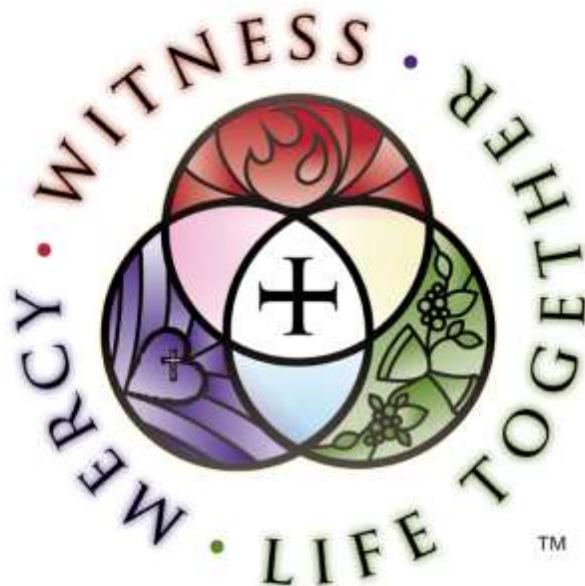


CIRCUIT VISITORS’ MANUAL

*Updated
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The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



CIRCUIT VISITOR'S MANUAL
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

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A. INTRODUCTION: THE CIRCUIT VISITOR
The Theological and Historical Setting
of the Circuit Visitor's Office

Unlike the office of pastor, the office of Circuit Visitor does not have a divine command. Nevertheless, the office, including its responsibilities, has its roots in the practice of the apostolic church and in the historic development of the church following apostolic times.

In the book of Acts and in a number of the letters of Paul, we have examples of both the visitation of the churches and the supervision of the churches.

In Acts 8, after the evangelist Philip had planted the church in Samaria, Peter and John were sent by the believers in Jerusalem to visit the Samaritan converts. It was through their visit that the Word was confirmed in Samaria, and they returned to report that the church in Samaria was of the same origin and held to the same Gospel as the church in Jerusalem.

The church in Jerusalem also sent Barnabas to Antioch in Acts 11 when the news reached Jerusalem that Gentiles also had been converted through the preaching of the Gospel. Barnabas, together with Paul, visited other churches also "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). And after the council in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders there sent two other men with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter to the Gentiles in Antioch and to report the decisions of the council.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul prepared the church in Corinth for the visit by Timothy. They were not to despise him but to "put him at ease" and speed him on his way (1 Corinthians 16:10-11). Later, Paul thanked God that Titus has the same "earnest care" in his heart for the church in Corinth, for Titus also visited there, apparently with Timothy (2 Corinthians 8:16-24). Paul speaks highly of them for their work. Paul sent Timothy also to the church at Thessalonica with mutually excellent results (1 Thessalonians 3:1-8).

Timothy was to protect as well as admonish the elders to whom he went (1 Timothy 5:17-19). This included concern for their wages. Through the apostolic "counselors" all the churches were encouraged to exercise concern for all the fellow believers (Acts 11:27-29; 1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8-9).

It should be evident from these passages that the apostolic church knew nothing about "independent and autonomous congregations." The purpose of such visitation and supervision of the doctrine was to prevent schism.

The Lutheran Confessions recognized this in the post-apostolic church (SA of the Power of Bishops, Tappert p. 330). "One man was chosen by the rest to prevent schism, lest several persons, by gathering separate following around themselves, rend the church of Christ" (From the letters of St. Jerome).

At the time of the Reformation after the collapse of ecclesiastic order, Luther urged Elector John of Saxony to give attention to the plight of the clergy and the churches. The spiritual life of the people in the elector's lands was in decline. In February 1527 the visitations began on the basis of Articles of Visitation formulated by Melancthon. As a result of these visitations Luther prepared both his Large and Small catechisms.

In 1528 Luther provided a preface which explained the origin of the instructions for the visitors of parish pastors. In this preface he states:

Both the Old and the New Testaments give sufficient evidence of what a divinely wholesome thing it would be if pastors and Christian congregations might be visited by understanding and competent persons. For we read in Acts 9[:32] that St. Peter traveled about in the land of the Jews. And in Acts 15[:2] we are told that St. Paul together with Barnabas revisited all those places where they had preached. All his epistles reveal his concern for all the congregations and pastors. He writes letters, he sends his disciples, he goes himself. So the apostles, according to Acts 8[:14], when they heard how the Word had been received in Samaria, sent Peter and John there... Formerly, in the days of the ancient Fathers, the holy bishops diligently followed these examples and even yet much of this is found in the papal laws. For it was in this kind of activity that the bishops and archbishops had their origin - each one was obligated to a greater or lesser extent to visit and examine... we would like to have seen the true episcopal office and practice of visitation re-established because of the pressing need... we have respectfully appealed to the illustrious and noble prince and lord, John, Duke of Saxony... that out of Christian love (since he is not obligated to do so as a temporal sovereign) and by God's will for the benefit of the gospel and the welfare of the wretched Christians in his territory, His Electoral grace might call and ordain to this office several competent persons... we yet hope that all devout and peaceable pastors who find their sincere joy in the gospel and delight to be of one mind with us will act as St. Paul teaches in Phil.2[:2], and will heed our prince and gracious lord. We hope they will not ungratefully and proudly despise our love and good intention, but will willingly, without any compulsion, subject themselves in a spirit of love to such visitation and with us peacefully accept these visitors until God the Holy Spirit brings to pass something that is better, through them or through us (Luther's Works American Edition, Vol. 40, pp. 269–273).

Following this ecclesiastical tradition, the original Constitution of the Synod made it the responsibility of the president of the Synod to visit the congregations of the Synod and to report to the Synod on the religious conditions of the congregations. As the Synod grew, the assignment of visiting and supervising was delegated to district presidents. And as the Synod continued to grow the District President was assisted by the circuit visitor.

Sometime after World War II the circuit visitor became the circuit “counselor” by convention action (1959 Committee 6 Resolution 7 †*Proceedings*, p. 233). The name change was not to change the office. Visitation by the district president with the assistance of the circuit “counselor” was stipulated by the Synod’s *Handbook*. At the 2013 Synodical Convention the title of this office was returned to circuit visitor and again the requirements, duties, and obligations of the office were not changed. [Resolution 7-02A, 2013 *Proceedings*, p. 175].

Thus the office of circuit visitor is a part of a long tradition of the church, beginning with apostolic practice. Circuit visitors serve the Lord and His Church in an extremely important and unique way.

The Personal and Spiritual Qualifications of the Circuit Visitor

Because the office of circuit visitor is such a vital link between the Synod/district and the local congregation/pastor, the pastor who is given this responsibility needs to be one who not only is committed to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ in faith but also who meets all the Scriptural qualifications that God requires of a pastor. In addition he must also be one who is committed to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as well as a spokesman to uphold and support the doctrinal position of the Synod.

But because of his many and varied responsibilities, following the lead of our Lord Jesus, he most certainly needs to be a man of prayer and devotion, one whose faith in the Savior not only is at the very center of his life but which can also be seen in his life.

Keeping in mind that he is a servant of the Lord and His Church, the circuit visitor accepts this office with humility and seeks to honor it by building up the Body of Christ to the glory of its Head.

It would seem obvious that from his election he holds the trust and confidence of the pastors and congregations in his circuit. This is to be seen as a sacred trust and needs to be held with honor and respect. Because he is an extension of the office of the district president, he needs to be a man of integrity and one willing to give of his time and efforts for the Lord and His Church. The circuit visitor will be dealing with people, thus he needs to be able to lead and lead well for he is to:

- remind and encourage congregations and pastors in his circuit of their responsibilities and privileges of carrying out the Lord's mission;
- build up and instruct congregations and pastors in his circuit with gentleness and forbearance;
- show wisdom in dealing with conflicts as they arise in congregations and pastoral relationships in his circuit, encouraging forgiveness and love to be shown;
- celebrate with congregations and pastors in his circuit the joys and successes of ministry
- and serve under the direction of and be accountable to the district president and serve as his spokesman when authorized to do so, assisting him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision.

To accomplish all this the circuit visitor needs to be open and honest. He must be a good listener, and one who can apply good communication skills. In addition it would be helpful for him to be positive in his thinking and speaking, and cheerful in his spirit.

The Lord gives these gifts and skills to His people for service in His kingdom.

ALL GLORY BE TO OUR GOD!

B. THE OFFICE OF CIRCUIT VISITOR IN RELATION TO THE SYNOD, DISTRICTS, CIRCUITS, CONGREGATIONS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS

"For as in one body we have many members and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Romans 12:4-5).

This understanding of the inter-working of the church as the Body of Christ is basic to all relationships in the church, including the role of the circuit visitor and his relationship to the various manifestations of the Body of Christ. Believers are not autonomous, individualistic entities. Each believer is united to Christ, the Head of the Church, from whom every gift and authority in the Church comes. Christ and His love controls all that is done in His Name. He is the unifying factor in all the activities of the church. This is true of the local congregation as it functions as the Body of Christ. Individual members work together in harmony "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7) so that united under the one Head, Christ, God may be glorified.

The Synod

Although not demanded specifically in Scripture to do so, congregations, in turn, do well to organize with other sister congregations, united by faith in Christ and a common confession, to do together what one congregation alone cannot do, or could not do as well as is possible **except** in concert with other congregations.

The work of world-wide mission and the training of pastors, teachers and other professional workers for the church are obviously such areas of work. The responsibility for such functions is laid on every worshiping community, but only in very exceptional cases could this be accomplished apart from the cooperation of congregations bound together in a mutual commitment to our Lord's mission and ministry.

These and other needs have led to the formation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and have prompted congregations of like mind and faith to join the Synod.

In its current Bylaws The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod gives the following as "Purpose for the Synod":

1. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN AND THROUGH THE SYNOD

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE SYNOD

1.1.1 Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives. The Synod is organized to work in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love.

- (a) The Synod functions in support of its member congregations by providing assistance as congregations conduct their ministries locally, as well as their ministries at large.
- (b) The Synod on behalf of its member congregations administers those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way, member congregations utilize the Synod to assist them in

carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service, and support. (2019 *Handbook*, p. 21)

The following "objectives" of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are also listed in its Constitution (Article III, 2019 *Handbook*, pp. 11-12):

Article III Objectives

The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—

1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy;
2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world;
3. Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth;
4. Provide opportunities through which its members may express their Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs;
5. Aid congregations to develop processes of thorough Christian education and nurture and to establish agencies of Christian education such as elementary and secondary schools and to support synod colleges, universities, and seminaries;
6. Aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their confessional unity in the true faith;
7. Encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith;
8. Provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties;
9. Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights;
10. Aid in providing for the welfare of pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and their families in the event of illness, disability, retirement, special need, or death.

It is to carry out such objectives that congregations have united themselves with other congregations in the Synod.

The basic relationship, therefore, is between the local congregation and the Synod. This relationship is defined in the Bylaws of the Synod as follows:

1.3 Synod Relationships: Congregation, National, District, Circuit

- 1.3.1 Individual Christians are joined together in a worshiping and serving community, the congregation. Congregations, the basic units of the Synod, have joined together to form the Synod and relate to one another through it.
- 1.3.2 The Synod divides itself into districts and authorizes its districts to create circuits. The criteria for the creation of districts and circuits are determined by the Synod in convention. Districts and circuits are included among the component parts of the Synod. The Synod also divides itself into regions to accommodate elections that require regional representation.
- 1.3.3 The Synod, including its component parts, is regarded as an extension of the congregations to the extent and for the purposes determined by the congregations acting through conventions. The Synod and its component parts are designed to assist congregations and their members in conserving and promoting the unity of the faith and in carrying out their mission and ministry.

The Synod, including its component parts, also serves as the structure through which congregations carry out certain functions that can be performed more effectively and efficiently together with other member congregations.

- 1.3.4 Congregations together establish the requirements of membership in the Synod (Art. VI). In joining the Synod, congregations and other members obligate themselves to fulfill such requirements and to diligently and earnestly promote the purposes of the Synod by word and deed.
 - 1.3.4.1 Members agree to uphold the confessional position of the Synod (Constitution Art. II) and to assist in carrying out the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), which are objectives of the members themselves. While congregations of the Synod are self-governing (Constitution Art. VII), they, and also individual members, commit themselves as members of the Synod to act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod under which they have agreed to live and work together and which the congregations alone have the authority to adopt or amend through conventions.
 - 1.3.4.2 Members of the Synod, compelled by love for one another, accept the responsibility to support financially the work of the Synod.
 - 1.3.4.3 Congregations of the Synod, to enable the Synod to plan current and future ministry efforts and to lend accuracy and integrity to the Synod's delegate representation and voting processes, agree to provide annual membership and statistical information to the Synod.
(2019 LCMS Bylaws, pages 24-25)

Membership in the Synod is held or may be acquired by congregations, pastors, and teachers and other rostered church work professionals who accept Article II of the Synod's Constitution without reservation:

Article II Confession

The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord. (2019 Handbook, page 11)

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod are voting members. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations form an electoral circuit which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in Synod, ministers not in charge of congregations, professors at the Synod's educational institutions, teachers of parochial schools, other commissioned church workers, and candidates for the office of the ministry—ordained or commissioned may be advisory (non-voting) members of the Synod (2019 Handbook, Constitution, Article V, pg. 12-13). The procedure for establishing membership in the Synod through districts of the Synod and the requirements for continuing eligibility of individual members is spelled out in the Bylaws of the Synod (2019 LCMS Handbook, Membership, pages 53-98).

To maintain the centrality of the congregation, the Synod has included the following statement in its Constitution pertaining to the relation of the Synod to its members:

Article VII Relation of the Synod to Its Members

1. In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.
2. Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation. (2019 LCMS Handbook, page 14)

Since this article has sometimes been interpreted wrongly, the Bylaws include the following clarification:

- 1.3.4 Congregations together establish the requirements of membership in the Synod (Art. VI). In joining the Synod, congregations and other members obligate themselves to fulfill such requirements and to diligently and earnestly promote the purposes of the Synod by word and deed.
 - 1.3.4.1 Members agree to uphold the confessional position of the Synod (Constitution Art. II) and to assist in carrying out the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), which are objectives of the members themselves. While congregations of the Synod are self-governing (Constitution Art. VII), they, and also individual members, commit themselves as members of the Synod to act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod under which they have agreed to live and work together and which the congregations alone have the authority to adopt or amend through conventions.
 - 1.3.4.2 Members of the Synod, compelled by love for one another, accept the responsibility to support financially the work of the Synod.
 - 1.3.4.3 Congregations of the Synod, to enable the Synod to plan current and future ministry efforts and to lend accuracy and integrity to the Synod's delegate representation and voting processes, agree to provide annual membership and statistical information to the Synod.
(2019 LCMS Bylaws, pages 24-25)

1.7 Agreements

- 1.7.1 The Constitution, Bylaws, and all other rules and regulations of the Synod apply to all congregational and individual members of the Synod.
- 1.7.2 The Synod expects every member congregation of the Synod to respect its resolutions and to consider them of binding force if they are in accordance with the Word of God and if they appear applicable as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned. The Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of a congregation to be the judge of the applicability of the resolution to its local condition. However, in exercising such judgment, a congregation must not act arbitrarily, but in accordance with the principles of Christian love and charity.
- 1.7.3 The Synod expects congregations that have not been received into membership, but are served by the Synod, and whose ministers of religion, ordained and commissioned, hold membership in the Synod, to honor its rules and regulations.
(2019 LCMS Handbook, pp. 35).

