5. SEMINARY AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program

RESOLUTION 5-01B

Overtures 5-01–10 (CW, pp. 205–216)

Background

Amidst today’s mission challenges, including the persistent need to provide pastoral ministry in ways that go beyond the current residential models, we will do well to engage the best collaborative thinking and creativity that we can muster to provide missional pastoral leadership driven by the depth of theological integrity that remains a hallmark of our church and its ministerium. The mission focus ignited by the Ablaze! movement has generated the need to identify laymen already in place in a local community to serve as church planters and missionaries. This work will certainly entail Word and Sacrament ministry. Historically, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its antecedents have attempted to meet such needs by preparing men as quickly as possible to be called and ordained in order to meet the urgent mission needs of the church. Such men were prepared to catechize, preach, and provide pastoral care. Within the LCMS, the need for such a track to ordination was initially embodied in the seminary begun by F. C. D. Wyneken and Wilhelm Löhe in Fort Wayne, Indiana. However, developments in ministerial formation since World War II have effectively eliminated this track altogether.

Ministers of religion—ordained will have two designations. “General ministry pastor” will serve as the designation for pastors graduated from a current approved theological education program (e.g., M.Div., Certificate, DELTO), and “specific ministry pastor” will be the designation for those educated for a specific ministry context through distance education. The Specific Ministry Pastor Program seeks to address the needs of the church by reestablishing a multiple-track approach and by developing a program that combines a commitment to faithfulness to a Lutheran theological confession with a missionary perspective and that is tailored to the preparation of men for service in specific kinds of ministries.

Such an effort must attempt in some measure to uphold two significant considerations in the service of our Lord’s mission and Great Commission. On the one hand, we are committed to upholding the Lutheran understanding of the pastor as theologian and insist on as much education as possible for the good of the church. On the other hand, emerging needs and economic pressures often make it impossible to call a pastor who has received a broad and thorough theological education to every congregation or mission station where, nevertheless, people need to hear the Gospel. This proposal is offered as a sincere and thoughtful attempt to address real-world needs with an urgency for bringing the Gospel to a dying world and to do so with theological
integrity with respect to both the doctrine of the ministry and our commitment to high
standards of pastoral education and formation.

Theological Foundations Guiding the Proposal

1. All those who regularly and publicly perform the functions of the Office of the Holy Ministry should do so as those called to and placed into that office. “It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” (AC XIV). As it is true that means of grace, the Gospel and the sacraments, are the rightful possession of all believers in Christ as members of the priesthood of all believers, only the one Office of the Holy Ministry is entrusted with the public exercise of these means. As such, we affirm that only those who are rightly and publicly called and ordained should publicly exercise the functions which are entrusted to this ministry.

2. Lutherans affirm that there is only one Office of the Holy Ministry, established by God for the public conduct of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. However, the church may recognize certain distinctions within that one Office of the Holy Ministry and establish degrees of supervision without undermining the unity of the office.

   a. All those who serve Christ and the church in the Office of the Holy Ministry exercise de iure divino (by divine authority) the power to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, administer the Sacraments, and exercise church discipline. There is no distinction within the one office with respect to this power and authority.

   b. Nevertheless, all ministers serve under supervision. In ancient times, the practice of making certain distinctions within the one Office of the Holy Ministry de iure humano (by human authority) was established so that those ministers with broader and deeper theological understanding should be able to provide doctrinal supervision for less experienced, or less well-prepared, ministers. These distinctions were made to ensure that the Gospel was rightly preached and taught, and to preserve the unity of the church.

   c. By the time of the Reformation, the common way of talking about such distinctions within the Office of the Holy Ministry was to speak of the differentiation between the power (or authority) associated with the Office of the Holy Ministry and the jurisdiction (or scope of the administration) of the office.

3. The church may establish, by human authority, distinctions in jurisdiction and in categories of service of its pastors so long as these distinctions do not compromise the authority of the office, undermine the Gospel, or burden the consciences of Christians by confusing human regulations with divine commands.
4. Ordination vows may be taken prior to the conclusion of a complete course of study provided that the ordained has received a preparation sufficient to preach and teach the Gospel rightly, administer the Sacraments correctly, and take his vows with integrity.

5. The church should provide the opportunity for a pastor who has been certified and ordained to serve in a specific kind of ministry subsequently to be prepared to serve the church more broadly through a combination of further academic preparation, accumulated pastoral experience, and examination.

