work is not recognized *transparochially* — it is also not recognized as a valid exercise of the Holy Ministry by many. Such uncertainty — this lack of clarity about the work of deacons and its legitimacy — is tragic and unnecessary. It can be resolved if those who serve pastorally, preaching and administering the Sacraments *are recognized* transparochially through the colloquy process proposed by the task force.

**Q3. Does the report elevate tradition over theology in regard to ordination?**

- A. By “tradition over theology,” the questioner is apparently contrasting custom with a scripturally required practice. The task force does not believe that ordination with the laying on of hands is something our Lord Himself mandates in Scripture for He never commands ordination. The Lord has given the authority and responsibility for calling pastors to congregations, while He does not require a specific training process or training locale. The Lord also provides the requirements for pastoral characteristics and ability to teach in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9 and charges local congregations with holding pastors accountable to such, even how to properly consider accusations (1 Tim. 5:19). Ordination (the laying on of hands) is once again not required by the Lord but is how the whole church recognizes that the Lord has led the local congregations to call specific men as pastors and place them into the Lord’s service for the church. Since LLDs are currently not considered pastors, this does not properly occur.

C. F. W. Walther calls ordination “an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call” (*Church and Office*, or, *Church and Ministry*). This does *not* mean, however, that ordination is incidental or unimportant to the Office of the Holy Ministry. The Apology notes: “If ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament” (XIII 11). Walther also vigorously objects to ordination’s omission because it has “the important purpose of publicly confirming that the call is recognized by the whole church as legitimate and divine” (*Pastorale*). This important, theological aspect of ordination is emphasized in the report, noting that ordination is the means by which the “transparochial” (beyond the local) aspect of the ministry is affirmed. The report’s recommendations, therefore, while certainly respectful of tradition, are based on theology, not mere custom.

**Q4. Do the report and recommendations satisfy concerns that have been raised about practice that is consistent with Augsburg Confession (AC), Article XIV?**

- A. Both seminary faculties and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations have examined our report. In conversations as well as by resolution, all three entities expressed support of the theological framework put forward in the report and its particular discussion of AC XIV. Objections that have been raised elsewhere had to do only with the concern that the understanding of AC XIV in the report might lead to false conclusions about ordination, e.g., as that an emphasis on ordination is a disavowal of the truth that the Office of the Keys is given to the *whole* Church (see Walther, *Church and Office*, Thesis IV on the Church and Thesis VI on the Office). Such a misperception is contrary to the understanding of the task force and its report.

**Q5. *Why does the task force report ignore the biblical office of deacon since it is mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:8–13 (see also Phil. 1:1)?***

- A. Rather than ignore what the Bible says about deacons, the task force gave full consideration to the matter, including the idea of a biblical office of deacon. But there is no clearly defined “office of deacon.” The *references to deacons in the New Testament simply do not provide any sort of specific definition or description of such an office*. The New Testament term diakonos means servant or minister — in a basic sense as a go-between — and is used both in ordinary contexts and church contexts (e.g., the “attendants” in Matt. 22:13 are deacons as are the “servants” in John 2:2). In the words of John Collins, perhaps the foremost authority on deacon terminology, in both verb and noun forms “usage was fluid and applications were varied” (John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, p. 235).

As a consequence, in church history and in contemporary Christianity, the title “deacon” can be and has been applied to church offices with a wide variety of responsibilities, from pastors of lesser rank, to assistants providing bodily aid, to liturgical helpers. The task force, therefore, noted on page 6 (fn. 21):

It is certainly the case that the Bible refers to deacons; however, there is no indication within the texts regarding the service that deacons provide. They are associated with bishops (“overseers” or ἐπίσκοποι), respectable and reputable, and clear about the faith, but beyond that there is nothing about what the “office” implies or involves. For that reason it is not surprising that deacons are not a constant in church history and that their role varies dramatically in different times and places. John Collins simply says “it is unlikely that this section of 1 Timothy can provide any more precise idea of the diaconate” (*Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 238). None of this denies that the church is free to have or not have an office of deacon, but the definition of that office would be a matter of human authority, not divine authority, and it should not create confusion about the necessity of the one office of preaching.

**Q6. *Why not ordain deacons as a helping office to pastors rather than turn to Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) ordination?***

- A. Establishing an ordained diaconate is a theoretical option that the LCMS could pursue and the task force considered this. It would require, however, numerous theological clarifications. “Deacon” is not clearly defined biblically, confessionally or historically, and in churches that have deacons, the office and its responsibilities have a variety of meanings. Questions about the status and meaning of the office would need to be determined by the Synod in a way that satisfied all concerns. How would it be distinguished from the pastoral office? Since the Synod currently has female deacons (that is, deaconesses), how would male and female deacons differ? After examining this idea, it was the judgment of the task force that ordaining deacons would entail further confusion and would not heal divisions.