1.8 Dissent

- 1.8.1 While retaining the right of brotherly dissent, members of the Synod are expected as part of the life together within the fellowship of the Synod to honor and uphold the resolutions of the Synod.

- 1.8.2 Dissent from the doctrinal position of the Synod as expressed in its resolutions and doctrinal statements is to be expressed first within the fellowship of peers (that is, with those who are competent to evaluate the issue critically) and then brought to the attention of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations before finding expression as an overture to the Synod in convention calling for revision or rescission. The discussion among the fellowship of peers is to be conducted privately and confidentially among those who are competent rather than in a public forum. While the conscience of the dissenter shall be respected, the consciences of others, as well as the collective will of the Synod, shall also be respected.
- 1.8.3 This right of brotherly dissent does not allow a member of the Synod publicly to teach or practice contrary to the established doctrinal position of the Synod. Any such public teaching shall place in jeopardy membership in the Synod.
- (2019 LCMS *Handbook*, pages 35).

Clearly, the glue which holds the congregations of the Synod together is the mutually accepted doctrinal (confessional) position of the Synod which expresses the commitment of the church to Jesus Christ, its Head. The power (and really the only power) the Synod has is the persuasive power of the Gospel. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God..." (Romans 12:1).

Districts

When the Synod was organized in 1847 there were neither districts nor circuits. The President of the Synod, responsible for the doctrine and life of the members of the Synod, was charged with the responsibility of visiting all the congregations at least once every three years and to report his findings to the convention of Synod—clearly an impossible task. Furthermore, the distances involved made it impossible for pastors and lay delegates from every congregation to attend annual conventions of the Synod.

The likely reasons given for the 1854 decision to divide into four districts were that administrative matters could be handled with greater ease at a district level and that there would be at greater participation of both pastors and congregations in such decisions. The Central District was organized in 1856. Soon thereafter the Northern, the Western and the Eastern Districts were organized.

Districts were to be independent in the management of the affairs which pertained to their district alone. The general Constitution of the Synod was to be the constitution of each of the districts and the Bylaws of the Synod were to be the bylaws of the districts, but districts could adopt such bylaws as might be necessary for their own peculiar condition, provided such bylaws did not conflict with the general constitution. Still today district bylaws must be submitted to the Commission on Constitutional Matters of the Synod for review and approval (Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3). The Synod specifically retains under its own jurisdiction such matters as general supervision of doctrine and practice, foreign missions; institutions of the Synod; qualification for ordination, commissioning and installation of ordained and commissioned ministers; requirements for individual and congregational membership in the Synod; publication of official religious periodicals; conduct of negotiations and affiliations with other church bodies; and the like (Bylaw 4.1.5). Districts are established by the Synod, which defines their geographic boundaries and approves their names (Constitution XII 1; Bylaws 4.1.1 and 4.1.1.3; also Bylaws 1.3.2, 1.3.3, and 1.3.6). This includes the division of established districts.

The Synod is not merely an advisory body in relation to a district. A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod (Bylaws 4.1.1 and 4.1.1.1). Resolutions of the Synod are binding on the districts (Constitution, Art. XII 9 a; Bylaw 4.1.1.1). The Synod regulates when and how district conventions are to be conducted (Constitution, Art. XII B 13, 14, 15). From 1854 to 1874 district officers

were elected at the conventions of the Synod. Since then they have been elected in district conventions. The Synod specifies what officers a district shall have and who may be district officers (Bylaws 4.3.1–4.3.3). The district president, by virtue of his office, is in effect an officer of the Synod (CCM Opinion Ag. 2117). Districts are subject to supervision by the President of the Synod regarding both doctrine and administration (Constitution, Art. XI B1c and XI B 2). A congregation becomes a member of a district at the time it joins the Synod and termination of membership in the Synod terminates membership in a district (Bylaws 4.1.2 and 4.1.2.1). The relationship of a congregation to the district is the same as the relationship of a congregation to the Synod as defined in Article VII of the Constitution of the Synod, Bylaw 1.3.5, and Bylaw sections 1.4, 1.5, and 1.7.

Upon dissolution of a district, all property and assets to which the district holds title or over which it has control, shall be transferred to the Synod since the purpose of a district is to serve congregations in conserving and promoting the unity of the faith and in carrying out their mission and ministry.

The Congregation and the District

The relationship of a congregation to the district is the same as the relationship of a congregation to the Synod as defined in Article VII of the Constitution of the Synod and section 1.3 of the Bylaws (see also Bylaw 4.1.6). That is, the district is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, but an advisory body with respect for the individual congregation's right of self-government. No resolution of the district imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned. As the Synod, the district is to assist the congregations and their members in conserving and promoting the unity of the faith and in carrying out their mission and ministry. The district also serves as the structure through which the congregations carry out certain functions which can be performed more effectively and efficiently together with other member congregations (Bylaw 1.3.3).

Privileges of Member Congregations

At meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or multiple-congregation parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate. A congregation which is a member of the Synod may submit overtures to the conventions of the Synod, i.e. district conventions or conventions of national Synod (Bylaw 3.1.6.2).

Congregations of the Synod may nominate by ballot candidates for the offices of the President and First Vice-President of the Synod (Bylaw 3.12.2), regional vice-presidents (Bylaw 3.12.2.7), regional members of the Synod's Board of Directors (Bylaw 3.3.4.1), regional members of the Board for National Mission (Bylaw 3.8.2.2), regional members of the Board for International Mission (Bylaw 3.8.3.2) as well as the president of any of the Synod's colleges (Bylaw 3.10.6.6.2 (b)(4)) and seminaries (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2). Congregations may also provide affirmation to amend the Constitution of the Synod according to specified procedures (Constitution, Art. XV 4).

Duties of Member Congregations

When a congregation enters the covenant relationship as a member of Synod it can be expected diligently and earnestly to promote the purposes of the Synod by word and deed, including financial support, and the provision of statistical information (Bylaw 1.3.4.2-1.3.4.3). Having accepted the Constitution, Bylaws, and other rules and regulations of the Synod as applicable to them, congregations are to honor the Synod's rules and regulations. "The Synod expects every member congregation to respect its resolutions and to consider them a binding force if they are in accordance with the Word of

God and if they appear applicable as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned. The Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of the congregation to be the judge of the applicability of the resolution to its local condition. However, in exercising such judgment, a congregation must not act arbitrarily, but in accordance with the principles of Christian love and charity" (Bylaw section 1.7).

Circuits

There are two types of circuits created in accordance with the Bylaws of the Synod, the Visitation Circuit and the Electoral Circuit.

The Visitation Circuit (Bylaws 5.1.1 and 5.1.2) is the primary grouping of congregations within the District structure. It serves as a channel of communication and action: 1. from individuals or congregations to the District; 2. from the District to congregations or individuals; and 3. to and from other Circuits and agencies.

Each Visitation Circuit organizes a Circuit Forum consisting of one pastor of each congregation and one lay member of each congregation, designated by the congregation, as voting member. The circuit visitor will be the chairman of the circuit forum and principal officer of the Circuit, as prescribed by the Bylaws of the Synod. The Circuit Forum may elect any other officers or committees it deems advisable.

Each Visitation Circuit Forum shall have the following responsibilities and authority:

- a. Elect its own officers, establish its own working structure, and determine its own goals;
- b. Elect representatives to District boards or committees when such representation is requested or authorized for each Circuit.
- c. Initiate programs for mission and ministry in its area and equip individuals to participate therein;
- d. Request inclusion of definite projects in the District budget and supervise the expenditure of any funds allocated to it in the District budget or by action of the District Board of Directors;
- e. Gather and disburse funds, in consultation with the District Board of Directors, for specific projects not included in the District budget.
- f. The Circuit Forum shall be qualified to submit overtures to Synod and District conventions.
- g. Make suggestions for the triennial process of identifying priorities and goals for the national Synod.
- h. Select the circuit visitor for ratification by the District Convention.

The Circuit may determine how many additional non-voting representatives a congregation may send, however, such representatives have no vote in matters assigned to the circuits by the Bylaws of the Synod. In addition the Circuit Forum is encouraged to meet at least twice a year.

Once each triennium, the electoral circuit will meet in a forum for the purpose of electing delegates to the conventions of the Synod as prescribed in the Bylaws of the Synod.

In most instances the makeup of the Visitation Circuit and the Electoral Circuit will be identical. The visitation circuit is obviously a crucial link in the structure of the Synod. The circuit can assist congregations in carrying out their mission and ministry especially in those areas where it is impossible for a single congregation to function. The circuit can also help congregations to carry out the objectives of the Synod. Just as in the human body there is a continuous two way process, in and out, receiving and sending, so in each manifestation of the Body of Christ. If the congregations of the Synod are to function as the Body of Christ together with other congregations, the circuit visitors are an essential part of the

nervous system carrying impulses back and forth so that the members can function harmoniously and effectively together.

Circuit visitors are nominated by the congregations of their circuits and elected by their districts according to the procedure spelled out in Bylaw 5.2.2 which states:

5.2.2 The circuit visitor shall hold his position by virtue of his selection by the circuit forum and ratification by the district convention.

(a) Circuit forums shall meet at the call of their circuit visitors to select their circuit visitors no later than the time established by the district. When in-person meetings are burdensome (e.g., geographically large circuits), a circuit may select another manner of meeting (e.g., e-meeting technologies) that is suitable and made available to all participants, taking into consideration the need to provide for an open and fair exchange of ideas and secure, private, and confidential voting.

(b) Prior to the day of the circuit forum, nominations for candidates for the office of circuit visitor may be submitted by a voting congregation of the circuit and suggested by the district president, in consultation with the praesidium of the district.

(c) Each circuit may adopt procedures and methods that will insure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes. The privilege of voting shall be exercised by the representatives from each member congregation of the circuit, who shall have been selected in the manner prescribed by the congregation (Bylaw 5.3.2).

(d) All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors whose names were nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws.

(1) Following presentations of pertinent information regarding each pastor as listed in Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (c) and circuit visitor responsibilities as provided hereafter in this bylaw, each voter shall submit the names of two pastors on the initial ballot.

(2) The three pastors (or more in case of a tie vote) who receive the highest number of votes in this preliminary ballot shall be placed on the next ballot. Each voter shall vote for only one candidate.

(3) Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, who shall be declared the nominee.

(e) Immediately following the circuit forum, the circuit visitor shall report in writing the results of the selection process to the secretary of the district in preparation for ratification by the district convention.

(f) In the event that a circuit visitor has not been selected by a circuit forum or has been selected but is no longer available to serve, thus resulting in no circuit visitor selection being included on the convention slate of circuit visitors for a circuit, the district president shall make the selection, which selection shall then be included on the convention slate of circuit visitors.

(g) The convention shall have the right to alter the slate by amendment.

(h) The convention shall then ratify the slate of circuit visitors, which ratification shall constitute election. (2019 LCMS Handbook, 5.2.2, pages 192-193)

The circuit visitor works closely with the district president assisting the president within the circuit. The district president is required by the Synod's Bylaws to meet with the circuit visitors of his district at least once a year for the purpose of discussing the work of the counselors. The circuit visitor is also required to report on his activities to the district president regularly. The circuit visitor is authorized to draw on the district treasury for his expenses (Bylaw 5.2.3 (k-m)).

The *Handbook* of the Synod emphasizes the "supervisory" aspect of the circuit visitor's work (Bylaws 5.2.1 and especially 5.2.3–5.2.3.3).

5.2.1 The circuit visitor is the principal officer of the circuit and serves in accordance with the duties assigned to this position in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod and the Bylaws of the districts.

- (a) The circuit may select such other officers as it deems necessary.
- (b) The circuit may create such other offices as may be desirable and also appoint committees for specific assignments.
- (c) The circuit visitor may appoint from member congregations of the circuit, with the approval of the district president, pastors, teachers, or laypersons to assist him in fulfilling his responsibilities.

5.2.3 Each circuit visitor shall assist the district president within the circuit.

- a) He shall serve under the direction of and be accountable to the district president and shall serve as his spokesman when so authorized and directed and shall assist him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision.
- (b) He shall serve in a servant role.
- (c) He shall seek to remind and encourage members of the circuit of their responsibilities as God's people and the privilege they have in being about His mission.
- (d) He and any other officers of the circuit shall have the primary responsibility for maintaining liaison between the circuit and the Synod at the national and district levels. He shall be conversant with and supportive of Synod-wide and district resolutions and programs.
- (f) He shall seek to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers, and congregations.
- (g) He shall assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases.
- (h) He shall assist the district president, as requested, in promoting and obtaining unanimous participation by congregations in the submission of annual statistical reports.
- (i) He may, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under dispute resolution of the Synod as outlined in section 1.10 of these Bylaws.
- (j) He shall regularly convene the pastors of his circuit for circuit conferences.
- (k) He shall regularly report on his activities to the district president.
- (l) The district president shall meet with the circuit visitors of the district at least once per year to discuss their work, to encourage them, and to conduct ongoing training for congregational and pastoral visits.
- (m) The circuit visitor is authorized to draw on the district treasury for his expenses. (2019 LCMS Handbook, pages 193-194)

In addition the LCMS Handbook speaks of the circuit visitor's "program" responsibilities. It does this, for example, when it makes him primarily responsible for the agenda of the circuit forum and the circuit convocation (Bylaws 5.3.2 (b) and 5.4.2 (b-c)) both of which are given a strong "program" emphasis in the *Handbook* (Bylaw sections 5.3 and 5.4).

This becomes clear also when it is remembered that the circuit visitor is an assistant to the district president (Bylaw 5.2.3) and receives training from him (paragraph [k]). The district president is made responsible not only for the supervision of the members of the Synod in his district (Constitution Article XII. 7, 8, and Bylaw 4.4.5) but also for the implementation of the resolutions of the district and the Synod (Bylaws 4.4.1 and 4.4.2), and for implementing Bylaw 5.2.3 (g) and its requirement that the circuit visitor assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases. This latter responsibility is clearly in the program area. Thus, each circuit is encouraged to develop a program

structure that enables the circuit to respond to the mission and ministry opportunities that God is providing.

Congregations

The circuit visitor communicates and works with the congregations of his circuit in two distinct ways: (1) he goes to the congregation and (2) he gathers representatives of the congregation to meet with him and representatives of the other sister congregations of the circuit.

(1) The visitor goes to the congregation

The *Handbook* of the Synod is very specific in placing the responsibility for visiting the congregations of the circuit upon the president of the district, who may call upon the circuit visitor to serve as his representative. The *Handbook* provides guidance to the circuit visitor in carrying out this responsibility.

5.2.3.1 The circuit visitor shall, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as his representative in the triennial visitation of the congregations of the circuit.

(a) In doing so, he should keep in mind the glory and responsibility of the universal priesthood of all believers as it applies to the congregations. He shall remind them that they are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)

(b) He shall endeavor to strengthen the spirit of unity among circuit congregations to effect mission and ministry and shall seek to strengthen and support the spirit of fellowship.

(c) When he is requested to make an official visit to a congregation by the district president, he shall arrange for such visits in advance with the respective pastor and congregation, except under extraordinary circumstances.

Remembering that the power of the Synod and of any synod official is only the power of persuasion through the Gospel, the circuit visitor will strive to conduct all his official business with the congregations in a brotherly and evangelical manner. He should not resort to legalistic measures. Hopefully, the members of the congregations of his circuit will see him as a sincerely concerned brother who serves them for the sake of the Gospel so that they will accept his advice and trust in his leadership.

