

ORIENTATION FOR CONGREGATION
MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE
PART 1

A process is underway to initiate a new element to the mission and ministry of Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church. This new element is the creation of a MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE.

Mutual ministry will be featured in the forthcoming Spirit of Joy newsletter. It should be in your email box or USPS mailbox this next week, and will speak of the nuts and bolts of mutual ministry.

As a background for mutual ministry, this morning I want to share with you a theological understanding of ministry. For the sake of the world that God loves, God has entrusted the Gospel to his Church and has given the Church the task of proclaiming the Gospel to all. This “ministry” is, in itself, an act of God’s ongoing activity to reconcile the world to himself through the saving work of his Son.

All the baptized have been entrusted with the Church’s ministry --- to proclaim the Gospel through word and deed --- and are called “ministers of the Gospel”. The Church’s ministry has a universal character. Our Lutheran understanding is that the Church’s priesthood is made up of all believers.

God calls some among the baptized to particular ministry within the Church, including the divinely instituted Office of Word and Sacrament. The Church ordains these persons for this office. Those called to the Office of Word and Sacrament have a threefold task; 1) proclaiming the Gospel to the world (evangelizing, witnessing, serving); and 2) of building up in Christ those who already believe (teaching, exhorting, reproving, and sanctifying, by Word and Sacrament). While it can be said that all the baptized have been called to a ministry of the Gospel; the ordained also have been called to a particular ministry of the Gospel. 3) Effective preaching and the right administration of the sacraments are examples of this third task of the ordained.

It is the whole people of God, however, who have been called to ministry, and, therefore, it is the whole people of God, who are accountable for this ministry. At no time is it possible for Lutherans to suggest that it is the pastor who is solely accountable for the ministry in a congregation or other setting (hospital ministry, prison ministry, church administration, to name a few).

The term “mutual ministry” recognizes that the Church’s ministry is the mutual concern of both the laity and the pastor. It encourages us to move away from a primary focus on the ministry of ordained clergy alone. It includes all the people of God in mutual work of ministry. There is one ministry in Christ, and all baptized people participate in it according to the gifts given to them and the specific ministries entrusted to them.

The model constitution of the ELCA calls for the establishment of a Mutual Ministry Committee in each congregation of the Church. I'll stop at this point and urge you to read the newsletter. I'll speak more about practical matters concerning the MMC on November 11.