Overview of the “Specific Ministry Pastor” Program

The student will take a core curriculum so as to acquire a foundational competency in Lutheran theology for pastoral ministry. This foundational core will be both contextualized and specialized within and for a specific ministry. In addition to the original objective of the Distance Education Leading To Ordination (DELTO) Program to provide pastoral ministry where full-time ministry cannot be maintained, such specific ministries will include such categories as church planter, staff pastor, and others as needs arise.

1. The specific curriculum will be determined and developed by the seminary faculties, in collaboration with those from the field who represent the specific ministerial contexts at district and congregation levels. It will be based on the following principles: Curricular goals based on outcome competencies appropriate to the stages of the program

2. The contextual nature of this educational model, which includes experiential learning within a mission context

3. The engagement of supervisors/mentors by the seminary in consultation with the district president as a critical element of the distance education model

4. A combination of distance education and residential components (likely through short-term seminars and the option to take courses within the residential curriculum)

5. The potential applicability of coursework for academic credit towards an M. Div.

6. A time frame for completion of approximately 4–5 years

The Specific Ministry Pastor Program will be divided into a pre-ordination curriculum and a post-ordination curriculum. The pre-ordination curriculum will equip the student in such a way that the church has confidence that the student will preach the Gospel in its truth and purity and conduct his ministry in conformity with Lutheran doctrine and practice. In order to do this, the pre-ordination curriculum will address such basic competencies as *Catechism, interpretation of Scripture, God and Christ and the work of Christ, the Sacraments, introduction to the Book of Concord, the conduct of worship, and preaching.*
The post-ordination curriculum will address these topics in greater depth and
detail and will include such topics as *OT content and theology, NT content and theology,
gifts of Christ, body of Christ, Church history and the history of Lutheranism, Christian
education, pastoral theology, and theology of missions.*

In addition, the student will participate in several residential and field seminars
aimed at cultivating the requisite ministry skills for his specific ministry context (e.g.,
church planters, staff pastors, and evangelists).

- Possible residential seminars might include *pastoral formation, issues in
  pastoral ministry, team ministry, urban ministry, spiritual formation.*
- Possible field seminars might include *basic mission planter training, edge
gathering, and advanced mission planter training.*

The Specific Ministry Pastor Program will utilize selected mentors in the
preparation of a man for pastoral ministry with an emphasis on the area of spiritual
formation.

**Step 1: Preparation for and Admission to the Program**

The identification of an applicant will be carried out by the congregation and
district through a comprehensive screening process.

For entry into the program, a student will need to show that he possesses the
requisite social skills and passion for theology and mission, as well as demonstrating the
specific skills and competence needed to be successful in a distance-education program.

For entry into the program, a student will need to pass the Entry Level
Competency Exams (ELCEs) in the areas of OT, NT, and Catechism/Christian Doctrine.
Preparation for the ELCEs may be accomplished by taking the corresponding district-
level courses, Concordia University System or seminary-offered courses. In addition,
other courses within a district’s lay training program may be helpful, such as courses on
evangelizing and catechizing. All students will need to demonstrate competency to
engage the program in the English language and in public speaking.

Based upon completion of the above requirements and with recommendations
from congregation and district, the student’s application will be presented to the
admissions committee of the seminary for action. As part of the application process, each
student, sponsoring congregation, and district will sign a covenant of commitment to
complete the entire specific ministry pastor curriculum, including all coursework and
seminars following examination and ordination.

**Step 2: Pre-Ordination Curriculum**

Upon entrance into the Specific Ministry Pastor Program, the student will be
assigned as a vicar in a specific locality but normally will not be authorized to administer
the Sacraments. He will preach sermons prepared in collaboration with and approved by
his supervisor. At this point, he will participate in courses and seminars comparable to those offered to residential seminary students designed to prepare him in the following areas:

• *Catechism, hermeneutical principles, God and Christ, work of Christ, the Sacraments, Worship, the Book of Concord, and preaching*

• *Possible residential seminars: intro to pastoral formation; issues in pastoral ministry*

• *Possible field seminars: basic mission planter training, etc.*

**Step 3: Certification/Call/Ordination**

After demonstrating competence in the pre-ordination areas, the student must apply for an examination hearing by the seminary in order to be certified for call and ordination. Each student will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The examination hearing shall include a review of the student’s portfolio, vicarage reports, an interview by the faculty, and recommendations by the district president and circuit counselor.