Bylaw 5.2.3 (j) of the Synod requires the circuit visitor to report regularly to the district president about his activities. This reporting is especially important when the visitor becomes aware of a conflict in the circuit or in one of the congregations of the circuit. ***The visitor shall immediately inform the district president when the visitor becomes aware of such a conflict.*** This is understandable because the circuit visitor represents the office of the district president in the Circuit. This reporting, however, ought not be turned into an onerous chore. Where formal report forms are used, they should be kept as simple as possible. Often a note to share circuit activities with the district president will suffice. Circuit visitors are assistants to the district president; they are his eyes and ears; they are not his spies in a negative sense but rather an extension of himself to help him to remain sensitive to the needs, the joys, the dangers, the triumphs and hopes and fears of the people committed to his care. A close personal relationship between the district president and the circuit visitors will provide opportunity for the full power of the church to remain at the disposal of the "troops in the field."

(2) The visitor gathers representatives of the congregations

The Bylaws of the Synod provide that a circuit forum is encouraged to meet at least twice a year and a circuit convocation during a year in which there is no Synod or district convention. The purposes and

possible functions of these meetings are outlined in Bylaw sections 5.3 and 5.4. A separate section in this manual will speak more specifically to these important gatherings. Suffice it here to say that these circuit meetings also play an important part in the functioning of the Body of Christ, and the circuit visitor will remain alert to every possibility to use these gatherings to enhance the harmonious and effective working together of the congregations in his circuit together with the overall purposes and objectives of the Synod.

Other Professional Church Workers

In his dealings with fellow pastors and teachers and other professional church workers, the circuit visitor will want especially to be brotherly and evangelical and not resort to legalistic measures. He will come as a brotherly advisor reminding his fellow workers of the glory of the ministry as well as its great responsibilities.

The Bylaws of the Synod encourage the circuit visitor to serve the church workers of his circuit in an evangelical and humble manner. The visitor will look upon his fellow professional workers, first of all, as fellow human beings created and redeemed by God. He will recognize the unique gifts God has given to each one. The visitor must be honest, but when a pastor needs to be admonished or corrected, the visitor should do so in a kind and gentle manner. He should be ready to forgive his fellow worker and also ready to admit his own mistakes and ask his brother to forgive him.

5.2.3.2 The circuit visitor shall serve the pastors of the circuit as a collegial and brotherly adviser, reminding them of the joy of the ministry and of its great responsibilities.

(a) He shall encourage the fellow pastors of the circuit in their preaching and teaching; in the exercise of church discipline in an evangelical manner, and in the proper supervision of Christian education and training in the parish.

(b) He shall encourage, in a brotherly manner, the pastors of the circuit in their spiritual and family life.

(c) He shall encourage the pastors of the circuit to continue both formal and informal continuing professional education.

The key to a circuit visitor's success lies in winning the confidence of the pastors and other professional workers in his circuit. To merit such confidence, the visitor needs to be a Christian friend and brother to the pastor. The ministry today is beset with a myriad of difficulties. Many professional church workers today are troubled by weariness, tension, frustration, and financial pressures. Many have lost the joy, enthusiasm, and confidence in their own ministry as well as zeal and excitement for the mission of the church-at-large.

The circuit visitor needs to pray fervently that he radiates at all times the grace of God in Jesus Christ and elevates the work of his fellow professional workers. His concern for the ordained and commissioned church workers of the circuit and for their work is to be warm and genuine. He is to be a patient and sympathetic listener—one who "hears a person out" before giving counsel. He will be more eager to commend than to criticize; more eager to encourage than to find fault.

The circuit visitor will especially be concerned to maintain all confidences, especially when a fellow professional comes to him with a problem. He will always remember the Eighth Commandment when speaking to or about others in his circuit.

The circuit visitor will be sensitive to the discouragements and the tensions which plague other professional workers in his circuit. With gentle pastoral concern, he will remind them of the glory of the

ministry, the privilege of serving God's people with Word and Sacrament, and the joy of telling others of the wondrous love of God in Christ.

Pastors especially seem to find it difficult to speak about their own spiritual problems. The circuit visitor, therefore, needs to make it easy for the pastors of the circuit to seek counsel from him in time of spiritual temptation or crisis. Pastoral conferences are important. A well-planned retreat for the professional workers in his circuit may pay rich dividends. The circuit visitor will encourage the continuing education and professional development of the workers in his circuit. A word of encouragement (better still, a good example on the part of the circuit visitor) will not go unnoticed.

Concern for the worker's family

The circuit visitor is to demonstrate a sympathetic interest and concern for the family life of the professional workers in his circuit—for their health, for the education of their children, and for their economic well-being. Like the barefoot shoemaker's children, the pastor's family may be deprived not only of a father but also of a pastor. The visitor will remain sensitive to the wife's feelings and concerns.

The circuit visitor is to protect his fellow church workers from unfair criticism and attacks. He will also be concerned about the physical needs of the worker and his family. The circuit visitor can often bring up the matter of salaries in his visit with a congregation where the pastor or teacher would be damaged if he or she were to bring up the matter directly.

Professional church worker families and marriages, by and large, are stable, but pastors do have marriage problems at times. Divorces and separations are not unheard of. When they occur they are doubly disastrous because of the shock and offense to many Christians. The circuit visitor is in the best position to sense problems, provide preventive care, and arrange referrals to sympathetic friends or even to professional counselors. In some circuits there may be one pastor's wife who because of age and wisdom may be a great help especially to the younger wives. Perhaps the circuit visitor's mate can serve in this role. The bride of a young pastor, with stars in her eyes, may need some help in dealing with the pressures of the parsonage.

Concern for retired workers

There will also be concern for the retired ordained and commissioned workers, veterans of many years of faithful service, and the aged widows of professional church workers. These are also in need of loving concern, yet they often are ignored until they die. The circuit visitor will extend his sympathetic and appreciative concern for these veterans of the cross.

Conclusion

Finally, the words of Peter might well be the words for and of the faithful circuit visitor: "So I exhort the elders (pastors) among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. When the chief shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

C. OVERVIEW OF CIRCUIT VISITOR'S RELATIONSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THEIR DISTRICT PRESIDENT

While the office of circuit visitor is a man-made position and was instituted for good order in the church, it is especially important that each circuit visitor understand his servant-role in the church at large. The office of circuit visitor is an extension of the Office of the district president. As such the circuit visitor is responsible to and accountable to his district president. The circuit visitor is to keep his district president informed about what is happening in the congregations of the circuit he serves, in the lives of called church workers, both ordained and commissioned. This includes conflicted situations or those which might cause a church worker to be disciplined, as are outlined at length in this "Circuit Visitors' Manual". What follows are pertinent sections that highlight that relationship of the circuit visitor to the district president; along with the pertaining page number to this document.

Page 4:

Sometime after World War II the circuit visitor became the circuit "counselor" by convention action (1959 Committee 6 Resolution 7 *Proceedings*, p. 233). The name change was not to change the office. Visitation by the district president with the assistance of the circuit "counselor" was stipulated by the Synod's *Handbook*. At the 2013 Synodical Convention the title of this office was returned to circuit visitor and again the requirements, duties, and obligations of the office were not changed. [Resolution 7-02A, 2013 *Proceedings*, p. 175].

Page 5:

It would seem obvious that from his election the circuit visitor holds the trust and confidence of the pastors and congregations in his circuit. This is to be seen as a sacred trust and needs to be held with honor and respect. Because he is an extension of the office of the district president, he needs to be a man of integrity and one willing to give of his time and efforts for the Lord and His Church. The circuit visitor will be dealing with people, thus he needs to be able to lead and lead well for he is to:

- remind and encourage congregations and pastors in his circuit of their responsibilities and privileges of carrying out the Lord's mission;
- build up and instruct congregations and pastors in his circuit with gentleness and forbearance;
- show wisdom in dealing with conflicts as they arise in congregations and pastoral relationships in his circuit, encouraging forgiveness and love to be shown;
- celebrate with congregations and pastors in his circuit the joys and successes of ministry and he is to keep the District President informed regarding happenings in the circuit.

Page 13:

The circuit visitor works closely with the district president assisting the president within the circuit. The district president is required by the Synod's Bylaws to meet with the circuit visitors of his district at least once a year for the purpose of discussing the work of the counselors. The circuit visitor is also required to report on his activities to the district president regularly. The circuit visitor is authorized to draw on the district treasury for his expenses (Bylaw 5.2.3 (k-m)).

Page 14:

5.2.3 Each circuit visitor shall assist the district president within the circuit.

- a) He shall serve under the direction of and be accountable to the district president and shall serve as his spokesman when so authorized and directed and shall assist him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision.
- (b) He shall serve in a servant role.
- (c) He shall seek to remind and encourage members of the circuit of their responsibilities as God's people and the privilege they have in being about His mission.
- (d) He and any other officers of the circuit shall have the primary responsibility for maintaining liaison between the circuit and the Synod at the national and district levels. He shall be conversant with and supportive of Synod-wide and district resolutions and programs.
- (f) He shall seek to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers, and congregations.
- (g) He shall assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases.
- (h) He shall assist the district president, as requested, in promoting and obtaining unanimous participation by congregations in the submission of annual statistical reports.
- (i) He may, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under dispute resolution of the Synod as outlined in section 1.10 of these Bylaws.
- (j) He shall regularly convene the pastors of his circuit for circuit conferences.
- (k) He shall regularly report on his activities to the district president.
- (l) The district president shall meet with the circuit visitors of the district at least once per year to discuss their work, to encourage them, and to conduct ongoing training for congregational and pastoral visits.
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This becomes clear also when it is remembered that the circuit visitor is an assistant to the district president (Bylaw 5.2.3) and receives training from him (paragraph [k]). The district president is made responsible not only for the supervision of the members of the Synod in his district (Constitution Article XII. 7, 8, and Bylaw 4.4.5) but also for the implementation of the resolutions of the district and the Synod (Bylaws 4.4.1 and 4.4.2), and for implementing Bylaw 5.2.3 (g) and its requirement that the circuit visitor assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases. This latter responsibility is clearly in the program area. Thus, each circuit is encouraged to develop a program structure that enables the circuit to respond to the mission and ministry opportunities that God is providing.

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5.2.3.1 The circuit visitor shall, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as his representative in the triennial visitation of the congregations of the circuit.

(a) In doing so, he should keep in mind the glory and responsibility of the universal priesthood of all believers as it applies to the congregations. He shall remind them that they are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light” (2 1 Peter 2:9)

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D. GUIDELINES FOR CALLS AND VACANCIES

The Right of the Congregation and the Responsibilities of the DP in Calling a Pastor

Prepared by Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
Clergy Call and Roster Committee

One of the distinct and humbling responsibilities that a district president fulfills as he serves the church-at-large is that of providing a call list to a vacant congregation, and then with the assistance of the circuit visitor guiding the congregation through the divine call process.

As the district president constructs a call list, basic questions arise: What kind of a pastor does the congregation need? What special gifts and abilities are required so that this parish can move forward in mission and ministry? Who will be best to serve in the pastoral office in this parish? How much influence should a district president bring to bear upon the congregation to call the pastor which he considers to be the best candidate?

It goes without saying that a district president wants only what is best for the congregations of his district. If a congregation calls a pastor who fails to honor his vocation, one who is disruptive, and/or one who proves unfaithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the Bride of Christ, viz. the local congregation, will suffer. Oftentimes because of that the witness and ministry of the church at large also suffers. Sadly, some may also lose their faith as a result.

Wanting only what is best for the congregations that he has been elected to serve, a district president can easily fall prey to the temptation of imposing his own will upon the calling congregation. This happens in two ways: either by refusing to allow a pastor in good standing to be considered by the congregation, or by specifically guiding the call committee and/or the congregation to the man whom the district president considers to be the best choice for that congregation. The church also suffers here because it has been deprived of the rights, which have been given to the church by Christ himself. (cf. Thesis 6)

However, the right of calling a pastor rests not with the office of the district president, but with the congregation, which is the Bride of Christ, the priesthood of believers. This Circuit Visitors' Manual states: "The Office of the Public Ministry is carried out within the context of the Christian congregation and, consequently, the congregation calls pastors to Word and Sacrament ministry within its life and ministry." [cf. page 47]

The local congregation, as the Bride of Christ and as the priesthood of all believers, has the right to call any pastor it chooses.¹ It is even their right to be willful and to head off in a direction that is not God-pleasing. The district president, as the ecclesial supervisor, has the responsibility to serve as an advisor and encourager during the call process. In that capacity the district president helps the local congregation to understand the proper Scriptural parameters of the divine call, as well as the *de iure humano* procedures under which we have agreed to follow as a synod.

¹ LCMS Bylaw 2.5.1 Congregations shall seek the counsel of their respective district presidents when calling ordained or commissioned ministers. 2.5.2 Congregations that are members of the Synod shall call and be served only by (1) ordained ministers who have been admitted to their respective ministries in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth in these Bylaws and have thereby become members of the Synod; (2) candidates for the pastoral ministry who have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments; or (3) ordained ministers who are members in good standing of church bodies that have been formally recognized to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod when agreements for such calls are in place.

One of the most critical responsibilities of a district president in aiding the vacant congregation is that he is to provide the congregation with a list of eligible pastors who might faithfully serve God's people in that place.²

To aide both congregations and district presidents in their respective rights and responsibilities the following six theses are offered, along with supporting Bible passages, references to the Lutheran Confessions, as well as how these have been explained and defined by Lutheran church fathers.

The theses themselves are taken from six points, which were written by C.F.W Walther and were published in *Der Lutheraner* from 1860-1861. The articles are currently published in English by the Concordia Seminary Publications under the title: *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*.³

The Theses:

- Thesis 1.** The first doctrine of Scripture, from which this right [of the congregation to choose its own pastor] clearly follows, is this, that faithful Christians, as the bride of Christ, have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore everything which Christ has earned for us. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 29]
- Thesis 2.** Among the doctrines of Holy Scripture which prove that Christian congregations have the right to elect their own pastors themselves the second is this: that all believing Christians are spiritual priests. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 79.]
- Thesis 3.** A third doctrine of Holy Scripture which proves that Christian congregations have the right to choose their own pastors themselves is that the church, i.e., the believing Christians, have the command and right to preach the Word of God, therefore, in one word, that they have the office originally. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 137.]
- Thesis 4.** A fourth teaching of Holy Scripture from which the right of the congregation to elect follows is this, that pastors are a gift, given by Christ to the church. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 160.]
- Thesis 5.** A fifth teaching of Holy Scripture on which the congregation's right to elect is based is that ministers are not lords, but servants and stewards of the church. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 163.]
- Thesis 6.** A sixth clear teaching of the Bible, from which the congregation's right to elect follows, is finally: that the church or the believing Christians have the right and duty to judge doctrine, to distinguish true teachers from false; and to accept the former, however, to avoid and flee the later. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 169.]

Thesis 1.

The first doctrine of Scripture, from which this right [of the congregation to choose its own pastor] clearly follows, is this, that faithful Christians, as the bride of Christ, have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore everything which Christ has earned for us. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 29]

² COP Manual, 9. The Calling of Ordained Ministers, pages 454-559.

³ *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*, CFW Walther, Concordia Seminary Publications, 1997. Fred Kramer, translator.

