

Church polity (church government) refers to how a church's leadership is structured.

1. **Episcopal.** The word *episcopal* is from the Greek word *episkopos*, which is often translated in English as "bishop" or "overseer." This form of church government functions with a single leader (bishop, superintendent, etc.) who is over other pastors/congregations. Even a single congregation can have a "strong pastor" (who makes all decisions).

Note: There might be a distinction made between spiritual (Word and/or rites/ceremonies/adiaphora) and secular concerns (property ownership, etc.).

2. **Presbyterian.** The word *presbyterian* is from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which is usually translated "elder." In this form of government, the authority rests not with a single individual but with the body of pastors (presbyters) or possibly lay elders/leaders.

3. **Congregational.** The final authority rests with the congregation, which is usually governed by a voters' assembly.

Note: Usually, the congregation is independent. If it belongs to a larger association, the association is voluntary and normally advisory.

Trinity Lutheran Church makes a distinction made between spiritual (Word) given to the Pastor, and secular concerns (property ownership, etc.) given to the congregational. The issue of rites/ceremonies/adiaphora is unspecified, and is usually a collaborative decision.

However, Trinity's pastors belong to a larger association, Eldona, which has an Episcopal form of polity as it relates to spiritual concerns (Word and adiaphora). The bishop decides and directs only the pastors.

Historical Factors

1. Roman Church – Bishop polity, with state negotiation
2. Reformation – State filled the void and took control.
Church orders – to provide church rules
3. Church hierarchy corrupted by rationalism
4. Pietism/Protestants emphasized the priesthood of all believers
5. Immigration – physical removal from state organization
 - A. Free - from the regulation of the state
 - B. Voluntary – membership does not come with citizenship
6. Progression in formation of congregations, ministeriums, and then synods (Nelson, p.53-55). This usually involved some kind of layman-organized decision-making polity, which resembled reformed models of governance.
7. Settlements/Colonies – Saxon-Stephan, Prussia-Grabau, Saginaw Valley, Michigan-Loehe

Grabau	Missouri
Semi-Episcopal Government	Congregational Government
Clergy Supremacy	clergy-lay equality
Centralized form of gov.	Decentralized
	Universal priesthood of believers
	Supremacy of the local congregation
	<i>(Moving Frontiers, p.164,166)</i>

	Scripture	Adiaphora	Temporal-church	Temporal-community
	Doctrine of the Word of God and godly life	Rites/Ceremonies Times of Service, Hymnal, Pastor Salary	Temporal issues (church property ownership, etc.)	
Rome	Bishop			State
Stephan Immigration	Bishop (Theocratic community)			
Missouri	Pastor (Synod)	Congregation		State
Grabau Immigration/ Buffalo/Wisconsin	Senior Pastor		Congregation	State?
Loehe promoted German colonies in Saginaw Valley, Michigan, Frankenmuth	Pastor		Congregation	State?

Hirtenbrief p.176-177

Missouri reaction p.177

C.F.W. Walther on the Church

p.196 the Norwegians were divided on Grabau's letter.

Loehe responds to and leaves the Joint Synod of Ohio

Some separated Ohioans and Missourians drafted a constitution in May 1846. P.180

Congregational polity, with Synod as an advisory body on non-Scriptural matters.

As early as 1847, Loehe commented on the Missouri Synod's constitution: "We fear certainly with a perfect right, that the fundamental strong mixing of democratic, independent, congregationalistic principles in your constitution will cause great harm, just as the mixing in of princes and secular authorities in our land has done." (p.181)

p.181 After Wyneken and Walther visited him in 1851 in Neuendettelsau, Loehe considered the Missouri Synod constitution to be mob-rule.