**Q7. *Don’t we need a variety of church workers, just as there are a variety of medical professionals who have different duties?***

- A. Yes, we do. We have a variety of auxiliary offices that are optional for congregational service, in addition to the one required office of the public ministry. Some see an analogy between the relationship of doctors and physician assistants or nurse practitioners with that of pastors and deacons, since doctors delegate some of their work to such assistants whom they oversee and pastors delegate responsibilities to the deacons they oversee. For example, both doctors and physician assistants or nurse practitioners can prescribe medications. A better analogy might be that of a judge and other officers of the court. A judge is assisted by many other officials, but only he sits over courtroom proceedings, an authority that cannot be delegated. For the office of public ministry, the defining responsibility is one of public preaching and the administration of the Sacraments for the church (see AC V). Based on this, the report’s first recommendation is to make this clear: when you preach and administer the Sacraments for a congregation, you are serving as a pastor. Note that, as with any analogy, correlations to another situation are limited. In each case, one must ask what responsibilities can rightly be delegated and what responsibilities are so central they cannot be delegated.

- Q8. *How do we uphold the office of public ministry in a positive manner without it diminishing the priesthood of all believers? How do we uphold the priesthood of all believers without diminishing the office?***
- A. Both the priesthood of believers and the office of preaching — the public ministry — are biblical teachings. They must be held in balance, without distortion by elevating one at the expense of the other. The report seeks to be very clear in this regard. Ecclesiastical authority or “the Office of the Keys” is given to the whole Church, but the whole Church confers the authority and duty to publicly preach and administer the Sacraments to competent men on behalf of everyone. So men are prepared, called and confirmed by the church as a whole as “called and ordained servants of the Word” who serve in the public ministry, even as every individual Christian also serves Christ in sharing the Christian faith with their family, friends, coworkers and others. The priesthood of believers and public ministry complement one another; they do not compete.
- Q9. *Do we need to give more emphasis to the roles of laywomen in the Lord’s mission?***
- A. The task force Recommendations 7 and 8 are designed to encourage the role of all laity in sharing the promises of the Gospel with the world. If adopted, encouragement of the work of outreach from within our various vocations — husband or wife, son or daughter, employer or employee, etc. — would certainly emphasize particular ways in which both lay women and lay men have opportunities to share the Gospel.
- Q10. *What questions does our task force raise about mission and the role of evangelists?***
- A. A basic question about the Church’s mission is raised and answered: Is mission the work of ordained servants of the Word alone? The answer is that all of God’s baptized children have a role to fill in the Church’s mission, since every member of the universal priesthood can and should “proclaim the excellencies” of Him who called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). By “evangelism” and “evangelist,” the report is talking about outreach or proclamation to unbelieving or unchurched individuals. Evangelism does have a more general meaning — proclaiming the Good News. The task force chose to emphasize evangelism as a “role” rather than an office, as a reminder that it is a responsibility for all believers. An “office of evangelist” could, and perhaps should, be established, especially as one considers the way in which it has been utilized in fast-growing Lutheran churches in the global South. But “the work of the evangelist” certainly has a place in every pastor’s ministry whether or not there is a particular office of evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5).
- Q11. *Are we creating an office of evangelist and will this result in confusion about the use of evangelists just as we currently have with LLDs? What does the report mean by the “role” of evangelist?***
- A. The task force is not recommending the creation of an office of evangelist. As noted earlier, the task force chose to emphasize evangelism as a “role” rather than an office, as a reminder that it is a responsibility for all believers. It would be an entirely different question whether the Synod would wish to create an auxiliary “office of evangelist.” Such a question would deserve thorough study on its own and one matter worthy of consideration would be potential areas of confusion through the creation of such an office.
- Q12. *Does the report place restrictions on mission or open the path for more mission outreach?***
- A. The report strongly encourages the recognition that the “path” for mission — sharing Christ with the world — is open to every believer. It is legitimate to say that the office of the public ministry is restricted since men, not women, are called to it and, so also, adults, not boys and those able to teach, not those without the ability to teach publicly. But the priesthood of the baptized (or priesthood of all believers) is the way in which the whole church exercises the office of the keys in daily life as ordinary Christians speak of Christ, proclaim His forgiveness, and guide their families, loved ones, coworkers, and others into the truth of Christ.
- Q13. *Does the report hamstring the mission of the church through human structures?***
- A. The church on earth is a human structure. Structure prevents chaos. The task force report suggests some structural improvements that, we pray, will diminish discord and division in the Synod over how to address ministries challenged by financial need, geographical isolation, or a lack of pastors from certain ethnic or