Holy Scripture:

Matthew 16:15-19 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (cf. also. Matthew 18:18)

Revelation 19:6-9 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” (cf. also Ephesians 5)

Lutheran Confessions:

Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. (*rite vocatus*)

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VIII, par. 9 Therefore, in order that we may not despair, but may know that the Church will nevertheless remain [until the end of the world], likewise that we may know that, however great the multitude of the wicked is, yet the Church [which is Christ’s bride] exists, and that Christ affords those gifts which He has promised to the Church, to forgive sins, to hear prayer, to give the Holy Ghost, this article in the Creed presents us these consolations.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Art. LXVIII 68] Here belong the statements of Christ which testify that the keys have been given to the Church, and not merely to certain persons, Matt. 18, 20: *Where two or three are gathered together in My name, etc.*

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Art. XXII 22] But they cite against us certain passages, namely, Matt. 16, 18f.: *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church*; also: *I will give unto thee the keys*; also John 21, 15: *Feed My sheep*, and some others. But since this entire controversy has been fully and accurately treated elsewhere in the books of our theologians, and everything cannot be reviewed in this place, we refer to those writings, and wish them to be regarded as repeated. Yet we shall reply briefly concerning the interpretation [of the passages quoted].

23] In all these passages Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles [and does not speak for himself alone, but for all the apostles], as appears from the text itself. For Christ asks not Peter alone, but says: *Whom do ye say that I am?* And what is here said [to Peter alone] in the singular number: *I will give unto thee the keys; and whatsoever thou shalt bind, etc.*, is elsewhere expressed [to their entire number], in the plural Matt. 18,18: *Whosoever ye shall bind, etc.* And in John 20, 23: *Whosoever sins ye remit, etc.* These words testify that the keys are given alike to all the apostles and that all the apostles are alike sent forth [to preach].

24] In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: *If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc.* Therefore he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. [For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately

to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to everyone who desires it, just as it is actually manifest that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. And Christ speaks in these words: *Whatsoever ye shall bind*, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely, to the Church: *Where two or three are gathered together in My name*. Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: *Tell it unto the Church*.

Church Fathers:

Luther: Third, that the Holy Spirit drives home this merit of Christ and makes it operative in us, so that it was not done and is not preached in vain. For thereby a holy Christian church comes into being, which is the entire congregation of all those persons, wherever they may be, living or dead, who through the operation of the Holy Spirit partake of Christ's merit, suffering, and resurrection. *To this congregation and to every member of it belong the keys, the power to forgive sins, and to proclaim the gospel—privately, and publicly if one is required to do so by others having equal authority*. Through this office of preaching and of forgiving sins, souls are resurrected here from sins and from death, and confidently await also the resurrection of the body and life everlasting through the same Holy Spirit who has now begun this in the soul. [LW Volume 36, page 298]

Luther: On the basis of these words they have attributed the keys to St. Peter alone. But the same St. Matthew, in Matthew 18[:18], has barred such an erroneous interpretation, for Christ says to all of them in general, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Here it is clear that Christ is interpreting himself, explaining chapter 16[:18] in this chapter 18[:18], that the keys are given to St. Peter in place of the entire community, and not to his person alone. Thus also John, in the last chapter [John 20:22–23]: "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; but if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" [LW Vol. 39, page 86]

Luther: But this office of the keys belongs to all of us who are Christians, as I have so often proved and shown in my books against the pope. For the word of Christ in Matt. 18[:15] is addressed not only to the Apostles, but, certainly, to all the brethren: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault ... if he listens to you, you have gained your brother." And, further on, "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [Matt. 18:17, 18]. [LW Volume 40, page 26]

Luther: The keys are given to him who stands on this rock by faith, to whomever the Father has given it. Now you cannot tell whether any person remains on the rock, for one falls today and the other tomorrow just as Peter fell. Therefore, no one is certain to possess the keys except the church, that is, those who stand on this rock. Only the Christian church has the keys; otherwise no one, not even a pope or bishop, may use them as having been entrusted with them by the congregation. A pastor performs the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs all other functions [*Aemter*] by which he serves the congregation not in his own name but in the place of the congregation. [Walther: Church and Ministry, p. 276]

Gerhard: Augustine writes: 'These keys He has given to His church in order that what they loose on earth might be loosed in heaven, and what they might bind on earth might be bound in heaven.' This verdict of Augustine is confirmed by all the passages of Scripture in which the church is called Christ's bride and mistress of the house (Ps. 45:10; John 3:29; Ps. 68:13 [cf. Luther's translation of these passages—Tr.]). Now as the keys are given by the master of the house to the mistress, so Christ, the Lord of the house of God, which is the church (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15), has given them to the church as to His

bride. The ministers of the Word use them merely as stewards (1 Cor. 4:1) and servants in the name of the church (Loci theologici, “De min. eccl.,” par. 87). [*Church and the Ministry*, p. 284]

Walther: Thus it is also with the name ‘bride of Christ,’ which, as we have seen, is also applied to believing Christians in the Word of God. For as a bridegroom gives to his bride, if he really accepts her as his spouse, the keys to the entire house, and thereby makes her a participant in all his goods and the mistress of his house, and gives her power over all supplies and treasures in his house: so Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, has also given to all believing Christians, as his bride, the keys of his house, made them partakers in all his goods, and given them authority and power over all the treasures of his house, and therefore also the authority and right of calling their pastors. Whoever denies that believing Christians possess all these glories, must also deny, in defiance of the Word of God, that they are by faith the bride of Christ. [The Congregation’s Right to Choose Its Pastor, CFW Walther, p. 30]

Walther: Consequently, our Church does not teach that every believer is a public preacher, a minister of the Church, a pastor, a clergyman; but she teaches that the Office—for the public administration of which the ministers only, according to the direction and institution of God, are called—is an authority bestowed by Christ originally and an authority bestowed by Christ originally and immediately upon the whole Church, that is, upon all believers, and therefore resting and rooting in them, and inseparable from them. [The Keys Are Given to the Church of Believers Sermon on Matthew 16:13–19 Preached by C. F. W. Walther Before the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, etc., in 1870, At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Locations 4027-4030). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther: Whoever therefore denies that Christians or the entire church have the keys immediately, must also deny that Christians or the entire church have the promise of the Gospel immediately. Such a person, as much as in him lies, tears away the ground from under the church’s feet and makes the Christians into unbelievers, for whom others must believe in the Gospel; as much as in him lies, he destroys the church, denies justification before God by faith and makes an end of all Christianity; he denies to Christians and to the church what makes them Christians and church, and thus overthrows God’s entire order of salvation. [The Congregation’s Right to Choose Its Pastor, pages 43-44]

Walther: If the congregation, this true possessor of the Keys, acknowledges a preacher as her pastor, and if he preaches, baptizes, absolves, and administers the Lord’s Supper in the right manner, then according to this doctrine, a Christian knows for certain that the real Keys are there. For the congregation, the original possessor of the same, has conferred them to her preacher according to the institution of God, that he should administer them not in his own [name], but in Christ’s and in her name. The pastors may die, they may become hirelings, yea, wolves; still, the Keys, according to the true doctrine, thus are not lost to the congregation of Christ. For she herself, the congregation of Christ, does not waver on that account. She is built upon Christ, the eternal rock, so that even the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. Behold therefore, the true doctrine of the Office of the Keys has just the same importance as the certainty of the Means of Grace and of the grace of God itself to every Christian. Therefore Luther, already in the year 1517, in his Ninety-Five Theses, which laid the foundation of the reformation of the Church, wrote thus: “Every true Christian, whether living or dead, is participant in all the blessings of Christ and the Church, from the gift of God. We say with good reason, without wickedness or frivolity, that this treasure are the keys of the Church, given to the Church by the merit of Christ.” [Sermon based on Matthew 16:13-19 in 1870, Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Locations 4141-4151). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther: According to this doctrine, Christ remains the Christians’ only king, and the Christians remain royal priests, subject to no man, no angel, no creature in heaven and on earth. According to this doctrine,

therefore, the glorious and blessed liberty of the children of God is maintained. According to this doctrine the Christians remain of the household of God, but the preachers their stewards and mere administrators of their goods. According to this doctrine therefore the Christians keep the right and the power of appointing and dismissing the preachers as their servants and to examine and to judge their doctrine, their practice, and their life. According to this doctrine, no preacher has the power of denying absolution to a penitent Christian, since it is not a power of the preacher, but the property of the Christians, which he has only the duty of announcing to them as their servant employed for this purpose. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Locations 4169-4175) Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Friedrich Wyneken: We further believe that this one-in-its-essence, undivided Church, the communion of believers, without the distinction of so-called clergy and laity, is the heavenly Bride. She is wedded to Christ by faith, and through this faith, has been elevated to become the one proper possessor and bearer of all heavenly goods, rights, offices, and authority. It is as the Bride of Christ, and not as the so-called clergy [Geistlichen], that she dispenses the spoils that Christ as the stronger one takes for the strong. For He has given the keys to her immediately, and not to the clergy. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Locations 8133-8137). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Preus: Luther, the Confessions, Chemnitz, and all the dogmaticians teach with one voice against the Anabaptists, Socinians, Schwenckfeldians and other enthusiasts, that after the time of the apostles God does not call pastors and ministers directly but mediately through the church. This is obviously the meaning of AC XIV. Mentzer bases AC XIV on such passage as 1 Tm 4:14; 2 Tm 1:6; Acts 20:28, and Eph 4:21. Thus God calls through the church, Christ's bride, to whom he gives the keys of the kingdom. [Robert Preus, "The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy" Church and Ministry Today, page 7, Luther Academy, 2001]

Thesis 2.

Among the doctrines of Holy Scripture which prove that Christian congregations have the right to elect their own pastors themselves the second is this: that all believing Christians are spiritual priests. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 79.]

Holy Scripture:

1 Peter 2:4-5, As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Revelation 1:5-7, To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Lutheran Confessions:

Apology to the Augsburg Confession: Art. XXIV, par. 25-26, 25] Now the rest are eucharistic sacrifices, which are called sacrifices of praise, Lev. 3, 1f.; 7, 11f.; Ps. 56, 12f., namely, the preaching of the Gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the afflictions of saints, yea, all good works of saints. These sacrifices are not satisfactions for those making them, or applicable on behalf of others, so as to merit for these, *ex opere operato*, the remission of sins or reconciliation. For they are made by those who have been reconciled. **26]** And such are the sacrifices of the New Testament, as Peter teaches, 1 Pet. 2, 5: *An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices*. Spiritual sacrifices, however, are contrasted not only with those of cattle, but even with human works offered *ex opere operato*, because *spiritual* refers to the movements of the Holy Ghost in us.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Art. LXIX, 69] Lastly, the statement of Peter also confirms this, 1 Pet. 2, 9: *Ye are a royal priesthood*. These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood.

Church Fathers:

Luther: It is therefore not true that there is more than one simple priesthood in the church; and the tonsure-bearers are not called priests in accordance with Scripture, as Emser lies. The name “priest” belongs to all of us, with all its power, rights. [LW Vol. 39, page 237]

Luther: For a priest, especially in the New Testament, was not made but was born. He was created, not ordained. He was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and Spirit in the washing of regeneration [John 3:6f.; Titus 3:5f.]. Indeed, all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians. Worthy of anathema is any assertion that a priest is anything else than a Christian. For such an assertion has no support in the Word of God and is based only on human opinions, on ancient usage, or on the opinions of the majority, any one of which is ineffectual to establish an article of faith without sacrilege and offense, as I have sufficiently shown elsewhere. [LW Volume 40, Page 19]

Luther: Paul’s frequent use of the word “stewardship” or “household,” “ministry,” “minister,” “servant,” “one serving the gospel,” etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers. In this view of the ministry, the so-called “indelible character” vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. [LW Volume 40, p. 35]

Walther: Sermon on the Office of the Ministry, 1862: The preacher is therefore distinguished from other Christians not that he were something more than a member of the body and a brother. He is rather such a member who has the obligation to serve the whole. The office is not a higher estate in Christianity. It is nothing other than a greater service. Those who hold the office serve among those who are all priests with them. Christ is the Lord of the house. The church is his bride, the matron of the house [*Hausherrin*]. The preacher is the householder. He does not exercise a power, which only he, the preacher has. The power he has is rather the power of the church. He has been entrusted with this power by the church according to God’s own order, to be exercised publicly in the name of the church. He does not dole out goods, which only he, the preacher, possesses. He doles out the goods of the church, which are conferred [*uebertragen*] to him by the church only for faithful administration in its stead. Therefore the holy apostle wrote to the Corinthians: “*Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? – They are ministers, through which you have become believers; and this to each as the Lord has given. We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, that He is the Lord, and we are your servants for Jesus’ sake.*” (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:5). [Harrison, At Home in the House of Our Fathers, pp. 150-151]

Walther: The keys were given to the church, and by the church entrusted to pastors as stewards of the mysteries of God, yet in such a way that every member of the church can retain his right to the keys, and also exercises this right to his neighbor in case the ordinary pastor is not present. Every Christians has the power, yes, he is duty bound, by virtue of the anointing which he has received from God, to announce the comfort of the grace of God in Christ on the basis of the Word to a terrified heart which wrestles with hell. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 110.]

Walther: Again in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of St. John, we read that Christ said to His disciples "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" [John 20:22–23]. Thus Christ intimated clearly that the Keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to those that have received the Holy Spirit, consequently to the Church, or to all truly believing Christians. Again in other passages of the Scriptures, the Church of believers is called Christ's Bride, Wife and Housewife, and the Mother of Christendom, whereas the preachers of the Gospel are called stewards, ministers, and servants. However, as a bride and housewife does not receive the keys to all the goods of the house mediately through her servants, but immediately from her bridegroom and husband, so also the Church does not receive the Keys to the house of God mediately through her ministers, the preachers, but has received them immediately from her heavenly bridegroom, Christ. Again, according to the Word of God, not the preachers by their office, but the Christians by their faith are the priests of the New Testament. Not once are the preachers called priests, but only ministers, stewards, elders, shepherds, teachers, bishops; but Peter addresses all believing Christians thus: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" [I Peter 2:9]. [The Keys Are Given to the Church of Believers Sermon on Matthew 16:13–19, Preached by C. F. W. Walther Before the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, etc., in 1870, At Home in the House of My Fathers, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). Kindle Locations (4093-4104). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther: For if the preachers are the original real possessors of the Keys of the kingdom of heaven, they then form a spiritual nobility, propagating itself in the Church beside the Christians, and far superior to the rank of common Christians. The Christians then have no more a free access unto Christ and His grace, for then the preachers are the indispensable mediators, not the servants, but the masters of the Christians, and these are their subjects. Then it is within the power of the preachers to open or not to open heaven for the Christians, for then they alone possess and have to maintain the blessed ministry of reconciliation. Then they alone give preachers to the Church and take them away, appoint and dismiss them. Then the Christians must beg of them the grace of Christ and, on the other hand, fear their excommunication, whether just or unjust. Romish popery shows where this doctrine finally leads. For this horrible dominion, with its hierarchy and tyrannizing over the consciences, is nothing but the consistent carrying out of this damnable doctrine. [The Keys Are Given to the Church of Believers Sermon on Matthew 16:13–19 Preached by C. F. W. Walther Before the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, etc., in 1870, Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). At Home in the House of My Fathers (Kindle Locations 4155- 4162). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Thesis 3.