After call and ordination according to the usual order, the student is placed on the pastoral roster of the Synod as a “specific ministry pastor.” He now may preach and administer the Sacraments under supervision in a specific locality.

**Step 4: Post-Call and Ordination Curriculum**

Upon call and ordination, the student shall complete the remainder of the Specific Ministry Pastor Program. The following areas are intended to continue development of the foundational competencies necessary for serving as a specific ministry pastor:

• *OT content and theology, NT content and theology, gifts of Christ, Body of Christ, Church history and the history of Lutheranism, Christian education, pastoral theology, and theology of missions*

• *Residential seminars, possibly including pastoral formation, issues in pastoral ministry, team ministry, urban ministry, and spiritual formation*

• *Field seminars, possibly including basic mission planter training, edge gathering, and advanced mission planter training*

Refusal to complete the Specific Ministry Pastor Program would result in the pastor’s removal from the Synod roster, at which point he is not eligible for a call.

**Step 5: Completion of the Specific Ministry Pastor Program**

Upon completion of the program, the candidate is examined by a committee of faculty, laity, and district representatives in order to be recognized as eligible for calls elsewhere within his rostered status. Apart from the usual need for continuing education, he is not required to take any further prescribed course of studies (but see below).

Specific ministry pastors are recognized as just that: pastors certified for calls into specific ministry contexts, who serve under the supervision not only of the district
president but also of a designated general ministry pastor. As such, they are eligible for calls into a similar specific ministry context, where they continue under the supervision of a general ministry pastor.

Because their theological education is formed within the context of their specific ministry and does not represent the breadth and depth of theology and ecclesiology that forms a basis for pastoral oversight beyond the local level, they may not be placed into ecclesiastical roles of exercising pastoral oversight outside the location of their specific call (i.e., in the church-at-large), such as

a. holding elected or appointed office at the district or Synod level that is assigned by the Bylaws to “a pastor” (though they will serve in all other capacities, especially representing the ministerial contexts in which they serve);
b. serving as circuit counselors;
c. serving as a voting delegate to a national Synod convention (but they may serve as an advisory delegate at national conventions and as a pastoral delegate at district conventions); and
d. supervising vicars.

Step 6: Continued Service and Status

Students who have completed the Specific Ministry Pastor Program may decide to remain in their rostered status as “specific ministry pastor” for the remainder of their ministry or they may choose to pursue a growth path that leads to a change in roster status to “general ministry pastor.” It is envisioned that most students will pursue the second path, either through an M. Div. route or nondegree certification. Thus, they have three options:

1. They may remain rostered as a specific ministry pastor.
2. They may enroll in an M. Div. program. It is anticipated that coursework done for the Specific Ministry Pastor Program may become applicable to an M. Div., determined by equivalencies.
3. They may continue their theological education and pastoral formation, reaching a level appropriate to general ministry pastor without a full M. Div. (cf. current “alternate route”) and then complete an interview with an examining board in order to have their rostered status changed to “general ministry pastor.”
Resolution

WHEREAS, The DELTO Oversight Committee was formed by the 2001 convention and given the task “to revise DELTO”; and

WHEREAS, This oversight committee concluded that original assignment, and a revised DELTO Program was deployed by the two seminaries in the fall of 2004; and

WHEREAS, The original and ongoing intent of DELTO was to “provide ordained pastoral service to congregations that cannot support a full-time pastor, ordained pastoral service to contexts where English is not spoken, ordained missionary personnel where finances and/or conditions do not permit calling a full-time missionary” (BHE document, “What Is DELTO?” Sept. 2000); and

WHEREAS, The needs for providing pastoral ministry in specific and specialized situations where a traditionally prepared seminary candidate or pastor is not available continue to multiply; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod needs to find a way to provide for an increase in pastoral ministry to meet such needs of the church, especially in light of the mission challenges of today’s world; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod has resolved to plant 2,000 new congregations by 2017, for which a net gain of 2,000 pastors will be needed; and

WHEREAS, Any way of providing for pastoral ministry must be faithful to our Lutheran Confessions, faithful to our historic commitment to a well-educated and well-formed ministerium, faithful to our historic commitment to provide pastors in both academic and practical tracks, and faithful to our historic commitment to provide pastoral ministry and leadership at the cutting edges of the mission fields, wherever they might be; and

