A Presentation of Lay Leadership and Teaching in the History of the Early Church and the Lutheran Church to the Present Time

This effort has been prompted by questions concerning the “proper” role of the laity in church leadership, particularly in the area of teaching. I view the clergy/laity to be one of historical partnership, each having its proper and defined role based on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. It is unfortunate that some have come up with different definitions of this relationship which either restrict the working relationship, or make the relationships almost interchangeable. Both extremes infringe on the proper exercise of vocation. Further, this paper will most likely not change anyone’s mind in this matter, but hopefully it will provide a fair and balanced approach to the surrounding issues and prevent someone from falling into one of the extremes.

The two ends of the question have been answered in practical terms by those that adhere to the “every man is a minister” theology on one end of the scale, to those who maintain that the laity cannot teach religious topics publicly, as being solely the function of an ordained and called minister. The Augsburg Confession Article XIV being the cited reference in the later instance. The other end of the question is not germane to the question, so it will not be addressed.

The early church is the obvious place to start, with the Lutheran Reformation also being a significant data point. Three questions need to be addressed, and they are all intertwined with the starting point.

1. What is the correct historic interpretation of Article XIV?
2. What laymen held leadership roles down through history from the early church through the Reformation period and up to modern times? (When dealing with historical reviews it should be noted that if the people were important and held dominate positions they may have been mentioned, otherwise, not at all.)
3. In addition to public leadership on behalf of the church, which of these individuals also publicly taught religious topics, lectured, etc.?

In starting the research on this presentation I have used the Internet, plus several references published by CPH and a few Pastor friends who have been kind enough to make contributions to this effort. Investigations, such as this one, must look at several sources to put together a mosaic of the people and events, because not all references totally agree with each other. I have used what sources are available to me, which reflect the available views, if there is a conflicting view I use the majority view. I will also deal with the first question last, as the proper context must be developed before the question is answered. In fact, context is an important point to remember because we tend to see history from our current context, not the context that was in play at the time of the events under discussion.

Another critical issue, though not really a part of the original effort, is to address the historical treatment of those non-clergy professional church workers who have been
called to serve full time in the Lord’s vineyard, as distinguished from those who have not. Another way to pose that point could be, “When is a layman a professional layman (commissioned, etc.) and when is the layman an “ordinary layman?” That question will have to be answered by someone having a higher grade level than mine, as there does not seem to be consistent agreement, particularly in these times about this important question. It is a question of everybody not fitting neatly into distinct boxes and somehow I think the Lord never intended that to be so. Thus for the purposes of this presentation I will refer to three classes of people, clergy, professional church workers (technically layman), and ordinary laymen. Professional church workers consist of many job descriptions, but for our purposes in this presentation I will speak primarily of those who are professors of theology and teachers in K-12 and college positions.

The Early Church

In the early church Tertullian of Carthage (c. 160 - 225) is a good example of a teaching layman, who also wrote extensively on theological topics, and served essentially as an early theologian. It would appear from one source that laymen of such talent held the title of Master, or Master Teacher. (It is about this time when the term clergy and layman came into use.) There are some who say he was a deacon, while others say he was a teacher first and later became a deacon. Jerome says that he became a clergyman at some point, and the Encyclopedia of Early Christianity states he became a presbyter, which was an ordained position. What was the sequence of events seems to be the issue. Later in life, he was expelled from the Church for his attributed beliefs, with some sources saying it was unjustly done….a pattern that later developed into more draconian methods for dealing with those who irritated the early church.

Pantaenus was a Stoic philosopher teaching in Alexandria. He converted to the Christian faith, and sought to reconcile his new faith with Greek philosophy. His most famous student was Clement (Alexandria), who was his successor as head of the Catechetical School, described by Pantaenus as "the Sicilian bee"[2]. Although no writings by Pantaenus are extent,[3] his legacy is known by the influence of the Alexandria Catechetical School on the development of Christian theology, in particular in the early debates on the interpretation of the Bible, the Trinity, and Christology. He was the main supporter of Serapion of Antioch for acting against the influence of Gnosticism. Generally it says Serapion of Antioch appointed him as a missionary of India. This another case of moving from being a lay theologian, most likely a Deacon, to that of priest. Note that the title of Teacher or Master Teacher was a call to an office. The person called to that office could be either lay (likely a Deacon) or clergy, in our terminology. It is interesting to note that a very similar practice arose during the Reformation. (Wikipedia) “That he was a priest may be inferred—not indeed from his headship of a school, for Origen was a layman, but—from the fact that he was sent by his bishop to evangelize India." (The point here is that being head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria did not imply that one was either a clergyman or a layman since the position title was Master Teacher. The best available man had the job in an era of harsh persecution from the Roman Empire.)
Origen succeeded Clement as the head of the Catechetical School after Clement fled due to persecution. Origen initially was a layman, and he was the first systematic theologian and philosopher of the Christian Church. Origen was, according to Eusebius, “not quite seventeen” when Septimius Severus’ persecution of the Christians began “in the tenth year of [his] reign,” (Ecclesiastical History; tr. Williamson, p. 179) which gives the approximate date of Origen’s birth as 185/6 C.E. He was ordained later into the office of presbyter (See Fathers of the Third Century: Ante- Nicene Fathers, vol. 4, p. 227.) He died around the reign of Gallus, which places his death in 254/5 C.E. Origen lived during a turbulent period of the Roman Empire, when the barbarian invasions were sweeping across Europe, threatening the stability of the Roman Empire. His was also a time of periodic persecution against Christians, notably during the reigns of the Emperors Severus, Maximin, and Decius, so that Origen’s life began and ended with persecution.