A third doctrine of Holy Scripture which proves that Christian congregations have the right to choose their own pastors themselves is that the church, i.e., the believing Christians have the command and right to preach the Word of God, therefore, in one word, that they have the office originally. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 137.]

Holy Scripture:

Matthew 16: 15-19 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 18:16-20 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Lutheran Confessions:

Treatise on the Power and Primacy, paragraph 24] In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. [*Triglotta*, page 511]

Church Fathers:

Luther: Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. [LW Vol. 30, p. 55]

Luther: The keys are given to him who stands on this rock by faith, to whomever the Father has given it. Now you cannot tell whether any person remains on the rock, for one falls today and the other tomorrow just as Peter fell. Therefore, no one is certain to possess the keys except the church, that is, those who stand on this rock. Only the Christian church has the keys; otherwise no one, not even a pope or bishop, may use them as having been entrusted with them by the congregation. A pastor performs the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs all other functions [*Aemter*] by which he serves the congregation not in his own name but in the place of the congregation. [Walther: Church and Ministry, p. 276]

Luther: This church has the power to engage pastors. The church selects such as are able and competent, not for their own sakes but for the welfare of the church. And in an emergency everyone must take care of his own needs. Yet not all are authorized to preach, but only one is to preach to the entire congregation. Thus the ministry is not mine; it belongs to all the others; it is a public office and confession. [LW Volume 22, page 480]

Walther: Hence, the power of the public ministry rests in the church and is conferred by the church according to Christ’s express direction on certain persons specifically called to the ministry of the Word. This power the church does not have mediately by the incumbents of the office entrusted with it for the

benefit of the church, but the church possesses it immediately, while on the contrary the incumbents of *the office have it mediately, for they received it from the church, to which it originally belongs.* [Church and Ministry, p. 271]

Thesis 4.

A fourth teaching of Holy Scripture from which the right of the congregation to elect follows is this, that pastors are a gift, given by Christ to the church. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 160.]

Holy Scripture:

Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Acts 1:15-26 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, "May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it"; and "Let another take his office." So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts 6:1ff And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Ephesians 4:11-14 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Hebrews 5:4-6 And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

Lutheran Confessions:

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Art. xiii, par. 118] We teach that the sacrifice of Christ dying on the cross has been sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and that there is no need, besides, of other sacrifices, as though this were not sufficient for our sins. Men, accordingly, are justified not because of any other sacrifices, but because of this one sacrifice of Christ, if they believe that they have been redeemed by this sacrifice. **9]** They are accordingly called priests, not in order to make any sacrifices for the people as in the Law, so that by these they may merit remission of sins for the people; but they are called to teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments to the people. **10]** Nor do we have another priesthood like the Levitical, **11]** as the Epistle to the Hebrews sufficiently teaches. But if ordination be understood as applying to the ministry of the Word, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises, Rom. 1, 16: *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.* Likewise, Is. 55, 11: *So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.* **12]** If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For the Church has the command to appoint ministers, which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry, and is present in the ministry [that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men]. **13]** And it is of advantage, so far as can be done, to adorn the ministry of the Word with every kind of praise against fanatical men, who dream that the Holy Ghost is given not through the Word, but because of certain preparations of their own, if they sit unoccupied and silent in obscure places, waiting for illumination, as the Enthusiasts formerly taught, and the Anabaptists now teach.

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Art. xv, p 41-42: With us the pastors and ministers of the churches are compelled publicly [and privately] to instruct and hear the youth; and this ceremony produces the best fruits. [And the Catechism is not a mere childish thing, as is the bearing of banners and tapers, but a very profitable instruction.] **42]** Among the adversaries, in many regions [as in Italy and Spain], during the entire year no sermons are delivered, except in Lent. [Here they ought to cry out and justly make grievous complaint; for this means at one blow to overthrow completely all worship. For of all acts of worship that is the greatest, most holy, most necessary, and highest, which God has required as the highest in the First and the Second Commandment, namely, to preach the Word of God. For the ministry is the highest office in the Church.]

Church Fathers:

Luther: Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. [LW Volume 30, p. 55]

Luther: For none of us is born as apostle, preacher, teacher, pastor through baptism, but we are all born simply as priests and clerics. Afterward, some are taken from the ranks of such born clerics and called or elected to these offices which they are to discharge on behalf of all of us. [LW Volume 38, page 188]

Luther: The keys are given to him who stands on this rock by faith, to whomever the Father has given it. Now you cannot tell whether any person remains on the rock, for one falls today and the other tomorrow just as Peter fell. Therefore, no one is certain to possess the keys except the church, that is, those who stand on this rock. Only the Christian church has the keys; otherwise no one, not even a pope or bishop, may use them as having been entrusted with them by the congregation. A pastor performs the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs all other functions [*Aemter*] by

which he serves the congregation not in his own name but in the place of the congregation. [Walther: *Church and Ministry*, page 276]

Luther: We have been born of this bridegroom and bride through holy baptism and thus have become true clerics in Christendom in a hereditary manner, sanctified by his blood and consecrated by his Holy Spirit, as St. Peter calls us in I Peter 2 [:9]: “But you are . . . a royal priesthood” for offering spiritual sacrifices. St. Paul also extols us as priests in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 12 [:1], for he calls upon us “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. . .” Now to make sacrifices to God is solely the office of the priests, as the pope himself and all the world must admit. Moreover, we are not only his children, but also his brothers, as he says in Psalm 22 [:22]: “I will tell of thy name to my brethren,” and in the Gospel of Matthew: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and my sister, and my mother” [12:50]. So we are not only true clerics and priests according to our right as children but also according to our right as brothers. This, our hereditary priesthood with which we are born, we do not want to have taken away, impeded and obscured; rather, we want to have it brought out into the open, proclaimed and extolled with all its honors in order that it should beam and shine like the precious sun and blind the eyes of the devil and his hypocrisies and abominations, making his private mass and chrism in contrast with it an illusion and an evil odor, stinking worse than the devil’s excrement. For this reason also the Holy Spirit in the New Testament diligently prevented the name *sacerdos*, priest or cleric, from being given to any apostle or to various other offices, but it is solely the name of the baptized or of Christians as a hereditary name with which one is born through baptism. For none of us is born as apostle, preacher, teacher, pastor through baptism, but we are all born simply as priests and clerics. Afterward, some are taken from the ranks of such born clerics and called or elected to these offices which they are to discharge on behalf of all of us. [LW Volume 38. 187–188]

Luther: For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other. This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests. [LW Volume 13, page 332]

Walther: Thesis VI The preaching office is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical authority, or the Keys, and through the call that is prescribed by God. The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call. **Thesis VII** The holy preaching office is the authority, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation. [Walther, CFW (2012-12-01). *The Church and The Office of The Ministry* (Kindle Locations 550). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Pieper: In this article we are speaking of the public ministry in the narrower sense, that is, of the office by which the means of grace, given originally to the Christians as their inalienable possession, are administered by order and on behalf of Christians.

The ministry in this sense presupposes Christian congregations. Only a congregation can establish the public ministry. Smalcald Articles (Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops): “Wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church [the churches, the congregations] to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.” (*Trigl.* 523, 67.) This is Scriptural. Only after the mission work on Crete had resulted in congregations

did Paul command Titus (Titus 1:5) to ordain elders (πρεσβυτέρους) “in every city,” κατὰ πόλιν, in the cities where there were congregations, which elders, or presbyters, he then called bishops (ἐπίσκοποι), v. 7. Furthermore, of the congregations that had come into existence during the first missionary journey of Paul in Asia Minor we are told that Paul and Barnabas on their return “ordained them elders (πρεσβυτέρους) in every church,” κατ’ ἐκκλησίαν, wherever there were congregations (Acts 14:23).

That the public ministry presupposes congregations is evident also from the fact that Scripture mentions entire congregations and every member of them as coming under the care of this office. 1 Tim. 3:5: “take care of the church of God” (τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι); Acts 20:28: “Take heed to *all the flock*” (προσέχειν παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ); v. 28b: “to feed the church of God” (ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ); v. 31: “to warn everyone” (νουθετεῖν ἕνα ἕκαστον); 1 Pet. 5:3: “being ensamples to the *flock*” (τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου). [Pieper, F. (1953). *Vol. 3: Christian Dogmatics* (electronic ed.) (439). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Thesis 5.

A fifth teaching of Holy Scripture on which the congregation’s right to elect is based is that ministers are not lords, but servants and stewards of the church. [The Congregation’s Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 163.]

Holy Scripture:

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (**ὕπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ**). Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

- **ὕπηρέτας Χριστοῦ.** A person who renders service—‘servant.’ Helper. “The special feature of ὑπέρτης, however, is that he willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth.” (Kittel, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 8:533)
- **οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ.** Steward. One who has the authority and responsibility for something—‘one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager. (cf. also Luke 12:42)

Titus 1:5-9 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

1 Peter 4:7-11 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:1-4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering [κατακυριεύοντες] over those in your charge, but being examples [Τύποι] to the flock.

- **Κατακυριεύοντες:** Domineering: overpower, gain dominion over, subdue. In the 6th cent. A.D. it came to mean “to have title to something.” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Bromiley)
- **Τύποι:** a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided—model, pattern.
- **ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου:** but becoming models or visible patterns for the flock.

Lutheran Confessions:

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIII, 12] Besides, we have declared in the Confession what power the Gospel ascribes to bishops. Those who are now bishops do not perform the duties of bishops according to the Gospel; although, indeed, they may be bishops according to canonical polity, which we do not censure. But we are speaking of a bishop according to the Gospel. **13]** And we are pleased with the ancient division of power into power of the order and power of *jurisdiction* [that is, the administration of the Sacraments and the exercise of spiritual jurisdiction]. Therefore the bishop has the power of the order, *i.e.*, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; he has also the power of jurisdiction, *i.e.*, the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes, and again to absolve them if they are converted and **14]** seek absolution. But their power is not to be tyrannical, *i.e.*, without a fixed law; nor regal, *i.e.*, above law; but they have a fixed command and a fixed Word of God, according to which they ought to teach, and according to which they ought to exercise their jurisdiction. Therefore, even though they should have some jurisdiction, it does not follow that they are able to institute new services. For services pertain in no way to jurisdiction. And they have the Word, they have the command, how far they ought to exercise jurisdiction, namely, if any one would do anything contrary to that Word which they have received from Christ. [For the Gospel does not set up a rule independently of the Gospel; that is quite clear and certain.]

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Art. xxiv, par. 79] Λειτουργία, they say, signifies a sacrifice, and the Greeks call the Mass, liturgy. Why do they here omit the old appellation *synaxis*, which shows that the Mass was formerly the communion of many? But let us speak of the word liturgy. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.*, of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as 81] though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the term λειτουργία agrees aptly with the ministry. For it is an old word, ordinarily employed in public civil administrations, and signified to the Greeks public burdens, as tribute, the expense of equipping a fleet, or similar things, as the oration of Demosthenes, *For Leptines*, testifies, all of which is occupied with the discussion of public duties and immunities: Φήσει δὲ ἀναξίους τινα'ς ἀνθρώπους εὐρομένους ἀτέλειαν ἐκδεδυκέναι τὰς λειτουργίας, *i.e.*: *He will say that some unworthy men, having found an immunity, have withdrawn from public burdens.* And thus they spoke in the time of the Romans, as the rescript of Pertinax, *De Iure Immunitatis, l. Semper*, shows: Εἰ καὶ μὴ πασῶν λειτουργιῶν τοῦ πατέρα ὁ τῶν τέκνων ἀριθμὸς ἀνεῖται, *Even though the number of children does not liberate parents from all public burdens.* And the Commentary upon Demosthenes states that λειτουργία is a kind of tribute, the expense of the games, the expense of equipping vessels, of attending to the gymnasia and similar public offices. 82] And Paul in 2 Cor. 9, 12 employs it for a collection. The taking of the collection not only supplies those things which are wanting

to the saints, but also causes them to give more thanks abundantly to God, etc. And in Phil. 2, 25 he calls Epaphroditus a λειτουργός, *one who ministered to my wants*, 83] where assuredly a sacrificer cannot be understood. But there is no need of more testimonies, since examples are everywhere obvious to those reading the Greek writers, in whom λειτουργία is employed for public civil burdens or ministries. And on account of the diphthong, grammarians do not derive it from λιτή, which signifies prayers, but from public goods, which they call λείτα, so that λειτουργέω means, I attend to, I administer public goods.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Article XXIV, For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it, just as it is actually manifest that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. And Christ speaks in these words: *Whatsoever ye shall bind*, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely, to the Church: *Where two or three are gathered together in My name*. Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: *Tell it unto the Church*.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, art. Lxvii 67] For wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the Church, which no human power can wrest from the Church, as Paul also testifies to the Ephesians when he says, Eph 4, 8: *He ascended, He gave gifts to men*. And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Church *pastors and teachers*, and adds that such are given for the ministry, *for the edifying of the body of Christ*. Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists.

Church Fathers:

Luther: But I do not preach to myself; you must be drawn into this too, so that you may declare: “This was not said by my preacher; but it was a sermon from heaven, and it was sealed.” If you believe, then you are called and numbered among those who believe and confess. Thus they give proof of their calling. They were, first of all, gathered into a Christian congregation through Baptism, and now they are in possession of the Sacraments and absolution. Thus we are the Christian Church, or a segment of it. This church has the power to engage pastors. The church selects such as are able and competent, not for their own sakes but for the welfare of the church. And in an emergency everyone must take care of his own needs. Yet not all are authorized to preach, but only one is to preach to the entire congregation. Thus the ministry is not mine; it belongs to all the others; it is a public office and confession. [LW Volume 22, page 480]

Gerhard: Instead, He gave the Keys of the kingdom of heaven to the church as to His Bride (Matt. 16:19) He promised her that if she agrees on earth about anything and asks for it, it will be given to her by His Father (Matt. 18:19). He entrusted the Word and Sacraments to her, just as the apostle says about the church of Israel, Rom.3:2; “It was entrusted with the oracles of God”; and Romans 9:4: “Theirs was the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the sacraments.” She is “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15) in which the ministers of the church are established as the “stewards” (1 Cor. 1:4). Therefore the ministry belongs to her, 1 Cor. 3:21: “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas.” Therefore to the church belongs the “delegated” right (as they call it) to establish suitable men as ministers of the church, and God wants to use the work of the church in the mediate calling of devout teachers. [On the Ministry, Part One, Johann Gerhard, page 115]

Walther: If we teach with our beloved Church, according to the Word of God, that Christ has given the Keys of the kingdom of heaven, or the ministry, originally not to the public ministerial persons, but to the Church of His believers. According to this doctrine, the word of Christ remains unshaken: “One is your

Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren” [Matthew 23:8 KJV]. According to this doctrine, Christ remains the Christians’ only king, and the Christians remain royal priests, subject to no man, no angel, no creature in heaven and on earth. According to this doctrine, therefore, the glorious and blessed liberty of the children of God is maintained. According to this doctrine the Christians remain of the household of God, but the preachers their stewards and mere administrators of their goods. According to this doctrine therefore the Christians keep the right and the power of appointing and dismissing the preachers as their servants and to examine and to judge their doctrine, their practice, and their life. According to this doctrine, no preacher has the power of denying absolution to a penitent Christian, since it is not a power of the preacher, but the property of the Christians, which he has only the duty of announcing to them as their servant employed for this purpose. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 4169-4175). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle]

Thesis 6.