WHEREAS, All those who regularly and publicly perform the functions of the Office of the Holy Ministry should do so as those called to and placed into that office because “It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” (AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, A variety of programs and routes leading to pastoral service have arisen at both district and seminary levels; and

WHEREAS, The DELTO Oversight Committee, after concluding its original assignment, was given the further assignment by the President of Synod to “study the various routes leading to ordination currently available, to study which routes leading to ordination would be most helpful to the Synod in producing a sufficient number of able and effective pastors to provide leadership to Synod’s congregations in fulfilling the Great Commission”; and
WHEREAS, In carrying out this further task, it was apparent that
a. the existing focus of DELTO, even as it was redesigned and redeployed, would
not be sufficient to meet these needs;
b. the Synod would benefit from a more coherent and comprehensive approach to
pastoral preparation and certification for ministry in specialized and specific
contexts;
c. the past years have provided the church, in general, and the seminaries, in
particular, with substantial experimentation and experience with distance-
education models, including the evaluation of both the advantages and
disadvantages; and
d. the Synod is presented with an opportunity to build on such experience and to
coordinate and consolidate programs and curriculum into a more cohesive and
comprehensive curriculum design that engages the best practices of educational
design and pedagogy, including much of the current course materials already
proven and in use; and

WHEREAS, The process of conversation and collaboration over the past six years
has brought together representatives of the needs of the field with the entities of the
Synod to whom leadership for pastoral education and certification is entrusted, and in so
doing provided a helpful model for continuing such collaborative work; and

WHEREAS, Both seminaries have provided leadership in this process and
worked together on written documents affirming the need for a new category within the
one office of the pastoral ministry and in affirming an educational process that will lead
to certification and ordination for such pastoral ministry, utilizing both traditional
residential components along with new distance education models; and

WHEREAS, The DELTO Oversight Committee in seeking to fulfill its further
task has
a. worked closely with both seminaries in honing a proposal for a category of
   specific ministry pastor, and an education and formation program that will lead
to certification and ordination for such pastoral ministry; and has
b. worked closely also with many other constituencies throughout the church in
developing this proposal, including the Board for Pastoral Education, the
   Council of Presidents, district and Synod mission leaders, and pastors in the
   field;

and

WHEREAS, The great strengths of this proposal bring together several issues that
have concerned our Synod for many years as it seeks to
a. find a way to meet the existing and expanding needs for pastoral ministry,
especially in the variety of contexts of mission and ministry in today’s church;
b. respect our commitment to the doctrine of church and ministry, especially in
light of AC XIV;
c. honor our commitment to responsible theological education that provides the
church with well-educated pastors, who as missional leaders are faithful to
Lutheran theology and practice;
d. retain our commitment to the importance, need, and great strengths of
residential pastoral education at both the certificate and M.Div. level, along
with a commitment to the continuing education of all clergy;
e. restore our past creativity in recognizing the importance, need, and great
strengths of alternative models of pastoral education leading to ordination,
including a commitment to continuing education;
f. utilize the advances in educational technology that allow for responsible
pastoral education and formation through distance-education models; and
g. develop a more coherent and comprehensive model for pastoral education by
which various routes leading to certification, call, and ordination are
coordinated and potentially interrelated, so that, for example, a student in a
nonresidential certificate route might be able to engage also in a residential
degree program;

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor Program has the support of the Board
for Pastoral Education, the faculties of both seminaries, and the Council of Presidents;
and

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor Program has been reviewed by the
Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and was found to be consistent with
Scripture and the Confessions; and

WHEREAS, As the Commission on Constitutional Matters has issued opinions
07-2499 and 07-2500 that no changes to Synod’s Constitution are required should this
resolution be adopted; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Specific Ministry Pastor Program be adopted in principle and
the seminaries, Board for Pastoral Education, and Council of Presidents be authorized to
implement it; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw sections 2.13 and 2.14 of the Handbook of the Synod be
amended accordingly, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

(A) Change the title of Bylaw section 2.13 to read as follows:

2.13 Restricting, Suspending, and Expelling Congregations or Individuals
from Membership


Membership Status and Limitations

(B) Incorporate current Bylaws 2.13.1 and 2.13.2 into Bylaw 2.14.1 as follows:

- Current Bylaw 2.13.1 becomes Bylaw 2.14.1
- Current Bylaw 2.13.2 becomes Bylaw 2.14.1 (a)
- Current Bylaw 2.14.1 becomes Bylaw 2.14.1 (b)

The early paragraphs of Bylaw section 2.14 therefore read as follows:

2.14 Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod

Preamble

2.13.1

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 Article II or the conditions of membership laid down in Article 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.