Origen was an innovator in an era when innovation, for Christians, was a luxury ill afforded. He drew upon pagan philosophy in an effort to elucidate the Christian faith in a manner acceptable to intellectuals, and he succeeded in converting many gifted pagan students of philosophy to his faith. He was also a great humanist, who believed that all creatures will eventually achieve salvation, including the devil himself. Origen did not embrace the dualism of Gnosticism, nor that of the more primitive expressions of the Christian faith still extant in his day. Rather, he took Christianity to a higher level, finding in it a key to the perfection of the intellect or mind, which is what all souls are in their pure form. The restoration of all souls to a purely intellectual existence was Origen’s faith, and his philosophy was based upon such a faith. In this, he is an heir to Socrates and Plato, but he also brought a new conception into philosophy – that of the creative aspect of the soul, as realized in history, the culmination of which is salvation, after which follows an eternal delving into the deep mysteries of God. Internet (Encyclopedia of Philosophy) Luther did not think highly of his teachings and thought him a heretic, according to one source.

Justin Martyr was born in Flavia Neapolis, a city of Samaria, the modern Nablous. The date of his birth is uncertain, but may be considered to be around the end of the first, beginning of the second, century. His father and grandfather were probably of Roman origin. Before his conversion to Christianity he studied in the schools of the philosophers, searching after some knowledge which should satisfy the cravings of his soul. At last he became acquainted with Christianity, being at once impressed with the extraordinary fearlessness which the Christians displayed in the presence of death, and with the grandeur, stability, and truth of the teachings of the Old Testament. From this time he acted as an evangelist, taking every opportunity to proclaim the gospel as the only safe and certain philosophy, the only way to salvation. It is probable that he traveled much, probably as a Christian missionary, but he never became a clergyman. We know that he was some time in Ephesus, and he must have lived for a considerable period in Rome. Probably he settled in Rome as a Christian teacher. While he was there, the philosophers, especially the Cynics, plotted against him, and he sealed his testimony to the truth by martyrdom. (Crosswalk.com)
“As in the case of Justin, we believe that the function of didaskalos or “catechetical teacher” was sufficient of itself and that this function did not require confirmation by any form of “ordination.”” (The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church. page 53)

There is no evidence that Justin was a public teacher in the sense of others mentioned above, or that he was called to be an evangelist. Perhaps an active layman on steroids would be a more appropriate definition.

**Britannica Concise Encyclopedia: theology**

Study of the nature of God and the relationship of the human and divine. The term was first used in the works of Plato and other Greek philosophers to refer to the teaching of myth, but the discipline expanded within Christianity and has found application in all theistic religions (see theism). It examines doctrines concerning such subjects as sin, faith, and grace and considers the terms of God's covenant with humankind in matters such as salvation and eschatology. Theology typically takes for granted the authority of a religious teacher or the validity of a religious experience. It is distinguished from philosophy in being concerned with justifying and explicating a faith, rather than questioning the underlying assumptions of such faith, but it often employs quasi-philosophical methods.

**New Oxford American Dictionary: theologian**

Is “a person who engages or is an expert in theology.” Theology is, according to the same source, “a study of the nature of God and religious belief.” Thus anyone who studies these topics is by definition a “theologian.”

Note that ordination is not a requirement to be a theologian, but what a blessing to the church if we had more laymen who were expert in this field.

Read more: [http://www.answers.com/topic/theology#ixzz1AObiGXPy](http://www.answers.com/topic/theology#ixzz1AObiGXPy)

In looking at the second question the personality that stands out most during the Reformation is Philipp Melanchthon, who, in the early days of the Reformation was Luther’s assistant, usually serving as the secretary of drafting groups, etc., and sometimes serving as a presenter of Lutheran theology. He also taught religious courses at Wittenberg University, and authored several important Reformation documents. Here are some facts on Melanchthon taken from several resources on the Internet, mostly from the Philipp Melanchthon 500th Anniversary Exhibit:

1. In 1518, the twenty-one-year-old Melanchthon was recommended by Johannes Reuchlin to Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony for the new chair of Greek literature at the elector's Wittenberg University (founded in 1502). On August 28 he gave his first lecture on "reforming the instruction of the youth." It was the beginning of a lifelong association for Melanchthon with the university. In addition to Greek, Melanchthon was fluent in Latin, as every professor was at the time.
2. In September 1519 he was granted his first degree in theology: *baccalaureus biblicus*. Melanchthon turned out to be a popular lecturer. And Luther, who was fourteen years his senior, recognized Melanchthon's remarkable abilities. The University of Wittenberg taught many subjects, including theology, and all professors took vows. That is noted in the following quote from *The Greatest Century of Reformation*, by Dr. Peter Hammond “In 1512, Martin Luther received his doctoral degree and took the traditional vow on becoming a professor at Wittenberg University to faithfully teach and defend the Scriptures.”

According to one historian the teachers of theology at the university all belonged to the same guild and as such took the same vows regardless of being clergy or lay. (I have searched for a copy of those vows but so far have not been successful. However that vow, or one very similar, can be seen and heard when Martin Luther received his doctorate of theology in the original black and white Luther film.) In the teaching guilds of the 15th & 16th centuries the basic teaching certificate was a Master of the Arts degree, to which was added specialties in various topics.