A sixth clear teaching of the Bible, from which the congregation’s right to elect follows, is finally: that the church or the believing Christians have the right and duty to judge doctrine, to distinguish true teachers from false; and to accept the former, however, to avoid and flee the later. [The Congregation’s Right to Choose Its Pastor, page 169.]

Scripture:

Matthew 18:16-20 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

John 10:4-8 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, *examining* the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

- **ἀνακρίνοντες** This word means “to investigate,” and is used of judicial investigation, especially prior to the hearing proper.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Do not despise prophecies, *but test everything* [πάντα δὲ δοκιμάζετε]; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. [for a definition of δοκιμάζετε see below.]

1John 4:1ff. Beloved, do *not* (μὴ) believe every spirit, but *test the spirits* to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

- **δοκιμάζετε** - to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use—to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.

Lutheran Confessions:

Treatise on the Power and Primacy: [49-51] 49] Then to these errors two great sins are added: The first, that he defends these errors by unjust cruelty and death-penalties. The second, that he wrests the decision from the Church, and does not permit ecclesiastical controversies [such matters of religion] to be judged according to the prescribed mode; yea he contends that he is above the Council, and can rescind the decrees of Councils, as the canons sometimes impudently speak. But that this was much more impudently done by the pontiffs, examples testify.

50] Quest. 9, canon 3, says: *No one shall judge the first seat; for the judge is judged neither by the emperor, nor by all the clergy, nor by the kings, nor by the people.*

51] The Pope exercises a twofold tyranny: he defends his errors by force and by murders, and forbids judicial examination. The latter does even more injury than any executions because, when the true judgment of the Church is removed, godless dogmas and godless services cannot be removed, and for many ages they destroy innumerable souls.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, art. 51] Also handelt der Papst auf beiden Seiten wie ein Tyrann, daß er solche Irrtümer mit Gewalt und Wütereie verteidigt und will keine Richter leiden. Und dies andere Stück tut mehr Schaden denn alle Wütereie. *Denn alsbald der Kirche das rechte Urteil und Erkenntnis genommen ist, kann nicht möglich sein, daß man falscher Lehre oder unrechtem Gottesdienst könnte steuern, und müssen derhalben viele Seelen verloren werden.* (emphasis added)

Treatise on the Power and Primacy: [translation of the German text] [51] Thus the Pope acts as a tyrant in both positions, by defending these errors with violence and outrage, and by not allowing any judge. And this latter point is the source of more injury than all his other outrages. *For as soon as the churches are deprived of the power to judge and to make a decision, there can be no possible means by which false doctrines or unjust methods of worship can be checked, in consequence of which many souls must be lost.* (emphasis added) [<http://www.1580boc.org/tr>]

Church Fathers:

Luther: Christ...takes both the right and the power to judge teaching from the bishops, scholars, and councils and gives them to everyone and to all Christians equally when he says, John 10[:4], “My sheep know my voice.” Again, “My sheep do not follow strangers, but flee from them, for they do not know the voice of strangers” [John 10:5]. Again, “No matter how many of them have come, they are thieves and murderers. But the sheep did not listen to them” [John 10:8].

Here you see clearly who has the right to judge doctrine: bishops, popes, scholars, and everyone else have the power to teach, but it is the sheep who are to judge whether they teach the voice [i.e., the words] of Christ or the voice of strangers. My dear, what can these water bubbles⁴ say against it, with their feet scraping,⁵ “Councils, councils! One must listen to the scholars, the bishops, the crowd; one must look at the old usage and custom”? Do you think the word of God should yield to your old usage, custom, and bishops? Never! That is why we let bishops and councils decide and institute whatever they please; when God’s word is on our side we—and not they—shall judge what is right or wrong and they will have to yield to us and obey our word. [“That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and Power to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by

⁴ *Wasser blasen*. Luther frequently used this expression to indicate the futility and transience of his opponents’ arguments. Cf. WA 10^{II}, 508.

⁵ *Scharren*, an image to denote bragging and vainglorious behavior. The allusion may be to the provocative behavior of a rooster when he scrapes his claws on the ground.

Scripture.” *Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (306–307). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

Luther: Christ says again, Matthew 7:15, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but are inwardly ravenous wolves.” You see, here Christ does not give the judgment to prophets and teachers but to pupils or sheep. For how could one beware of false prophets if one did not consider and judge their teaching? Thus there cannot be a false prophet among the listeners, only among the teachers. That is why all teachers and their teaching should and must be subject to the judgment of the listeners. [“That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and Power to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture.” *Vol. 39: Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (307). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

Luther: Thus we conclude that wherever there is a Christian congregation in possession of the gospel, it not only has the right and power but also the duty—on pain of losing the salvation of its souls and in accordance with the promise made to Christ in baptism—to avoid, to flee, to depose, and to withdraw from the authority that our bishops, abbots, monasteries, religious foundations, and the like are now exercising. [LW Volume 39: 308–309]

Walther: [the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope] clearly states that the Keys were given directly to the Church, and with equal clarity, that “the Church” means every little group of Christians. When it says, for example, that the Church has the ultimate power of judgment [das höchste Gericht], it cites Matthew 18, which says: “Tell it to the congregation” [v. 17]. Matthew 18 is here clearly speaking of a local congregation. In other words, the symbolical books clearly assert that every local congregation possesses the Keys, i.e., it does not [emphasis added] acquire them through a pastor, who presumably has acquired them through ordination and is now bringing them to the congregation. No, that is not how it works. It is God’s dear children in the congregation who possess the Keys, and when they want [begehren] a pastor, they do that by virtue of their power of the Keys, and they then delegate that glorious [power] to a pastor, so that in their name he may carry out [the functions of] that office in their midst. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 5096-5104). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther: The [Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope] says: “Christ gives the supreme and final jurisdiction to the church when he says, ‘Tell it to the church’ (Matt. 18:17).” [Treatise 24 (German); Tappert, 324, footnote] [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 5799-5800). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Conclusion:

The calling of a pastor is one of the most significant decisions a local parish can make. The calling of a pastor is more important than what hymnal is used, more critical than whether or not the pews are padded, more crucial than whether or not the church is air conditioned. The pastor proclaims the Word of God and administers our Lord’s holy sacraments. The pastor serves publicly “in the stead and by the command” of our Lord Jesus Christ; both on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. Once installed, the called pastor has a profound impact on the life of the congregation and God’s people in that place.

But it is not merely the local congregation that has a vested interest in who is called to serve an individual parish. The district president and the church at large also have an undeniable interest in who is called to serve in that location. The CTCR comments in *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*

(1981) “In a synod of congregations bound by a common confession and loyalty, good order demands that admission into the pastoral office or into its closely allied auxiliary offices is not the act of a single congregation or agency.” [page 25]

Nonetheless, as we have seen above from Holy Scripture, from our Lutheran Confessions, as well as from the church fathers who are lights and teachers⁶, when it comes to the specific call to an individual pastor it is exclusively the right of the local congregation to extend a divine call to the pastor it chooses.

The district president’s responsibility is varied in the call process. He is to guide a congregation through the call process, oftentimes utilizing a circuit visitor. The district president also has responsibility of vetting the nominations provided by the congregation to ensure each pastor is competent for the position, and of prayerfully nominating additional suitable names of pastors for the congregation to consider.

However, the district president, the area vice-president, the circuit visitor, and/or any pastor ought not to influence the call committee or the congregation to consider a specific individual as a potential pastor. Nor does the district president or his representative have the right to prescribe, or to recommend, to the local parish exactly whom the congregation should call. Such an action would be an egregious abuse of their office. It is exclusively the congregation’s right to call its own pastor.

Walther writes this in his convention essay: “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” Thesis II, A second major duty is that it faithfully treat its congregations in an evangelical way, and therefore a) not assume a dictatorial role over them, but only help them in an advisory way; b) assist them in acquiring upright [rechtschaffener] pastors and teachers; it is the most immediate and the primary purpose of a congregation, when it joins the synod, to then have the prospect of always getting a faithful pastor, whereas, if it stands all alone, it is always in danger of getting a drifter [Vagabunden] who ingratiates himself. Therefore, it is indeed a sacred duty of a synod to be extremely anxious to help each of the member congregations get a good pastor. In the case of most congregations, you know, it isn’t possible for them to know personally those whom they need and might be able to get. That is where the synod should step in. But one does well to remember: this does not say that the synod can impose on the congregation a different pastor than the one it wants, that the synod has the power to choose pastors. No; *the right to install, to call, to choose pastors is exclusively a right of the congregation. We see that clearly from Acts 6. There the apostles wanted to install only a deacon in the congregation. And so they did not say, “Now then, we are even apostles, not just ordinary pastors; therefore we decide that it is to be this one and that one.” No; the apostles first point out to the congregation how necessary it now is to establish an office of deacons, and they say that they [the congregation] should look around for such as must be qualified in such and such a way. They [the congregation] must choose them, and after they had chosen them, then they (the apostles) would pray over them and install them into office. That is apostolic. Therefore a synod that arrogates to itself the right to impose on the congregations pastors whom they don’t want is a tyrannical synod and not worthy to be called Lutheran. [emphasis added]* [Walther: “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”, At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Location 4870). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

The words bear repeating: *“The right to install, to call, to choose pastors is exclusively a right of the congregation.”*

⁶ “Patres fuerunt lumina, non numina, indices, non iudices, ministri, non magistri” (the fathers were lights and not gods, teachers and not judges, servants and not masters). [Walther, C.F.W. (2014-01-18). Walther's Works: Church Fellowship (Kindle Locations 3599-3601). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

May our gracious Lord grant us faithfulness to our Christ-centered doctrine, to our Lutheran Confessions, and to the exercise of our office as district presidents.

I. GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING PASTORS IN DEALING WITH PASTORAL CALLS

A. Proper Lines of Communication

In dealing with pastoral calls, it is important that a pastor maintains proper communication in three directions:

1. The calling congregation.
2. The congregation presently served.
3. The district president where the pastor currently serves and the president of the district into which he has received the call, both Circuit visitors, and both regional vice-presidents (where applicable).

The circuit visitor is to encourage appropriate communication in the three directions indicated above. If the circuit visitor does not receive copies of correspondence, he should inquire and insist that appropriate communication take place.

B. When a Pastor in the Circuit Receives a Call

1. Communication should take place immediately in three directions.

- a. To the calling congregation.

The pastor-elect should acknowledge receipt of the call and the accompanying documentation, and give the assurance that it will be prayerfully considered. He should share with the calling congregation his intended procedure for considering the call, *i.e.*, if and when he intends to visit, the time by which he hopes to reach a decision, etc.

- b. To the congregation presently served.

Since a call is a public act, the pastor-elect should immediately inform his present congregation that he has received a call. He should do this in a way that encourages prayer and helpful dialogue as he seeks the Lord's will in the matter of the call he has received. The call should not become a "bargaining chip" to enhance the pastor's leverage and position in the congregation.

- c. To the district.

The pastor-elect should send copies of all correspondence dealing with the call to his district president. If the call is from another district, that district president should also receive copies of all correspondence as well as the circuit visitors of both circuits.

2. Prayerfully and carefully consider the call.

While the decision to decline or accept a call rests with the pastor-elect, it would be well if, as part of his deliberations, he sought the counsel and advice of his brothers in the ministry, district officials, and members of the congregation involved. The circuit visitor should request an appointment and invite such a discussion. What is best for his present congregation(s) the congregation(s) that is/are calling him, where our Lord wants him to serve, where the pastor's skills might be best used for the Kingdom, as well as the well-being

of the pastor and his family are all important components of a decision to accept or decline a call.

C. When a Pastor in the Circuit Declines a Call

1. Communicate immediately in three directions:

a. To the calling congregation.

The pastor should formally notify the calling congregation of his declination of the call. This should be contained in a letter which is sent to the calling congregation together with the returned call documents. Courtesy suggests that a telephone call to appropriate representatives of the calling congregation be made giving his decision and indicating that a formal letter of declination will follow.

b. To the congregation presently served.

The pastor should formally notify the congregation of his declination of the call and the reasons for which he declined it.

c. To the district.

Copies of the correspondence described above should be sent to the appropriate district presidents and circuit visitors.

2. Express concern for the church at large.

In order to foster concern for the church at large, the pastor should lead his parish in prayer for God's blessing on the calling congregation.

3. Put the decision behind him.

Once a decision is made the pastor should "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2a) in his present congregation, confident that his current location is where the Lord has called him to serve.

D. When a Pastor in the Circuit Accepts a Call

1. Communicate immediately in three directions:

a. To the calling congregation.

The pastor should formally notify the calling congregation of his acceptance of the call, the termination date of his present ministry, the date of his intended arrival, etc. This formal notification should be by letter. Courtesy suggests that the letter of notification be preceded by a telephone call to the appropriate congregational representatives.

b. To the congregation presently served.

The pastor should immediately notify his present congregation that he has been led to accept the call. He should formally request a "peaceful release" from his call as of a specific date. A letter from the pastor to each parish member may be helpful at this point.

c. To the district.

The pastor should send copies of all correspondence relating to the call, including his letter of acceptance, to the district presidents and circuit visitors of both the calling congregation and the congregation he presently serves.

If his call is to another district, the pastor should formally request his district president to transfer him to the new district. The pastor should request of the receiving district president permission to be installed on a specific date. It should be noted that authority to install is given by the district president and not by the congregation.

This is according to LCMS Bylaw 4.4.3(e) which states that "...ordained ministers and commissioned ministers who have been duly called to a position of full- or part-time service shall be installed upon authorization by the appropriate district president. Each installation shall be conducted, in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, by the district president or by an ordained minister designated by the district president".

2. Set date of departure from the current parish.

The date of the pastor's termination of his present ministry should be decided upon and specifically announced as soon as possible and practical. Thirty days of transition is generally appropriate. The transition period should not exceed six weeks out of respect for the congregation's need to move on with their call process. While the pastor should not "run away," it is usually best that he plan to leave for his new field as soon as arrangements can be made.

3. Meet with circuit visitor to discuss vacancy.

- a. The departing pastor should arrange a meeting with the circuit visitor to discuss issues relating to the vacancy. The circuit visitor should take the initiative and ask for such a meeting if the departing pastor does not.
- b. Once the pastor has accepted a call, he should work through the circuit visitor. Arrangements for serving the congregation during the vacancy ought to be made by the congregation in consultation with the circuit visitor and not by the pastor who is leaving.

4. Terminate his present ministry.

- a. The departing pastor normally should not attend meetings of the boards, church council, or of the congregation after his acceptance of the call, except to discuss matters pertaining to his leaving, to give a final report, or to express appreciation to the board members for their faithfulness. If pastoral guidance is needed at such meetings, it will be provided by the circuit visitor or by the vacancy pastor.
- b. The pastor is not to try to name his own successor. Doing so would be quite inappropriate since it is the congregations' right to select their next pastor. If he has any suggestions regarding possible candidates to be considered for the call list, the departing pastor properly should forward them to the district president and not to the congregation.

