

- (a) take steps to ensure that as far as possible ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments are readily available to every local church;
- (b) provide for the

resolution and remarks made at the Assembly, not to mention elsewhere, show that re-examination is necessary again.

4. Three views

There are three views one hears expressed.

- (a) 4.1. The position held by the greater part of the Church universal is that ordination places the care of the Sacraments firmly in the hands of the minister, who is therefore the proper person to preside and administer them. It is a most ancient view. It recognises that it is the responsibility of the wider church, not the local one, to supervise both ministry and Sacraments. Those who hold this view, nevertheless, have to be pragmatic and so provision has to be made for lay people to preside where ordained people are not available.
- (b) 4.2. Another view frequently heard is that the preaching of the word and the conduct of the Sacraments are so closely related to those recognised as lay preachers should also have authority to preside at the Sacraments.
- (c) 4.3. A third view has been growing of late. There are a number of places with collegiate ministries and others where there is a need for local lay leaders and these could well be authorised. It is felt that it is more important to have someone presiding who is recognised as a leader in the local church than someone who is not of the family. Which way are we to go? Or do we go off in different directions?

5. Looking back

- 5.1 We were asked to explore the past, so we turned to John Calvin, who did not give us as much help as we hoped. It seems that no one in his day questioned the rightful place of the ordained minister at the Lord's Table. If anyone imagines the Reformers had an easy time they should know that Calvin faced considerable opposition from lay people who refused to accept the elements from elders. The idea of a layman presiding would have caused rebellion! In principle any believers might preach or preside, but in practice there had to be order. Thus Calvin in his Genevan Catechism of 1545 says: 'Does the administration both of baptism and the Lord's Supper belong indiscriminately to all? By no means; but these duties you speak of are the peculiar functions of those to whom the public office of teaching has been committed.'

That this view was widespread among the Reformed Churches is substantiated by instances of congregations going without the Lord's Supper for long periods because they had no pastor. Perhaps the best known is that of the Pilgrim Fathers.

renewal of baptismal promises may be taken by everyone. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated everyone is a celebrant, though one has to preside and speak for all present.

- 6.3 An unwelcome change is the smaller congregations of our day and the proliferation groups of churches, served mostly by one stipendiary minister. In places people seem to go to extraordinary lengths to have the Sacraments administered by the minister, no matter that it binds that person to a tight schedule and entails driving miles on busy roads between services. The minister is thus always with an eye on the clock rather than the congregation, and constantly saying, 'I must fly!' It is a shame when pastoral work is reduced to this state when there are probably good lay people in the congregations who would make good presidents.

7.1 Concluding remarks: Lay Presidency and Ordination

The objection is raised that if lay presidency became common, it would diminish the significance of ordination

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communion services in rest homes for the elderly and for sick and housebound people. But in all our dealing we must all endeavour to keep away from the city of legality while not falling into the morass of disorder.

7.5 The Moderators

One way of acting with hope of greater consistency is to bring nBof is6f0c83000(12)6 0.000.B30009

Decisions of General Assembly 2016

General Assembly agreed (2016, resolution 14) that the of presidency at the sacraments if the minister in pastoral charge is not available should be as follows:

- (a) the Church meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed a willingness to do so);
- (b) if such a minister is not available, the Church meeting may invite an elder (or accredited Lay Preacher) authorised by the synod, in accordance the provisions of paragraph 25 of the Basis of Union: elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there should be considered first;
- (c) authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three-five years (according to synod judgment), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.

Person responsible for this section is the Minister of Word and Sacraments (MWS) of the congregation.