demographic groups. It seeks to do nothing that would hamstring mission or outreach to those who do not know Christ. Rather, its recommendations are intended to urge greater clarity about and encouragement of the work of outreach by every member of the church. In all discussions, it should also be remembered that there are offices with specific duties that are established by divine right. Thus, the pastoral office, as the office to which the public preaching and the administration of the Sacraments is given, exists by divine right. It is by divine right, not mere human arrangement, that a congregation is to call a pastor (see C. F. W. Walther, *The Form of Christian Congregation*, § 20).

**Q14. *How can the emphasis on new mission and ministry become more of a focus for the report and proposed plan? Does the report take into consideration the needs of the changing post-church or post-Christian mission fields of the United States?***

- A. The report emphasizes the need for outreach and mission. The “post-church and post-Christian mission fields” of today are an environment that necessitates such an emphasis, since the number of professing Christians in North America is shrinking. Recommendations 7 and 8, in particular, encourage the ongoing use of various district programs that help to assist pastors and churches in training laity for service to Christ in their daily vocations and in the activities of their congregations. The role that the laity can and do play in Christian outreach is inestimable. The church grows when Christian men and women “are prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). The need is not for turning the laity into “little pastors” — as if one shares the Christian faith only on Sundays from the pulpit — but for every Christian to be a strong, vibrant witness in daily life. Walther is helpful: “Thus, my dear ones, you see: the office of Preacher or Caretaker of souls has not been instituted so that no one else is responsible for teaching or the care of souls. No, the whole congregation is to be a holy people, a royal priesthood. Each Christian should bear the needs of the soul of his neighbor in his heart and assist in the advance of the salvific Gospel (*in the lives*) of men so that the kingdom of Satan in the world is destroyed and the Kingdom of God expanded. Oh, how differently things would look; how much greater and more wonderful would be the blessing of the Word of God, if each Christian recognized his holy calling and administered his royal priesthood. With that in mind the Apostle cries to the Corinthians, ‘*Strive to love. Be zealous for the spiritual gifts, but primarily for the gift of prophesying Christ’s message of salvation.*’ (*The German imperative is plural, denoting all of the people.*)” (C. F. W. Walther 1842 sermon, “Holy Desire and Duty of All Christians to Lead Souls to Christ.”)

**Q15. *The report speaks about lay people involved in evangelism and outreach, but isn’t the work of evangelism the responsibility of the pastoral office?***

- A. Please note the answers to FAQ 9-12 above that address this same concern. In addition, it may be helpful to read what Michael Green has stated in his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (quoted also in the report): “One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to His holy Christian Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. The clergy of the Church saw it as their responsibility, too: bishops and presbyters, together with doctors of the Church like Origen and Clement, and philosophers like Justin and Tatian, saw the propagation of the gospel as their prime concern.”

**Q16. *Is the use of technology, as suggested in Recommendation 5 in keeping with good theology and practice?***

- A. People will have varying perspectives on this matter. Certainly no one wants to encourage “virtual church” in place of a congregation gathered to hear Christ preached by its pastor and receiving the Sacraments from him. At the same time, some districts that have chosen not to utilize lay deacons have opted instead to have a pastor who serves two far distant congregations, present in each on alternating weeks and uploading his sermon to the congregation where he is unable to be present.

**Q17. *Do the report and recommendations discourage men from residential seminary training in the name of mission?***

- A. The task force does not want any of its recommendations to be misunderstood as discouragement of our residential programs. We need more men, not fewer, to enroll in the highest level of theological and personal formation, such as we have on our two seminary campuses. There they engage in study on the highest academic levels but also have the opportunity for daily life together with fellow seminarians and professors in which casual conversations, chapel services and special campus events enrich their preparations on many levels, as well as their participation in the ministries of local congregations and specialized ministries. Residential theological education allows men to work in, and to become familiar with, a variety of contexts for public ministry. Nevertheless, as much as residential pastoral preparation may be regarded by many as the preferred option or “gold standard,” it seems evident to the task force that our Synod must also continue to utilize other approaches for preparing pastors. In Acts 16:1–5, we read of the Christians at Lystra and Iconium speaking well of Timothy, and Paul then taking Timothy to be trained. The Synod’s SMP program, Center for Hispanic Studies and Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology provide strong non-residential training that prepares men for pastoral service in a specific mission and ministry context. These non-residential programs begin with a call from a congregation that is followed by seminary-level training in a localized context with attentive mentoring and supervision, examination, and the whole church custom of ordination.