- c. The pastor should ensure that all congregational records, lists of congregation and society officers, members of the Sunday school staff, lists of shut-ins, and the like, are complete and up to date.
 - d. Before he leaves, the pastor should be sure to settle all matters of a personal nature. Bills should be paid, belongings gathered, borrowed things returned, all church property should be returned, so that there will be no ill will or misunderstandings after he is gone and no bad reflection on the pastoral office. Longer term obligations with congregation or district should be refinanced.
 - e. The "farewell sermon" should be a Gospel sermon. It should be positive and upbeat. This is not the time to criticize or to settle old scores, etc. This is rather a time to leave peaceably. Negative comments about members or the direction of the congregation can only hurt the congregation and its future and are best left unsaid.
5. Notes on beginning a new ministry.
- a. A pastor in a new ministry should be extremely careful of what he says about his predecessor. The Eighth Commandment should be remembered. NOTE: Before changes in the ministry are instituted, it is best to move slowly, discussing those changes with the congregation's board of elders, church council, or board of directors.
 - b. After the pastor departs he should not speak too often about his former parish. His focus should be on his present charge, not on the one he left.
 - c. He should avoid carrying on any correspondence with members of the parish he has left. Under no circumstances should he counsel or advise members of his former congregation except to tell them to go to their pastor. He no longer bears pastoral responsibility for them.
 - d. He is not to officiate at weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc., at his former parish unless invited to do so by the present pastor. If he has reason to believe that the pastor was "pressured" into inviting him, it would be best if he declined the invitation. Under similar circumstances, he would want to be treated with the same consideration.
 - e. He should not return to visit his former parish too soon after leaving. His presence can only disrupt the necessary process of adjusting to the new pastor. If he plans to visit, he should make the current pastor aware of his intentions for such a visit.
 - f. When members of a former congregation come to complain about their present pastor, he should not listen to them with sympathetic ears. The Kingdom will not be strengthened by such actions. There are established ways for them to deal with legitimate grievances.
6. The role of the circuit visitor.
- a. The circuit visitor should meet with the departing pastor to provide for an orderly transition. The visitor should notify the district president in writing that he has reviewed the parish records and has found them to be in order. Normally, the district president will not transfer a pastor until he has received such assurances from the circuit visitor.

- b. The visitor should offer to assist the departing pastor in every possible way. A circuit farewell gathering among pastors and wives is always in order. The district president and his wife should be invited.

E. The Consideration of a Call

1. Taking enough time.

- a. Whenever a pastor considers a call, there is an appropriate tension between wanting to decide quickly and taking enough time to determine the will of God. The work of the Spirit may be hindered as much by making too hasty a decision as by taking too much time in the consideration of a call.
- b. There is a danger here that the pastor considering the call ought to carefully weigh; viz. that we not become “Enthusiasts”. Here appropriate counsel from the Smalcald Articles comes into play:

Smalcald Articles: This is all the old devil and old snake, who also turned Adam and Eve into enthusiasts and led them from the external Word of God to “spirituality” and their own presumption — although he even accomplished this by means of other, external words. In the same way, our enthusiasts also condemn the external Word, and yet they themselves do not keep silent... In short: enthusiasm clings to Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world — fed and spread among them as poison by the old dragon. It is the source, power, and might of all the heresies, even that of the papacy and Mohammed. Therefore we should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil. [Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (323). Minneapolis: Fortress Press. SA. III. 8. Paragraphs 5 and 9]

- c. When asked about this topic, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison comments:

1. Simul iustus et peccator. There is NO way to avoid sin (Rom. 7) in the consideration of a call. There will be sinful reasons for accepting a call (pride, perceived advancement, mere desire for more money, avoiding the trials of a troubled situation which could be straightened out with more time), and there will be sinful reasons for declining a call (desire for money, comfort, laziness, fear, security etc.).

The important thing is that if the call has been extended that God himself is acting through a congregation. This is the mediate call. But, it just so happens, that God is also acting in the call one currently holds. While this may seem quite contradictory, I would hold that it removes the idea that God somehow talks to me apart from the Word (or the act of a congregation calling). Moreover, God uses these situations for pastors and parishes to seriously evaluate the nature of the ministry in that place and the well-being of the congregation and pastor. While there will be a swirl of sinful thoughts and deeds and motivations in the consideration of a call, a pastor must needs note that neither taking the call, nor declining the call is in and of itself sinful. Therefore freedom reigns along with forgiveness and nothing but promised blessings.

2. How is the decision made? NOT by looking for some internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. "God is leading me to take the call which doubles my salary and places me miles from my parents." Luther in the Smalcald Articles notes that God WILL NOT deal with us apart from his word! God has given the pastor his reason in order to evaluate what is best for the parish he currently serves, and for the one he's contemplating serving. He must also sincerely evaluate his own capabilities, physical and spiritual well-being, the well-being of his dear wife and family as factors.
3. CFW Walther lists this criterion for the consideration of a call: "Where can his [i.e. the pastor's] gifts be used for the greatest benefit for the greatest part of the Kingdom of God?" Even this advice, though excellent, cannot be acted upon without sin.

2. Receiving appropriate counsel.

As a pastor considers a divine call to another congregation or ministry, while not absolutely necessary, it is good to listen to the opinions of the following people or groups of people: the congregation presently served; the calling congregation; his family; trusted colleagues; and those who know the congregations involved (for example, the circuit visitor and the district president). It is important that the pastor keep himself open to the counsel and advice of his colleagues. Those who offer such counsel need to be available, open and honest. If it appears necessary, the visitor should not hesitate to take the initiative to meet with the pastor.

3. Setting a target date.

As a matter of policy, the pastor-elect should announce a "target date" for reaching his decision. Experience suggests that three to four weeks is an adequate amount of time for prayerful consideration and for discussion with the appropriate people. The point is not to tie the hands of the Spirit, but to respect the integrity of the congregation by responding to the call in a reasonable and responsible manner.

4. Making a decision.

- a. As the pastor considers where he is to serve, he should prayerfully struggle with the question of where our Lord wants him to serve, weighing carefully where his particular talents and abilities can best be used for the work of our Lord's Kingdom. In keeping with our Lord's words in Luke 9, once the decision is made the pastor should put his hand to the plow and not look back.
- b. Experience suggests that if a pastor cannot decide to take a call, he should return it. That is to suggest, if a pastor has doubts about accepting a call, he should decline it. In that case, the commitments and responsibilities of his present call should prevail.

F. Length of Time for Assuming Responsibilities of a New Call.

1. Terminate present ministry in a timely way.

Once a call has been formally accepted, it is usually best to implement a reasonably quick process of transition. Unusual circumstances, especially when they pertain to family considerations, need to be considered and respected. However, it should be understood that more often than not the process will be completed within three to four weeks.

2. Time of departure is a shared decision.

The exact time of departure is not a decision which belongs to the pastor alone. The time of departure should be discussed and mutually agreed upon by the pastor, the two congregations, and the two district presidents involved. In this process, the circuit visitor will serve as the representative of the district president.

3. If it is necessary for the family to remain behind, say for school or work reasons, before moving to the new location, the family should have a very low key presence. The congregation should be afforded the time to move on.

II. GUIDELINES FOR THE CIRCUIT COUNSELOR IN ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS DEALING WITH VACANCIES

A. Introduction

1. Assumptions and Principles:

As the circuit visitor assists vacant congregations, he needs to be aware of the following assumptions and principles:

- a. The Office of the Public Ministry is carried out within the context of the Christian congregation and, consequently, the congregation calls pastors to Word and Sacrament ministry within its life and ministry.
- b. The pastoral office is a gift (calling) of God (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28).
- c. The nature of a pastor's ministry includes "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- d. The primary attention of a pastor needs to be focused upon "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4).
- e. The primary model for a pastor is Jesus (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).
- f. The primary characteristic of the public ministry is its pastoral nature (1 Peter 5:1-4).

2. Useful references

As the circuit visitor assists vacant congregations, he will find the following references useful:

- a. "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- b. "And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word'" (Acts 6:2-4).

- c. "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:5-9).
- d. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of His Own Son" (Acts 20:28).
- e. "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- f. "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.' And, 'The laborer deserves his wages.' Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man's sins: keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:17-22).
- g. "The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop; he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, and hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way: for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil: moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).
- h. **Augsburg Confession: Article V: Of the Ministry.**
1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel* [German: *Predigtamt. Latin: ministerium*] and *administering the Sacraments was instituted*. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, **2]** the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear **3]** the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. **4]** They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. [Concordia Triglotta]
- i. "No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called" (AC Art. XIV).

- j. "For where ever the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel. Therefore, it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers hence, where ever there is a true Church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists" (SA "Of The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops").
- k. "If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For the Church has the command to appoint ministers...which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry, and is present in the ministry (that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men)" (*Apology*, Art. XIII. "Of the Number and Use of the Sacraments").
- l. Excerpts from Walther's Lecture of February 27, 1885 (*Law and Gospel*, pp. 207-209).

B. Proper Lines of Communication

In dealing with pastoral vacancies, it is important that proper communications be maintained in three directions:

- 1. Within the congregation.
- 2. To and from the visitor and district president.
- 3. To and from the pastor-elect.

A vacancy in a congregation is often a time of uncertainty and confusion. In order to clarify expectations, avoid misunderstandings, and minimize the disruption of congregational life, there needs to be a clear and consistent flow of information.

C. The Vacancy Process

- 1. When a vacancy occurs.

When a congregation has received word that its pastor is leaving, there should be immediate communication with the circuit visitor and district president. The circuit visitor should take the initiative in this and immediately contact the congregational president or the appropriate congregational board. His discussion with the congregational president should focus on the following concerns:

- a. The district is prepared to assist the congregation during its time of vacancy. The circuit visitor will pastorally support the congregation and will act as the representative of the district president during the vacancy.
- b. The identification of a vacancy pastor. Working together with the district president and the leadership of the congregation the circuit visitor will assist in helping to identify a competent pastor to serve the congregation during the vacancy.
- c. The severance arrangements for the departing pastor and the granting of a "peaceful release" by the church council/voters assembly. When severance is considered, it is suggested that it include any unused portion of the departing pastor's vacation time.
- d. The scheduling of a meeting between the counselor, the District President, and the congregation in order to review and implement the vacancy process.

2. Initial meeting with congregational leadership and the call committee.

The initial meeting between the circuit visitor, the district president and the congregation will accomplish the following:

- a. A review of the congregation's official constitution. "Official" is used because the congregation may not be functioning under the last district approved constitution. A copy of that "official" constitution can be obtained from the files of the District Office or District Secretary.
 - b. Vacancy plans will be reviewed.
 - c. Vacancy terminology will be reviewed.
 - d. Our Lutheran understanding of the call and the pastoral office will be articulated in a preliminary way.
 - e. The specific ministry roles of the district president, circuit visitor, vacancy pastor, call committee, and congregation will be identified.
 - f. The process for developing a call list and extending a call will be described.
 - g. A timetable for the calling process will be established. Target dates will be set for:
 1. The completion of the self-study.
 2. The gathering of nominees from the congregation.
 3. Receiving the call list from the district president.
 4. Publishing the list to the congregation.
 5. The date for the call meeting.
 - h. Call documents will be reviewed.
 - i. A commitment to a self-study process will be secured.
 - j. Conflicted congregations or congregations who have been served by a long-term (20-plus year pastorate) need to consider intentional interim ministry. Contact the district office to learn about the intentional interim ministry program offered by the district.
3. A ministry evaluation (self-study).

It is important for the congregation to understand why it should work through a self-study process in preparation for the calling of a pastor. The self-study process assists the congregation to accomplish the following:

- a. Provides a snapshot of where the congregation is headed by looking at where it has been, as well as where the congregation may be heading.

- b. Determine its spirituality
- c. Identify its strengths
- d. Identify its weaknesses
- e. Interpret trends
- f. Identify its ministry potential
- g. Identify its ministry resources
- h. Identify the kinds of gifts the new pastor must possess in order to shepherd a fruitful ministry
- i. Identify the ministry priorities to which the congregation and the new pastor must give attention
- j. Articulate expectations

After receiving the self-study documents, the district president will need some time (usually several weeks) to review the self-study, make an evaluation, and put together an appropriate list of pastoral candidates. The number of candidates will vary (usually from 6 to 10 or more).

D. Providing For Continuing Ministry during the Vacancy

A vacancy in the pastoral office provides an opportunity for the members of the congregation to grow spiritually through a reassessment of and a recommitment to their common ministry. A primary concern of the circuit visitor must be to assist the congregation in maintaining as much of its ministry as possible during the vacancy. This concern must be addressed at two levels:

1. The existing leadership.

a. Staff

If other professional staff members (pastors, teachers, DCE's, parish workers, etc.) remain in the congregation, they can often provide additional leadership to the parish. They should be a part of any consultation on continuing ministry.

b. Officers.

A vacancy is an opportunity for the elected officers of the congregation to exercise leadership. By carrying on in their responsibilities and, if necessary, accepting broader roles, they can exert a steady influence over the congregation.

c. Members.

A vacancy often sees the emergence of new leadership as individuals step forward in new and unexpected ways. The congregation is to be encouraged in this regard.

2. The vacancy pastor.

a. The need for pastoral service.

Unless another ordained pastor remains on the professional staff during the vacancy, the congregation will want to appoint a vacancy pastor to carry on in their midst the specific functions of the public ministry. The duties of a vacancy pastor typically could include preaching, the administration of the sacraments, teaching, counseling, and calling and, upon request, providing input to boards and committees.

b. Establishing the specific needs.

Prior to any consideration regarding the vacancy pastor, the congregation should establish its pastoral needs. It is important that the circuit visitor requests an early meeting with the church council or other appropriate body within the congregation to identify the congregation's expectations of a vacancy pastor and the amount of time required to meet those expectations. A job description (or statement of ministry) should be developed that is as specific as possible. This helps the congregation clarify what it expects and will help the vacancy pastor understand what he is being asked to do.

c. Compensation.

After formalizing congregation's expectations in a job/ministry description, the next step is to determine appropriate compensation for the work that is to be done. The circuit visitor should consult the district's compensation and benefit guidelines for guidance. Expenses incurred by the vacancy pastor should be submitted to and paid by the congregation. When the circuit visitor functions in behalf of the congregation his expenses also should be submitted to and paid by the congregation.

One way to determine an appropriate compensation for the vacancy pastor is to determine how many days will be needed to carry on the ministry, determine what percentage of a normal pay period that might be, and then use that percentage of the base salary guideline provided by the district.

d. Selecting the vacancy pastor.

Only after his responsibilities have been specified and the compensation established should the congregation select a vacancy pastor. The circuit visitor should determine who is available to serve as a vacancy pastor. The guidance of the district president should be sought and his advice carefully considered when selecting the vacancy pastor.

Under normal circumstances the vacancy pastor is not to be considered as a candidate for the office of pastor of the vacant congregation.

e. Clarification of roles.

The role of the vacancy pastor should be clearly distinguished from the roles of the circuit visitor and the district president. The role of the visitor is to assist the congregation during the vacancy and the calling process in consultation with the district president. "Congregations shall seek the advice of the respective district president when calling ordained or commissioned ministers" (Bylaw 2.5.1). The role of the vacancy

pastor is to provide ongoing pastoral ministry to the congregation. The role of the district president is to secure the commitment of the congregation to the vacancy/calling process, to guide and supervise the whole calling process, and to develop an appropriate list of candidates for the pastoral office. It should be made clear that the vacancy pastor is not to be involved in the calling process. Except by specific appointment, only the circuit visitor or a vice-president serves as the representative of the district president.