3. Melanchthon also became involved in the administration of the Wittenberg University. In 1523-24 and 1538 he was rector. In 1535-36 and 1546-48 he was dean of the philosophical faculty. Beginning in 1555 Melanchthon gave lectures in world history. The resulting work was later published under another name.

4. Beginning in 1519, Melanchthon was to spend the rest of his life studying and defending the Evangelical theology of the Reformation. In June of that same year he and Luther accompanied another Wittenberg theologian, Andreas Karlstadt, to Leipzig, to debate with a Roman Catholic theologian sent by the Pope named Dr. Johannes Eck (a German name that also means "corner"). While he did not formally take part in the debate, Melanchthon is said to have written little notes to Luther giving biblical passages that contradicted the Pope's claim to preeminence. This advice irritated Eck. Luther later commented, "In my teaching profession I do not respect anything more than Philipp's advice. This man's judgment and his authority are worth more to me than all dirty Ecks (corners)."

5. While Dr. Luther was hidden at the Wartburg castle (because of the imperial ban against him after the Diet at Worms), Philipp Melanchthon took over his lectures on the Scriptures. This marked the beginning of a time of great productivity for Melanchthon. (From the Philipp Melanchthon 500th Anniversary Exhibit). (Note that Melanchthon was high in the administration of the university and right after Martin Luther returned to lecturing, Melanchthon held the position of Rector.)

6. Luther was the prophet among the Wittenberg theologians. He worked endlessly on the evangelical theology. But that gave him little time to systematize its various doctrines. In 1521 Melanchthon took on this task, writing the first summary of evangelical theology titled *Loci communes rerum theologicae*. Luther was enthusiastic about the book and recommended it as essential reading to understand the Reformation theology of Wittenberg.
7. In Oct 1-5, 1529, Luther and Melanchthon participated in the Colloquy of Marburg where agreement was sought with Zwingli and his followers. The two of them were the principal speakers for the Lutheran side. Agreement was reached on 14 of the 15 articles, with the failure being over the true presence of the Lord’s Supper.

8. *Augsburg Confession*. Earlier documents, including the Schwabach and Torgau Articles, were used. It was also determined that the Lutherans did not want to be identified with other opponents of the Roman Church. The document was to include agreements along with differences. Under the preparation of Philipp Melanchthon and the consultation of Dr. Martin Luther, who was not present in Augsburg, the Confession was completed and signed by seven princes and the representatives of two free cities and delivered to the emperor on June 25, 1530. Note that the signing and the presentation of the Augsburg Confession were by committed laymen of the Reformation. (Luther was not present due to the ban on his life, but he was in constant contact with those at Augsburg during the many weeks the Diet lasted. He approved of what was presented.)

9. The Book of Concord includes one of Melanchthon’s singular writings titled *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, one of our confessional documents. According to the Preface for this document the clergy entrusted him to write it. He authored several other confessional documents, but not totally by himself.

10. Luther had at one time requested Melanchthon to start work on the catechisms but for some reason he did not, so Luther did it himself.

11. Melanchthon’s production of the *Altered Augsburg Confession* in 1540 was considered by many as a betrayal of Lutheran doctrine, principally in the area of the Lord’s Supper. The second sad story in Philipp Melanchthon’s life is that of the Interims. After Luther’s death, Emperor Charles V invaded Germany (1546) and attacked those lands that had accepted the Reformation. He forced on the people a document called the Leipzig Interim. This document was to settle the controversy between the Roman Church and the Evangelicals during an interim period until a church council could be held. The document was so severe against Lutheranism that a revision was necessary. Philipp Melanchthon, who was a leader of the reformation and often served as its scribe, publicly rejected the Leipzig Interim. He, along with other leaders from Wittenberg, took on the task of revising the document and in November 1548 they produced the Augsburg Interim. It only brought with it much trouble for the followers of Luther.

12. In 1553 Maurice of Saxony betrayed the Emperor, turned on him, and expelled him from Germany. Yet Melanchthon was never to recover from his participation in the Interims and the criticism for compromising the Lutheran positions that it brought. Ironically, his open discussions with the Reformed were also to bring similar accusations of betrayal to that camp. Much of the descent can be
attributed to the compromising style of his writings, which could be interpreted by others to support opposing views. Sadly, it seems that Melanchthon not only did not satisfy those whom he worked hardest to please; but he never satisfied himself. (These compromising actions were in conflict with the vows he had made earlier as a professor of Scripture at the university. Melanchthon was a Lutheran Theologian and taught religious classes to students who could be considered the Lutheran seminary of its time.) Another clergy reformer who made more compromises than Melanchthon was Bucer.

13. Many times Melanchthon played the part of compromiser between two contending views, seeking unity above principal. Whatever your views on him, all must accord him his due for the part he played, especially in the early years of the Reformation.

Was Melanchthon an anomaly (deviation or departure from the normal or common order.), or was he a peer of other professional laymen in the past, or to come? If you say he was an anomaly then he was an anomaly allowed to exist because of his many talents and his friendship with Luther and other reformers. Can you say that Luther would have compromised his beliefs for the sake of Melanchthon, his friend, while at the same time being deeply involved in the preparation and discussion leading up to the presentation of the Augsburg Confession that included Article XIV? This article was concerned with Order in the Church, who would preach and teach in the Divine Service, not who could teach in other venues. I hope to answer that question by the end of this presentation.