## **Practical Questions**

**Q18. *What does the change from LLDs to SMPs give to the Lord’s mission, congregations, LLDs, districts, and what does it take away?***

- A. A deacon who is colloquized and then ordained as an SMP pastor loses nothing other than some time and effort necessary for the colloquy process. This will include a week of preparation through instruction by two seminary professors, provided at no cost in a retreat setting in the region of the country where he serves. This will be followed by an interview with a colloquy committee that includes his district president and pastors from his region as well as regular colloquy committee representatives. The ordination as an SMP pastor will give a Synod-wide endorsement to his ministry, rather than the district-only endorsement of the LLD programs — thereby ending questions about the legitimacy of his service to the church.

**Q19. *What are the options for congregations who are served by LLDs when the LCMS calls upon the LLDs to become SMPs? Do we need to delineate these options?***

- A. When the regular preaching and administration of the Sacraments are currently conducted by a licensed deacon (that is, he is fulfilling the primarily pastoral work in a congregation), the task force recommendations provide three options for the deacon.

- (1) Apply to one of our seminaries for an alternate route or Master of Divinity;
- (2) Apply to one of the seminaries for the regular SMP program; or,
- (3) Apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy.

It is assumed that most of the men licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry and functioning as *de facto* pastors would take this third option of a special colloquy process to the SMP roster. If a man so licensed does not take one of these three options, his license to preach and administer the Sacraments will lapse as of July 1, 2018.

**Q20. *How are congregations and LLDs to be prepared for such a transition?***

- A. Any convention resolutions to adopt task force recommendations will need to specify the process to be followed. The task force report timeline suggests the period of a year and a half to allow for communicating with districts, congregations, and LLDs, assisting and guiding them through the transition, and implementing an SMP colloquy process.

**Q21. *Are we asking the people who are least able to change because a few believe a change must occur? What do we tell the people who must make a change? How will this change benefit them?***

- A. These are important questions because included in the purposes of the Synod are promoting “the unity of the true faith,” strengthening one another for bold witness and mission, and preparing church workers (LCMS Constitution, Article II). The task force plan recognizes the challenges faced by congregations that are small, isolated, financially challenged, and unable either to find or to support a pastor. Wherever deacons are serving such churches as, in effect, their pastor — preaching regularly and administering the Sacraments — very little change and virtually no expense will be required to change from a deacon to a specific ministry pastor. Wherever financial need is an obstacle to the transition, support will be available through the Synod’s Office of Pastoral Ministry. Such deacons will be eligible for a streamlined, regional colloquy process that will result in their ministry being recognized as fully legitimate and answer the objections of those who have been troubled by practices that are inconsistent with our biblical theology of the pastoral ministry and the call, as exhibited in the Augsburg Confession (Article XIV). The change will conclude the controversy and an ongoing criticism of the work of such deacons as they transition from being licensed deacons to ordained pastors. Current limitations on their ministries, such as their inability to pronounce the absolution, will no longer exist.

**Q22. *Does the task force report press all deacons into tracks to ordination?***

- A. No, it certainly does not. No one is to be coerced into the Holy Ministry. When a deacon is fulfilling the responsibilities and functions of the Holy Ministry — that is, when he is the chief servant of the Word, preaching and teaching for a congregation, and administers Christ’s Sacraments on their behalf, then he is *already* engaged in the Holy Ministry. The first concern of the task force report is that whenever that is the case, this man’s ministry should be recognized and validated by the whole church through the colloquy process (Recommendation 1). If other individuals, deacons or otherwise, wish to serve as preachers and in the administration of the Sacraments, then for the sake of good order, they too ought prayerfully to consider the ministry. Many other deacons who wish only to assist in other ways, from teaching, to evangelism, to visitation, should feel no compulsion to enter a track toward ordination.

**Q23. *The current need for ordained pastors to serve challenging ministries may be met in part through the colloquy of the deacons serving them (Recommendation 1). But what about the future, when these men retire or can no longer serve? How do we, in an ongoing way, provide men to serve the congregations and ministries with minimal resources in isolated areas or those made up of new immigrants or other minorities?***

- A. This important question is addressed, in part, by the report’s second recommendation that not only endorses greater use of SMP to provide pastors for congregations facing challenges such as minimal financial resources or geographic isolation but also includes this: “Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in the SMP.” The task force included this final sentence only after receiving firm assurances from the Office of National Mission that financial resources are available and would be provided to aid eligible SMP candidates with demonstrated need. The very same financial commitment is part of Recommendation 3 that affirms and encourages participation in training programs that have been created as vehicles for the theological education of individuals from ethnic and linguistic minority groups. SMP and the cross-cultural programs mentioned in Recommendation 3 are structured along the lines of “on the job training” or, we might also say, extended vicarages, so that individuals can be trained for the Office of the Holy Ministry while remaining in their current location and serving existing congregations and ministries. Currently, no financial aid is available for such men. The recommendations change that, enhancing these programs’ feasibility and appeal.

