

The Augsburg Confession

Talking About Faith with Family and Friends



Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order (see Article XV too)

Discussion: Does it matter to you who leads the worship service and prepares the sermon? Why do you think this is an issue for debate in the Lutheran church? Many churches allow women to lead the worship service, be called as a pastor, preach the sermon, administer the sacraments, read the Gospel, etc. Is this an area in need of reform or should this brief statement of doctrine be strictly interpreted?

"Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called."

Importance: This is currently a controversial issue in the Lutheran church regarding preaching, leading worship, and administering the sacraments. The Augsburg Confession explicitly states that public worship needs to be conducted by a man with a call from a congregation or institution of the Church.

This is a potential problem for congregations without a pastor or when an elder in the congregation conducts the worship service in the absence of the called pastor. The reason for such a doctrinal statement is to assure that the Word is properly taught and that the Sacraments are properly and reverently administered. Although the validity of the Sacrament depends on the faith of the person and not the action or faith of the called pastor, it is important that worship be conducted properly. This is important in times when some Christians are conducting worship in their homes or places away from a church. The teaching of the priesthood of all believers suggests that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ is led by the Holy Spirit in prayer and empowered to speak a statement of witness, provide instruction on God's Word, and administer the sacrament of Baptism in an emergency situation when someone may be dying.

The position of the Roman Catholic Church today allows only for a baptized man as a priest, bishop, or deacon to receive the Holy Orders, administer the sacraments, preach, officiate at a wedding and conduct a funeral mass. Pope Francis I has said this is divine law and that the door is closed for the ordination of women. However, the Roman Catholic Church is discussing the role of women as diaconates.