Note that Melanchthon not only taught what other clergy had prepared, but was also preparing theological materials on his own in classes at the university, not in church. Review and oversight was common for all the documentation he prepared can be fairly well attributed. There is much in the record to indicate he was teaching adults, theology students and future Lutheran pastors, at the university.

Certainly we see in the case of Melanchthon, and others that followed, where this is true. He taught Scripture to seminarians, but did not preach it or speak it in Divine Services as this was not covered by his guild (context again). Others, who were clergy, were empowered to do this, as well as teach at the university. For whatever the reason, Melanchthon did not become ordained as his vocation was teacher and administrator.

Luther Quotes

Additional points can be found in "What Luther Says" In 706 He says “the one High Priest Christ (Heb. 5:5f., 8, 9), who gives them an anointing a priestly consecration of another kind, namely, the Holy Spirit, who gloriously and purely graces and clothes them with His power and gifts (2 Cor. 1:21 f.)” Here I would suggest that Luther is speaking of what one does in his/her vocation, and there is no argument among theologians about that. In 3835, referencing Proverbs 3:7 he states “does not want us to be self-taught or taught by any man, by reason or opinion, but by God, our Lord, alone.” “He himself
wants to be the Light and Master so that our faith in divine matters may without fail be pure and unadulterated." Original languages are needed to do this in the way God intended, because there is not a word for word correspondence between Hebrew or Greek and English. Much of the meaning of any text is found in the original words (in their context and also where they are used elsewhere in Scripture) and without those resources one is relying on man's interpretation. By the way, Melanchthon was well trained (although primarily in Greek), but the average laymen peasant of this time had little to no training. Also, it is important that we not separate ourselves from the Church's historical treatment of a text lest we ignore the work of the Spirit in generations past.

I believe this is the reason Luther reminds us to pray for wisdom and discernment before we read the Bible, even before private devotions. It would be dangerous to say that God only teaches the clergy, since the He is speaking of all priests in Luther's 706 quoted above.

Also in this book we find several paragraphs on teachers, as set apart from preachers. The context of these paragraphs is the teaching of children, publicly, by consecrated laymen. Luther held the vocation of teaching in high regard and necessary for the upbringing of the young. See pages 1337 and 1338 for those paragraphs, which uphold Luther's honorific view of the vocation of the teacher and in no wise confuse the office of pastor with those vocations.

Another Luther quote on teaching is: "Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer." This quote points to the need for Christians to speak of God's blessings and salvation, the need to lead a Christian life, etc., within their vocations. [Please note this proviso.] This is a strong argument both for parents to instruct their children in the catechism, and for laymen to be involved in catechetical instruction when they are commissioned to do so.

One more important player of the early days was Johannes Bugenhagen, a pastor from Pommerania who migrated to Wittenberg, essentially to follow Luther. The two of them became fast friends, soul mates as some say. They thought very much alike, yet brought different sets of skills to the Reformation. If you are wondering what he might have to do with the questions at hand I beg your patience for a time. Now some facts:

1. Bugenhagen first encountered the theology of Luther in the reformer's Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church in 1520. At first he did not like Luther's thoughts at all. However, once he had studied it more, Bugenhagen became a supporter of the Reformation and moved to Wittenberg, arriving shortly before Luther departed to attend the Diet of Worms, in April 1521.
2. It was most likely Melanchthon who was chiefly responsible for the fact that Bugenhagen was added to the teaching staff of the university, as he would have had to be in a leadership position to become the Rector two years later.

3. Bugenhagen soon became one of the most effective reformers. Besides his job as the parish pastor in Wittenberg (after 1523), and personal counselor of Luther, he also lectured in theology at the university in Wittenberg (today Martin Luther University). (Note that being parish pastor in Wittenberg means he was the pastor at St. Mary’s Lutheran Church in Wittenberg, the city church.)

4. In 1533 he was awarded his Doctorate of Theology.

5. Other than for his theological opinions, Bugenhagen also became well-known because of his organizing ability. Not only did he create the new rules, he also established them and convinced people to follow them. Bugenhagen produced rules and regulations for religious service, for schooling, and for social issues of the church. In 1539, he became superintendent of the Church in Saxony.

6. During the Smacaldic Wars (1546-47) Bugenhagen stayed in Wittenberg and continued to preach at St. Mary’s. Most of the other reformers fled the town, including Lucas Cranach (The Elder), who accompanied the Elector into exile in Austria.

7. Johannes Bugenhagen died in Wittenberg in 1558.

In the later days of Bugenhagen’s life something interesting happened at St. Mary’s Lutheran Church in Wittenberg. This church was often called the mother church of the Reformation, or a similar title. In 1546 Lucas Cranach began painting a set of Altar Panels known as the Triptych. Unfortunately, he fled before it was finished, but his son (The Younger) finished it and it was consecrated in St. Mary’s sometime in 1547. It is reasonable to assume these panels were commissioned to commemorate the Reformation and specifically to honor Luther, who had died earlier in 1546. It is also indisputable that Bugenhagen approved of the depictions, since he was the overseer of St. Mary’s, as well as being Luther’s right hand man of long standing.

The point of concern to our presentation is the altar triptych in the chancel, showing on the left panel Philipp Melanchthon (a layman) baptizing an infant, which is a Sacrament, and Martin Luther observing as Junker Jorge. However, it is apparent that Bugenhagen, in his role as superintendent approved of the depiction, including its dedication in St. Mary’s Lutheran Church. One view offered to me while visiting in Wittenberg was that Melanchthon was doing the baptism because no clergy was present, as Luther was in disguise as a knight, which is allowable under such circumstance.
This provision for emergency baptism by laymen was in direct conflict with Roman Catholic theology that access to the sacraments could only be obtained through the priesthood. Thus this depiction of an emergency baptism (Luther being unable to serve during his time as Junker Jorge) flies in the face of such Roman false doctrine...gotta love that!