**Q24. *Does the task force recommend that all trained ecclesiastically supervised licensed lay deacon ministry be phased out by January 2018?***

- A. The answer depends on what aspect of the present practice of licensing lay deacons is referenced. Yes, if the task force recommendations are adopted, by January 2018 there will no longer be licensed lay deacons serving

as *de facto* pastors of congregations, that is, regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments, because these men will have become ordained pastors recognized by the entire Synod.

But does that mean the end of our practice of training lay people for service in the church? No. Those individuals who have completed diaconal training and serve in ways other than preaching and the administration of the Sacraments — over one-third of all deacons — will continue to do so. The task force Recommendations 7 and 8 commend district level programs with the desire for them to continue to prepare lay men and lay women for service in the church to assist pastors and congregations in a variety of ways. We need more, not fewer, lay people trained as leaders, especially in the role of evangelism. Of course, should a man trained locally desire to serve as a pastor, he may apply to one of our residential seminaries, or he may apply to one of our SMP programs for pastoral training in place. In other words, we need more lay leadership training, but if we ask a man to do pastoral work, we need to train him and clearly recognize him as a pastor.

**Q25. *I am a deacon trained in my district and licensed to help my pastor mostly with visitation. He might ask me to preach once or twice a year, but I never preside for the Lord's Supper. I visit sick and shut-ins, and I help with the distribution of Holy Communion. Do the recommendations of the report apply to me? Will I need to colloquize if I want to continue doing what I'm doing in my congregation?***

A. The simple answer is no. Recommendation 1 of the 4-06A Task Force applies specifically to those Licensed Lay Deacons who are functioning as *de facto* pastors of a congregation. That's not what you are doing. Indeed, there are many trained deacons across the Synod for whom the task force's first recommendation does not apply. However, the task force is also recommending that district programs for training lay leaders to assist pastors, particularly in evangelism, are to be encouraged and strengthened (Recommendations 7 and 8).

**Q26. *I am president of a district that has many trained and licensed deacons. The majority of them serve within their congregation under the direct supervision of their pastor to assist the pastor in visitation and teaching Bible study. They rarely preach and never preside for the Supper. We have a few men who do regularly preach and teach and administer the Sacraments under some light supervision from a pastor in the area. How will the recommendations of the task force, if adopted, affect us?***

A. The task force's first recommendation will not affect the majority of deacons who are not doing regular Word and Sacrament ministry and are not serving as pastors of congregations. However, the men in your district who are functioning as pastors will be required, if the task force recommendations are adopted, to do one of the following (by July 1, 2018): apply to one of our seminaries for an alternate route or Master of Divinity; apply to one of the seminaries for the regular SMP program; or apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy in the manner described in the report. It is assumed that most of the men licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry and functioning as *de facto* pastors would take this third option of a special colloquy process to the SMP roster. If a man so licensed does not take one of these options, his license will lapse as of July 1, 2018. It will be the responsibility of the district president to see to it that the requirements adopted by the Synod are carried out.

**Q27. *Can the task force provide specific definitions of emergency and exceptional circumstance?***

A. We must be careful here. Emergencies are exceptional circumstances, by definition. But not all exceptional circumstances are emergencies. (To have a dozen retired pastors in one's congregation is an exceptional circumstance but it is hardly an emergency.) A true emergency is an exceptional circumstance that has dire consequences attached to it. Focusing on emergencies, then, the task force quotes Luther's dictum, "Emergency knows no rule." One cannot get too specific about what is or is not an "emergency" because the word implies unexpected and dire circumstances demanding immediate action. The task force decided that to try to define terms such as emergency (or even exceptional circumstance) would encourage endless debates that would quickly devolve into trivialities. Few would disagree that when a pastor is stricken by an illness Sunday morning, it is necessary for a layman to step in to lead the congregation in his absence. It is both an exceptional circumstance and an emergency. But when the practice of a layman preaching and administering Sacraments has become the rule, it is no longer an "exceptional circumstance" and certainly not an emergency.