General

2.13.2

a. Although the Constitution (see Art. VI 3 and Art. XII 7–8) deals with the “life” of ordained and commissioned ministers of the Synod and provides for dealing with “ungodly life” or ordained and commissioned ministers, this does not suggest that the Synod, including any district of the Synod, has the duty or even an opportunity to observe the activities in the life of an individual member of the Synod or has the means or authority to regulate, restrict, or control those activities. The only remedy available to the Synod in response to improper activities in the life of such a member of the Synod is, as is true with
respect to violations of other conditions of membership or is otherwise
appropriate under the Constitution or these Bylaws, and following the
procedures set forth in these Bylaws, to take such action as may lead to
termination of that membership and the attendant rights and privileges.

2.14.1
b. The action to commence expulsion of a congregation or individual from
membership in the Synod is the sole responsibility of the district president
who has the responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision of such member. This
Bylaw section 2.14, among others, provides the procedures to carry out
Article XIII of the Constitution, “Expulsion from the Synod.” However, it
does not provide the procedure for the expulsion of the district presidents and
the officers of the Synod (Bylaw section 2.15), the President of the Synod
(Bylaw section 2.16), or individual members in cases involving sexual
misconduct or criminal behavior (Bylaw section 2.17).

(C) Add a new section at the beginning of Bylaw section 2.13 to define a “specific
ministry pastor” and the limitations on membership privileges and responsibilities
that pertain, as follows:

Specific Ministry Pastor Status and Limitations

2.13.1 A “specific ministry pastor” is a minister of religion—ordained who has
completed the requirements for service as a specific ministry pastor and has been
examined by one of the Synod’s seminaries, has received a regular call and has
been placed by the Council of Presidents into a specific Word and Sacrament
ministry context. He is eligible to serve only in that specific ministry context for
which he has been trained and may not be offered or accept a call for ministry for
which he has not been certified as determined by his district president. He shall
serve under the supervision of his district president and another pastor who is not
a specific ministry pastor.
(a) Because he is under supervision of another pastor and because a specific
ministry pastor’s theological education has been formed in part by and for a
specific ministry context, he may not be placed or called into ecclesiastical roles
that exercise pastoral oversight outside the location of his call.
(b) A specific ministry pastor is not eligible to
(1) serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod—but may
serve as an advisory delegate to national conventions and as a pastoral delegate to
district conventions;
(2) hold any elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level that
is assigned by the Bylaws of the Synod to “a pastor” (although specific ministry
pastors may serve in all other capacities, especially representing the ministerial
contexts in which they serve);
(3) supervise vicars; or
(4) serve as a circuit counselor.
(c) The ministers of religion–ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the official membership roster of the Synod shall distinguish between specific ministry pastors and other pastors.

(D) Change the titles and bylaw numbering of subsequent paragraphs of Bylaw section 2.13 to accommodate the introduction of the “specific ministry pastor status and limitations” paragraphs, as follows:

Restricted Status and Limitations

2.13.3
2.13.2 An individual member of the Synod may be placed…

Removal of Restricted Status and Limitations

2.13.4
2.13.3 An individual member of the Synod who is placed…

Suspended Status and Limitations

2.13.5
2.13.4 When formal proceedings have been commenced…

(E) Change Bylaw 3.1.3.1 to read:

3.1.3.1 Each district shall select one advisory delegate for every 60 advisory ordained ministers and specific ministry pastors, and one advisory delegate for every 60 commissioned ministers on the roster of the Synod. Fractional groupings shall be disregarded except that each district shall be entitled to at least one advisory delegate in each category;

and be it further

Resolved, That the DELTO Oversight Committee be renamed the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee be placed under the supervision of the Board for Pastoral Education; and be it further

Resolved, That the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee develop comprehensive guidelines that are consistent with the theological foundations, educational expectations, rostering process, training of mentors and supervising pastors, and membership limitations intended for this Specific Ministry Pastor Program, and be it finally

Resolved, That the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee submit a progress report to the Synod at least nine months prior to the 2010 convention.