Dear Brothers in Christ:

One of the several tasks that are part and parcel of serving in this office of district president involves conflict resolution. Sometimes leaders of a congregation point a finger at their pastor saying that he is not doing his job. For that reason I carry along a *“Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation”* in my bag. It’s a good thing for each of us who serve as *“called and ordained”* to consider. It is basically our job description. It outlines our responsibility to our Lord and His Church, His Bride, His people.

I hold it up for us all here…for your consideration.

In the name of the Triune God and by His authority, in order that we might carry out His mission to the world, we hereby authorize and obligate you:

*To administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity* as contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord;

*To administer the holy sacraments in accordance with their divine institution*;

*To demonstrate the mind and spirit of Christ* as you serve the members of the congregation *and equip them for Christ's mission to seek and save the lost;*

*To equip and enable the members of the congregation to serve one another and those outside the fellowship of the congregation;*

*To perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner*; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions*; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring; to support the members of the congregation as they extend that evangelical ministry to others*;

*To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation*, in particular to see to the instruction of the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the church;

*To guide the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church* according to the Word of God and *to assist and lead the members of the congregation in practicing the forgiven life with one another*;

*To promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to endeavors of the Synod and its Districts, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work*;

*To serve as a resource and guide for members of the congregation* as they participate in the ministry of Christian education, and *to train parents to teach the Christian faith to their children*;

*To assist the congregation in adopting administrative policies and procedures* that will help it carry out the mission of a Christian congregation;

*To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct; to endeavor earnestly to live in Christian unity with the members of the congregation, fellow workers, and sister congregations in the Synod; and by the grace of God to do everything possible for the edification of the congregation and the upbuilding of the church in Christ.* *[Emphasis added]*

To weigh the infinitive clauses is to understand that we have been entrusted with an awesome responsibility; both by our God and by the people through whom He has called us to serve. It is a Word and Sacrament ministry that unpacks itself in so many ways, not just on Sunday morning but every day of the week. It is Word and Sacrament ministry that is to be unpacked as we serve God’s people, and as we reach out to people in the community in which we live.

It is a humbling calling, and it can be overwhelming responsibility; to be entrusted with the spiritual care of God’s own people, to reach out to people in the community with the Gospel. It is more than a 40 hour a week “job”; rather a divine vocation, a way of life. In view of that it is essential that we remember the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians:

* 2 Corinthians 3:4-6: Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. **5**Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but *our sufficiency is from God*, **6**who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
* 2 Corinthians 4:1, Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

May our gracious Lord Jesus, the Lord of the Church, who has called us to serve Him through His church, bless us as we proclaim His saving Word and as we serve His people in the ministry placed upon us!!

May our Lord bless us as we faithfully serve Him and His Bride, the Church

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille

SWD President