Another panel, on the right depicts John Bugenhagen, keys in hand, absolves a penitent sinner on the left while he refuses absolution to the impenitent man on the right; in the upper center panel Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper; in the lower center a preaching Luther points to the crucified Christ.

On this point, Lutherans have a unique position that is neither Reformed nor Catholic. In Luther’s position, the “pastor” is the PREACHER (German Predigtamt). To the properly called preacher is given ALL the functions of the church, including the Sacraments, Keys, teaching, and pastoral care of individuals. In some cases, the
pastor may decide only to PREACH, and give the other “minor offices” to other clergy. See Luther’s Works (hereafter AE) 39:301-314. The Lutheran practice of valid lay baptism in emergency is related to this doctrine. Walther makes a slightly different case, in that the “pastor” is the CONFESSOR (i.e., the one who administers the Office of the Keys), and to him is given ALL the functions of the church. [The proper marks of the church - which is also her mission - are the teaching of the Word of God in all its truth and purity and the administration of the Sacraments in accord with Christ’s institution.] Thus in the Wittenberg altar triptych, the two called and ordained clergy, Luther and Bugenhagen, do the preaching and absolving-and-retaining-of-sins, while the minor office of baptism can be done by the non-pastor theologian Melanchthon in an emergency.

Based on the above it is safe to conclude that Melanchthon held a prominent place as a non-ordained professional church worker in the early days of the Reformation, over a period of about 20 years and before the interim difficulties. All of his recorded exploits and achievements have not been included, but only sufficient to prove his long participation in the events of the Reformation, often in the areas side by side with clergy.

Following in Melanchton’s footsteps was none other than Martin Chemitz, often referred to as the second Martin. He came on the Wittenberg scene first as a student. In early 1544 he joined the staff of the university, as a lay professional guild worker, serving as a professor of theology. Prior to his joining the staff he had served as a librarian to a Duke and in the Duke’s personal library he studied theology for three years. During this time he also received his Master of Arts degree. Later in 1544 he was ordained and took a call as coadjutor of Braunschwieg. He became the superintendent in 1567, received his doctorate in 1568, and continued to serve as superintendent until his death.

Other lay theologians followed at Wittenberg in Melanchthon’s footsteps, where the following have been noted: Abrahimm Calov (1512-81), Johanes Meisner (1615-84), Johnannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1688), Martin Chaldenius (1669-1725), John Heinrichson Berger (1672-1740), and Johann Deutschmann (1625-1706. These names are prominently displayed at Luther House in Wittenberg. It is reasonable that other theologians, including lay theologians, taught at Wittenberg University but were of lesser rank. It is my understanding that more than one lay theologian is on staff at the St. Louis Seminary at the present time. Additionally, guest lay professors are invited to speak at our seminaries within their vocation, e.g. Dr. Gene Veith.

Other historical notations of Lutheran laymen acting as leaders in the visible church have been taken from the Internet.

1. The Germans who left Germany to settle in the Russian Volga valley did so at the invitation of the Russian Empress, Catherine II, in July of 1763. They left Germany to avoid religious persecution, high taxes and the devastation of their farmland following the Seven Years War, which thrust them into extreme poverty.
2. There were 1,790,439 Germans settled in Russia by 1897. Seventy six percent of these Germans were of the Lutheran faith. The church was the center of the colonist's intellectual world and sustained their moral standards, language and ethnic character. Religion was deeply ingrained in the Volga German.

3. Once WWI started so did the persecution against the Volga Germans. By 1919, pastors were regarded as counterrevolutionary propagandists and were sent to slave camps. During the period from then until WWII the Germans suffered persecution, made into servants, lost their land holdings, etc. During this extended period any religious activity, which was deeply ingrained had to have been maintained by designated laymen. (On a personal note, my stepfather was from a German family that emigrated from the Volga, I presume sometime around WW I. Unfortunately, he was not a Lutheran and that had to wait later for me.) The proper understanding of “church” would have resulted in the pastor-less congregations electing from among themselves the most qualified men to take up the duties of the ministry, but not necessarily the Lord’s Supper. This practice of electing temporary “emergency ministers” was based on Luther’s letter to the Bohemians, AE 40:7-44, who were in a similar emergency situation. Luther’s position was that in such an emergency, the Lord’s Supper should not be administered, since there is no “emergency communion,” but there is emergency baptism, the mutual confession and absolution of the saints, and temporary teachers where no preachers can be obtained. There is a verbal record that some did not take communion at all during this period, while others took communion along with Reformed Lutherans.

Under such extreme circumstances, the question becomes one of duration. Is this situation of long term or short term? If short term, then the proper thing is to refrain from the Lord’s Supper until the emergency is over. If it is long term, then the congregation needs to call a well-qualified layman and ordain him as a pastor from among themselves. Under no circumstances should the confession of the faith be compromised by communing with the Reformed as it would be preferable to do without.

4. In 1893, Samuel Gilbert, a devoted Lutheran layman from Chester County, PA organized the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran English Sunday School. This organization quickly evolved into "The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity" and was chartered on June 18, 1896. Many of the members of this congregation were English-speaking members of the Scandinavian Lutheran Church, which worshipped at Atlantic Street and Second Avenue. In 1995, Holy Trinity was forced to close its doors due to financial necessity and many of its members transferred to St. Paul Lutheran Church.

5. Following WWII, a Caucasian layman founded a Lutheran church in LA for Japanese Americans who had been discriminated against by Caucasian citizens.
Probably the event of greatest interest to confessional Lutherans today would be the history surrounding the Saxon immigration led by Rev. Martin Stephan. Several Lutheran sources are available, plus the Internet, to develop the following points of interest to this survey concerning the Saxon immigration to the US.

1. Because of legal pressures, Pr. Stephan resigned his Office at his church in Dresden, in order to gain his release from arrest and received legal permission to leave Germany. Legal steps were also necessary before he was free to immigrate. He chose to leave his wife and seven children behind, in the state’s care. (All the other pastors resigned their pulpits before the immigration as well, since they worked for the state. Pastors during this period of time were considered to belong to the higher levels of society, but less than royalty, and enjoyed the privileges thereof.)

2. Before the immigration Pr. Stephen had been secretly laying the groundwork well before the public formation of an immigration company became a reality. This work was done by three laymen, including Herr Marbach (a lawyer), who initially served as Pr. Stephan’s right hand man. Later, when the plans went public, a group of 7 laymen were assembled to make all the arrangements.

3. Marbach was the first to question Pr. Stephan’s intent to create a theocracy and control the ecclesiastical and secular affairs of the immigrants when they arrived in St. Louis. For this, he incurred the wrath of the newly self-appointed Bishop Stephan and lost in his bid to prevent secular control by the Bishop in this instance. The day of reckoning was merely postponed. In fairness it must be said that Marbach envisioned himself as the one to be in control of the administrative affairs of the company of immigrants, which he was well qualified to do.

4. In attempting to establish Lutheran schools the immigrants started the effort ineffectively, primarily focusing on preserving the German Language. The first Lutheran school in Saint Louis was established in March 1839 and taught by Teacher Johann Friedrich Winter, and later by other German educated teachers who came with the immigration (see Zion on the Mississippi, pp. 344-345). In the first ten years it was especially bad, as teachers came and went at a good pace, and professionally trained teachers were in short supply. Pastors attempted to fill in, but lacked the qualifications and their performance was “often not on a par even with their limited pastoral abilities.” The Bishop, pastors, clergy candidates and teachers (laymen) were all paid their stipends from the Credit Fund of the emigration company. Exactly what course of instruction these men attempted has so far escaped disclosure, but the popular assumption is that this was centered on the teaching of children). The first Lutheran school in Perry County was established in summer 1839 in Altenburg (“Concordia College,” see ibid, 501-503), and taught by Pastor CFW Walther, and Pastoral Candidates Theodore Julius Brohm, Ottomar Fuerbringer, and Johann Buenger. The latter three were waiting for parish calls, and when they received those, they left. This was a grade school and “Gymnansium” (German-style high school). Also see C.S.
Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower* on the history of that school. Because of the small number of clergy in the company one can assume trained lay teachers and candidates did most of the teaching there (page 523).

5. When the expulsion of Bishop Stephan took place it was the leading laymen of the company, led by Vehse, which immediately objected to the continuation of the existing form of government. The clergy were defending Stephan’s form of government seeing no need for change and had assumed spiritual and secular control (power) over the company. Vehse’s initial point was to recover administrative control, but that evolved into a theological controversy as well. This all evolved into a multi-factional battle that lasted a number of years, with Walther gradually emerging as the leader of the clergy faction.

6. The laity, including research on the writings of Luther for guidance, held numerous discussions. At first, the clergy rejected the proposals of the laity because they wanted to continue on with the present form of “Stephen” polity. Ultimately, Walther, who recast the lay writings for the debate at Altenburg, accepted the main points of the laity proposals, with some purification. [Actually quite a lot of purification!] At that debate, with Marbach, Walther prevailed and a new course was charted for the polity that was to become the Missouri polity in the following years. The main point of this discourse here is to highlight that the lay leadership was educated to the point where they could articulate Luther’s writings and their points of view in persuading some of the clergy to give up the priest rule [Episcopal rule] of Stephan.

7. There are several references of lay teachers during the first 80 years of the Missouri Synod that can be found in *The House of my Fathers*, Rev. Matt Harrison. The first one mentioned by Pr. C.F. W. Walther in his trip report covering his Germany visit with Pr. Friedrich Wyneken, is Catechist Frederick Bauer (1812-1874) He was the Director of the Mission Preparation Institute (pre-seminary program), at Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, working under Wilhelm Loehe, the pastor there. This school was organized to prepare students for the seminary at Ft. Wayne, and he was by their account a very dedicated and gifted layman. Here, apparently, is a continuum from the early church whereby faithful, competent, and gifted layman, professional church workers, are involved with the teaching of theology and associated topics.

As stated in the first Constitution of the LCMS; no one was to teach in the congregation without verification by the pastor that the candidate was theologically qualified and that the position into which the teacher entered was an “office” and that he was formally and publicly placed into that office.

It is fair to conclude that during the Reformation, which returned the church to its original values and doctrines, they also re-established the role of learned and gifted and professional lay theologians and teachers within it. That role has continued down through the centuries, but is now being disputed by some. While some of these
“professional laymen” became ordained, not all did, however, all were rightly appointed or called to their office of teacher in accordance with the proper protocol.

Augsburg Confession

Now on to the preeminent question, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, “It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.”

When reading this article it must be put in context with the situation at the time, plus we can also look at the Confutation and the Apology for additional clarification. The Augsburg Confession was written by Philipp Melanchthon, a lay professional church worker, based on writings already completed, known as the Schwabach, Marburg, and Togau Articles. All of this is done in close consultation with, and under the direct supervision of, Martin Luther. At the very time of these writings, Melanchthon was teaching Scripture to students at Wittenberg University at this time, including those who would later become Lutheran pastors. Again, this was his proper vocation of university professor into which he had been placed and officially installed placing himself under vows of faithfulness.

Does the term “Church” in the context of Article XIV mean the conduct of Divine Services, or the broader use as in the visible church? For the Roman Catholic it included the broader use, such as the papacy, etc., because that was their definition of church, but that was not the Lutheran position. For Lutherans the Church is seen wherever the Word of God is taught in all its truth and purity and where the Sacraments are administered in accord with Christ’s institution. These are the “marks” of the visible Church and they also serve as the Church’s mission. The office of the pastor is to proclaim and administer those marks publicly in the context of the congregation. Also, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession is based on Luther’s writing about “infiltrating and clandestine preachers,” in AE 41:383-394. The word “Call” in Latin is vocatio, in German is Beruf. Martin Chemnitz’s Enchiridion says many things about the Lutheran doctrine of the “Call,” (see Martin Chemnitz, Ministry, Word and Sacraments, pp. 26-38).

“The Apology of the Augsburg Confession”

Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order.

24] The Fourteenth Article, in which we say that in the Church the administration of the Sacraments and Word ought to be allowed no one unless he be rightly called, they receive, but with the proviso that we employ canonical ordination. Concerning this subject we have frequently testified in this assembly that it is our greatest wish to maintain church-polity and the grades in the Church [old church-regulations and the government of bishops], even though they have been made by human authority [provided the bishops allow our doctrine and receive our priests]. For we know that church discipline was instituted by the Fathers, in the manner laid down in the ancient canons, with a good and useful intention. 25] But the bishops either compel our priests
to reject and condemn this kind of doctrine which we have confessed, or, by a new and
unheard-of cruelty, they put to death the poor innocent men. These causes hinder our
priests from acknowledging such bishops. Thus the cruelty of the bishops is the reason
why the canonical government, which we greatly desired to maintain, is in some places
dissolved. Let them see to it how they will give an account to God for dispersing 26] the
Church. In this matter our consciences are not in danger, because since we know that
our Confession is true, godly, and catholic, we ought not to approve the cruelty of those
who persecute this doctrine. 27] And we know that the Church is among those who
teach the Word of God aright, and administer the Sacraments aright, and not with those
who not only by their edicts endeavor to efface God's Word, but also put to death those
who teach what is right and true; 28] towards whom, even though they do something
contrary to the canons, yet the very canons are milder. Furthermore, we wish here again
to testify that we will gladly maintain ecclesiastical and canonical government, provided
the bishops only cease to rage against our Churches. This our desire will clear us both
before God and among all nations to all posterity from the imputation against us that the
authority of the bishops is being undermined, when men read and hear that, although
protesting against the unrighteous cruelty of the bishops, we could not obtain justice."

This defense is all about the canonical ordination, not who is conducting worship
services or teaching in the church. It is not exclusionary to the holding of an office of
teaching by laymen. By office I mean that the teacher or theologian has been
evaluated, chosen and placed in a position of teaching by his parish or church
supervising organization, not assuming the position by weight of personality, etc. That
said all auxiliary offices are subordinate to the Pastor, because they are extensions of
his office and function, but they are not ordained.

Scripture and Commentary

In Scripture we find other references besides Eph. 4:11, which combine the Office of
Public Ministry, as both pastor and teacher, because not being able to teach and hold
the office of Public Ministry is an oxymoron. The Lord is wise indeed on this point. Thus
it can be stated that holding the Office of Public Ministry requires the occupant to both
be able to preach and teach. That point is not exclusionary to the auxiliary office of
teaching being held by a layman, or is the term “office” only used with the Office of
Public Ministry. This later statement is supported by the following quotes.

In Romans 12:7, “If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;” Paul E.
Kretzmann states, “If we have a service or office, let us pay attention to that service. All
offices of the Church are tributary to the great service of the preaching of the Word, but
there are many forms of this service. …. This applies first to such that hold the office of
teachers in the congregations, no matter in what form.” (Vol. II, page 66) The context of
these and surrounding sentences is all about the functions of the “body of Christ” that
make up the Church, each has a function for the common good. Let that person be
about his or her part. The historical context up to the time Kretzmann is also limited to
Day School teachers.
In 1Cor. 12:27-29, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?”

Paul E. Kretzmann states, “There were first apostles, the teachers of the entire Church till the end of time, originally the spoken word, afterwards their doctrines transmitted in the form of writing. There were, secondarily prophets, men that held the gift of prophecy, vv 8.10. There were thirdly, teachers, men that were able to teach the transmitted doctrine, to apply it to the individual cases. These three represent the teaching orders.” (Vol. II, page 66)

In the Old Testament we have situations where God called forth a man (immediate call), not a priest, to be His prophet in the land. These men spoke the Word of God to the civil leaders, and temple priests of their day and not so much foretelling the future. God told them what to say and protected them. Every call that God made to a prophet (Amos, Jonah, etc.) in the Old Testament was an “immediate” call. That is, he called them directly, not through others, which we sometimes refer to as a “mediated” call. After Christ gave the gifts to the Church (Eph. 4), and based on the examples of the Apostles in Acts and other Epistles, it is evident that with John the Baptist, who both closes the Old and opens the New (and the calling of the 12 by Christ Himself) there are no further examples of any “immediate” calls, except the conversion of Saul to Paul. Note that John was of the priestly order, thus he had the right to do what he did.
Summary and Conclusions

It is clear that laymen have been, in Old Testament instances, called by God to be His prophets. It is also clear that professionally trained laymen served (theologians and teachers) in the early church, as well as served as theologians and teachers during the Reformation and after. Clearly Melanchthon was not a onetime only occurrence or an anomaly. Martin Luther strongly supported the office of teacher and understood the high importance of such an office. The Saxon immigration, even with an autocratic polity, still brought with them 29 trained lay teachers for the education of those in the company. One of their first deeds was the founding of a “college” in the settlement in Perry County. This also became the first seminary of the Saxons, which was later moved to St. Louis.

It is also clear, and I have offer no solution to this problem, there is some degree of concern over the status of what I have called professional laymen, lay theologians, etc. Does one who holds an auxiliary office fit in a new classification of neither being clergy or lay? Some yes, and some say no. Perhaps this would be a good topic for someone to undertake in another paper.

1. Three points can be made. 1. Educated laymen taught in the church, over the ages, and sometimes were professors of theology, but they did not preach, or conduct church services, as this was not their vocation. 2. Skilled lay teachers played a part in the development of systematic theology in the early church. 3. Since the Reformation was all about restoring the truth and purity of the early church why would it not include teaching by competent laymen, such as Melanchthon and many others as noted here?

2. Some outstanding examples of lay leadership have been noted, but are not all inclusive. It should be sufficient to illustrate that from time to time, properly educated and learned laity can and have presented the Confessions and taught religious topics within the Body of Christ within the vocations God gave them in His Church. One would expect that only the most notable, not routine, exceptions would be found in historical documents. These examples are not a diary, but the highlights of events passed.

Two important element in all of this is the status of the teacher, who in early times was not called, but appointed and the clergy who were always called. In today’s environment we have synodically trained teachers who have a “commissioned call,” as different from an “ordained call” issued to clergy. This area will not be discussed further, as it is not germane to this presentation. Other lay teachers in congregations, and other teaching organizations can also have a “status” in the form of being elected and/or commissioned/appointed to their positions. It is important that this tradition be observed to insure good order in the church and those organizations serving the church. It is also important to maintain the proper relationship between Office of Public Ministry and any associated auxiliary offices, as they are subordinate.
## Table of Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Ordained/Commissioned</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Ordained</td>
<td>Called, Office of the Public Ministry, accountable to Congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theologian</td>
<td>Ordained or Commissioned</td>
<td>Called or Appointed to this Vocation, Aux Office, under supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>Called, Aux Office, under supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Teacher</td>
<td>Appointed</td>
<td>Works under Pastoral supervision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that lay teachers and theologians existed in the early church and also became a part of the Reformation as they acted within their God-given vocations. That tradition existed down through the next 300 years + when there was no question about doctrine and practice being the same. Thus someone taking the position that Augustana XIV prohibits the holding of the auxiliary office of theologian or teacher by a qualified non-clergy person is incorrect and out of context, adding more than was written and accepted during the time of the Reformation. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession is consistent with this view. Those who occupy auxiliary offices do not occupy the office of pastor at all and are not included in the parameters set by the AC.

It is incorrect and improper to suggest that holding these auxiliary offices by the laity is some type of “revisionist theology” as some try to infer. It is also important to observe a “protocol” to insure good order, as follows:
1. No layman should teach in the church that has inadequate knowledge and skill for the task. The pastor of a congregation has the duty of examining all lay teachers in his church, and prohibiting their teaching if they are incompetent. The pastor is also responsible for the oversight and approval of the materials being presented.

2. Only laymen who understand and are motivated by the Gospel-proclamation purposes should be allowed to teach. Because laymen are not involved in pastoral care, in private confession, or in the proclamation of the Gospel for the forgiveness of sins, for the encouragement and consolation of consciences, and for building up of the church, they may not understand these purposes of teaching in the church. They may see teaching as the mere accumulation of knowledge, or worse, as some form of entertainment. “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”

3. If the pastor has qualified lay teachers, he should use them where it best serves the needs of the congregation. This also includes those who teach adults at home (cottage Bible studies) as long as they do so under the supervision of the pastor who holds the responsibility for the content of all theology taught by such laymen within his flock. Likewise, he is under no obligation to use lay teachers who are not qualified, it would be in error to do so.

4. Clergy and Laymen publically teaching religious topics for organizations outside of a church (congregation) are bound by the same general protocol as would be found in a church (congregation). Basically, the organization should vet its instructors for qualifications to teach the topics assigned to them and the layman’s congregation should commission them to do so.

Item number 4 above was not envisioned as a standalone situation as this paper was undertaken, but this is what it has become. The details of the protocol, or protocols that may exist for calling a person, clergy or lay, into such a vocation could well be the topic of another paper. It is beyond the scope of this paper and my resources to pursue.

Other References: Zion of the Mississippi, What Luther Says, the Book of Concord, Government in the Missouri Synod, John Bugenhagen Pomeranus, and the internet.

In Christ,

Gene White

Note: My profound thanks to those who reviewed, commented, provided additional references and text to improve this paper.