E. Circuit Visitor's Role in Assisting a Congregation Interested in an Intentional Interim.

1. When a congregation becomes vacant, one of the considerations that the district president and the circuit visitor may consider is that of "Intentional Interim Pastor." This is especially true if the congregation has experienced significant conflict to work through. Additional issues that would give rise to consideration of an "Intentional Interim Pastor" include but are not necessarily limited to the following:
 - a. Following sexual misconduct by the former pastor, or another staff member
 - b. Following a long term pastorate
 - c. Following financial irregularities by the former pastor, or staff member
 - d. Following boundary violations by the former pastor; e.g. sexual, gambling, embezzlement, overbearing personality, etc.
 - e. Retirement of a Senior Pastor in a large congregation with a multiple staff
 - f. Alignment issues between church and school, which often are manifested in conflicted relationships between the pastoral and teaching staff or a silo mentality where each exists independently of the other.
2. The district president should be notified when a congregation is considering an "Intentional Interim Pastor". The district president has a vested interest in making sure that the congregations under his supervision are healthy and functional. Because he is aware of the conflicted circumstances in the congregation the district president may suggest that the congregation consider issuing a non-tenured call to an interim pastor.
3. An Intentional Interim Pastor will guide the congregation through the following five developmental tasks:
 - a. Coming to terms with the congregation's history
 - b. Discovering a new congregational identity
 - c. Managing congregational leadership shifts
 - d. Renewing denominational linkage with the district and with the LCMS
 - e. Commitment to a new future
4. There are seven other developmental tasks that a congregation also can work on during the in between times:
 - a. The necessity to rebuild the congregational "infrastructure"
 - b. Evaluation of and removal of staff members if necessary
 - c. Financial/stewardship issues
 - d. Conflicts over issues or congregational agenda
 - e. Interpersonal or intergroup conflicts
 - f. Getting closure with the previous pastor
 - g. Communication Improvement
5. The Intentional Interim Pastor works closely with the district president, the circuit visitor and the congregation to call a new pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor may work with the Call Committee. The Intentional Interim Pastor is not eligible for the Call. The Intentional

Interim Pastor does not name the next pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor does not attend Call Voters Meeting.

- a. The normal “non-tenured call” for an Intentional Interim is 18 months.
- b. Much like a vacancy pastor an Intentional Interim Pastor is usually not eligible for call consideration to the congregation where he has served as an Interim.

6. Other considerations:

- a. The former pastor should consider not remaining a member of the congregation.
- b. The circuit visitor and the district president have a responsibility to walk with and support the Intentional Interim Pastor in every appropriate way.

III. GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING VACANT CONGREGATIONS IN DEALING WITH THE CALLING PROCESS

A. Review the Congregation's Constitution

The circuit visitor should review the constitution and bylaws of the vacant congregation to make certain that the process followed in extending a call is in compliance with that document. It is vitally important that the congregation follow the call process as it is outlined in its constitution. The constitution to be used must have been reviewed by the district's constitution committee and approved by the district board of directors prior to its use (Bylaw 2.4.1).

B. The Call Committee

1. Definition.

The call committee is a committee of the parish charged with locally supervising the calling process.

2. Size and composition.

The congregation's constitution may specify who is to serve on the call committee. If it does not, the circuit visitor should bear the following in mind as he gives guidance to the congregation:

- a. While there are no hard and fast rules, a committee of less than four or more than ten could easily become awkward and unworkable.
- b. The call committee needs people who have a personal stake in the future of the congregation.
- c. It should represent a wide cross section of parish life.
- d. If the make-up the call committee is not determined by the congregation's constitution, then the call committee should be appointed by and responsible to the church council or voters assembly.

3. Duties.

While practices vary widely, the call committee typically is assigned tasks such as the following:

- a. Review self-study information to understand congregational needs.
- b. Develop a profile of the pastoral skills needed by the congregation.
- c. Gather suggested names from congregation members.
- d. Communicate with the circuit visitor and district president regarding the call.
- e. Evaluate/prioritize names, if the list is large, to form a preferred list. (However, only the voters assembly can remove a name from the call list.)

- f. If authorized by the constitution or the voters assembly recommend names from the call list.
4. The role of the circuit visitor.

- a. Resource.

The circuit visitor serves as a resource to the call committee. He is to assist and advise them as needed in such tasks as reviewing self-study materials, developing a profile of needed pastoral skills, etc.

- b. Process supervisor.

The circuit visitor, under the supervision of the district president, is to guide and direct the process to ensure that all matters are dealt with evangelically, constitutionally, and according to established church forms. Ordinarily, the visitor will attend all meetings of the call committee.

- c. Protecting the process — not influencing the outcome.

Circuit visitors and vacancies pastors *are not to provide candidate names* to the calling congregation. If the visitor or other pastors have names to suggest, they should be given directly to the district president

Nota bene: The circuit visitor *is not to become involved in evaluating the qualifications* of the individual men on the call list. It is the responsibility of the district president to evaluate the qualifications of the men on the call list. Exercising influence over the ranking or selection of the candidates *not only is inappropriate but constitutes a breach of trust.*

C. The Calling of a Pastor

While congregations can easily become extremely anxious and want to move ahead quickly to call their next pastor, they should be counseled to take the necessary time to carry out the calling process in a careful and effective way. Additional time devoted to calling, when properly and prayerfully used, can minimize the likelihood of problems later.

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the congregation should arrange with the circuit visitor for a pre-call meeting (II C 2 above). If possible, the district president will attend. The meeting should be open to the entire congregation. The purpose of this meeting is to establish procedures which will guide the congregation through the calling process. It is important that all members understand the process and have a chance to participate in it.

- 1. The list of candidates.
 - a. The procedure for developing a call list.
 - 1. The congregation will accept suggestions for candidates for the call list from any members, in writing. A specific time should be given (for example, two weeks)

during which time suggestions may be made. Those nominating candidates may be expected to use the nomination form provided by the district.

2. The congregation will request the district president to secure needed information about the candidates proposed by the congregation. The district president may require three or four weeks to obtain the needed information. The district president may add to the list, recommend from the list, or recommend that certain names on the list not be considered by the congregation. Some names may need to be deleted due to proper reasons. The district president will identify the reasons for the deletions.
3. The official list of candidates (names, pertinent biographical information, but not the district president's evaluations) may be made known to the entire communicant membership of the congregation by bulletin, newsletter, special mailing, etc.
4. A period of time should be allowed (for example, two weeks) during which any communicant member in good standing shall have the right to file a valid objection with the chairman of the congregation or the chairman of the call committee or the board of elders to any candidate on the official call list. (A valid objection is one according to which a person cannot in good conscience or on moral grounds accept the man in question as his or her pastor.) If such an objection is made and sustained as valid by the board of elders or the Call Committee, then the candidate in question shall be removed from the call by the voters assembly.
5. The entire list of candidates must be presented to the voters' assembly. However, if the number of candidates is large, the call committee, if so authorized by the congregation or its constitution, may screen the list on the basis of preliminary information available and propose a prime list of candidates.

b. Safeguarding the Call List.

The personal and professional evaluation of the candidates by the district president as well as the Self Evaluation Tools from the candidates may be duplicated for use by confirmed members only and only at the time of the call meeting. Before and after the call meeting, all copies must remain in the possession of the circuit visitor.

2. The call meeting.

a. Introduction.

At a meeting of the congregation which has been properly announced as a "call meeting" and convened in accordance with the regulations of the congregation, the list of candidates received from the district president, together with his evaluations, will be presented. At this meeting, the congregation formally determines a final list of nominees and elects a new pastor. At his option, the district president will attend the meeting. If not, he will be represented by the circuit visitor. No pastoral call should be issued by a congregation unless a district representative is present. Consequently, the congregation will need to schedule call meetings at the convenience of the district president, circuit visitor, etc.

b. Prior to the call meeting.

1. Check congregation's constitution.

Check the provisions of the congregation's constitution to ensure that:

- a. The call meeting has been properly convened.
 - b. Any other requirements for the election of a pastor have been identified.
2. Review procedures with congregational president.

Make sure the congregational president is familiar with the procedures to be used at the upcoming meeting.

3. Oversee preparation of the call documents.

Regular Synod-prepared documents should be used. The circuit visitor should ensure that the documents are processed and sent as soon as possible following the call meeting (normally within 24 hours). The signature of the circuit counselor is not required. The signature of the district president is required only for seminary candidates. (In the case of an application for a seminary candidate, the usual documents are filled out, but the name of the individual is left blank.) The documentation sent to the pastor-elect should consist of the following:

- a. Call documents properly completed, typed, signed. The call documents are now available on-line with an access code provided by the office of the district president and his administrative assistant.
- b. Self-study documents (if any).
- c. Constitution and last annual report of the congregation, newsletters, bulletins, anniversary booklets, etc.
- d. Information about the community, local schools (including Lutheran schools), maps, etc.
- e. A cover letter of introduction. This letter should be drawn up by the congregation and reviewed by the circuit visitor. If not already covered in the self-study documents, this letter should provide the pastor-elect with information regarding the congregation, including its growth, program, mission challenge, special needs, and the like. It should be strictly factual.
- f. A copy of the Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation, the Information Sheet, and the accompanying letter should be sent to the District President after the meeting.

D. Conduct of the Call Meeting

1. Devotional tone.

Filling a vacancy is ultimately something only God can do. Without His guidance, our best human efforts would result in a "hiring." The calling of a pastor is an act of faith. It is, finally, God who calls and not the congregation. The congregation only mediates the call. Therefore, it is imperative that the human agents in this divine process (whether they be Synod leaders or the congregation in assembly) submerge self, endeavor to think as Christ would think, and pray "Thy will be done" and "Thy Kingdom come." The circuit visitor

should seek to convey this by the tone he sets for the meeting. (Some districts have developed a worship service setting for the call meeting. Check with the district office for the availability of such a resource.)

2. Two-step process.

The calling of a pastor involves a two-step process.

- a. The acceptance of an official call list.
- b. The election of a pastor-elect. (Only one pastor-elect at a time can be identified and elected.)

3. Presenting the list.

- a. The circuit visitor is required in each instance to present the call list submitted by the district president. He is not to edit or amend the list in any way. The circuit visitor is there to supervise the process, not to influence the outcome. Nor may the Call Committee or other minor body within the congregation edit the district president's call list.
- b. Candidates may be removed from the call list only by resolution of the voters assembly. The presentation of the call list to the voters assembly is to be made orally. Biographical information on the candidate as well as the district president's evaluation may be duplicated for use by confirmed members only and only at the time of the call meeting. Due to the confidentiality of the information that is being shared, before and after the meeting all copies must remain the possession of the circuit visitor.
- c. Additional candidates should not be proposed from the floor at the time of the call meeting. However, if the assembly demands this (and the local constitution does not forbid it) congregational autonomy is to be respected. In that case, the meeting should be adjourned until the necessary information on the new candidates can be received from the district president.

4. Suggested procedure.

- a. Review the doctrine of the church.
- b. Review the doctrine of the call.
- c. Explain and show the call documents.
- d. Review the constitutional requirements for election.
- e. Voters assembly officially adopts the call list.
- f. List of candidates with the evaluations of the district president is presented by the circuit visitor and discussed by the congregation.
- g. Motion for the first ballot is adopted. All voting should be done by secret ballot.

- h. Prayer seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. In the event no candidate receives the necessary majority on a ballot, the candidate with the least number of votes is removed from the next and all succeeding ballots at that call meeting. (Note: The candidate is removed from the ballot, not from the call list. If no decision is reached by the voters assembly at that meeting, the entire call list is presented again at a subsequent meeting.)
 - j. Balloting continues until the pastor-elect is chosen. Prior to each ballot, the floor is again opened for discussion.
 - k. When a candidate has received the required majority of all votes cast, he will then be declared the choice of the congregation. If a unanimous vote is required or requested, it is taken at this time.
 - l. Motion to telephone the pastor-elect.
 - m. The Call Committee should be encouraged to establish possible salary and benefit packages prior to the call meeting. This permits the circuit visitor the opportunity to instruct the congregation regarding matters such as salary, vacation, continuing education, car allowance, etc. He should challenge the congregation to maintain salary levels which comply with the established district salary scale, reflect the pastor's experience and responsibilities, etc. It would be good to have a copy of the district guidelines on hand.
 - n. Closing.
5. Informing the pastor-elect.

When the congregation has reached a decision, it is advisable that the circuit visitor phone the pastor-elect before the meeting adjourns to inform him of the fact that he has been called. In case the pastor-elect indicates that he is not in a position to consider this call, the congregation may reconsider its vote and proceed with another election.

E. After the Call Meeting

- 1. During the pastor-elect's period of deliberation.

Once a pastor-elect has been selected by the congregation, the responsibilities of the circuit visitor are as follows:

- a. Supervise the completion of the call documents and the accompanying material. (Normally the documentation should be mailed special delivery within 24 hours of the call meeting.)
- b. Contact the pastor-elect by phone (if this has not been done already).
- c. Notify the district president of the results of the call meeting.
- d. Ensure that the members are notified promptly as to whom the congregation has called. When a pastor has a call, he really has two calls—to his own congregation or position

and to the one he has received. Prayers should be offered publicly and privately as he deliberates the Lord's will regarding these calls.

- e. Ensure that a letter from the congregation is forwarded to the pastor-elect's congregation, informing it that its pastor is being called and soliciting its prayers that the will of God may be done in this important matter.
 - f. Supervise a visitation for the pastor-elect. It is advisable for the congregation to offer the pastor-elect and his wife the opportunity to visit, at congregational expense, before he decides on the call.
 - g. Assist the pastor-elect in seeking the Lord's will in accepting or declining the call.
2. If the call is declined.
- a. If the call is declined, the congregation should inform the circuit visitor and district president and proceed again as outlined above. The congregation may issue another call using the adopted call list, or they may begin again with the gathering of additional names. Names of nominees which appeared on the previous list may be retained, or an entirely new list may be developed.
 - b. The district president should be consulted to verify the availability of the pastors remaining on the list, to suggest additional names, or to give information on additional names suggested by the congregation.
 - c. Under no circumstances should the congregation automatically send a call to the pastor who was second high in the first election. Only one pastor can be identified and elected at a time and that man must have at least a majority vote (which the runner-up in the first election does not have). In addition, experience has shown that when another election is held, the pastor who was runner up in the first election many times does not receive the majority vote in the second election. Since the election of a pastor is always a matter of far reaching importance, the congregation should proceed prayerfully and deliberately, enduring necessary delays in the process of calling the one pastor the Lord wishes for them.
3. If the call is accepted.

If the pastor-elect accepts the call, the circuit visitor's responsibility is as follows:

- a. Coordinate with the congregation and pastor-elect the arrival time and date for installation (in consultation with the district president).
- b. Supervise the service of the installation.

F. Calling other Professional Church Workers

Ordinarily, the circuit visitor has no direct involvement when a congregation in his circuit calls a teacher, DCE, deaconess or other non-ordained professional church worker because this is usually handled by the district's education executive. However, he needs to be available should his assistance be requested.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS IN DEALING WITH VISITATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

A. Preserving the Integrity of the Calling Process

Neither pre-call interviews, post-call visitations or listening to sermons of candidates on the internet are prohibited by Holy Scripture or the Confessions. However, the church needs to function in such a way that the dignity and the divine nature of the call are maintained. The calling congregation needs constantly to bear in mind that it is not hiring an employee but asking God to send them a pastor. The prayerful manner in which the call process is handled is probably more significant than whether or not an interview or visitation is conducted.

B. The Inherent Limitations in this Procedure

1. What can be gained?

The interview or visitation will not enable a pastor and a congregation to learn all there is to know about each other. The most the congregation can hope to gain from an interview or a visitation is a sense of the pastor's style of ministry. The most a pastor can hope to gain from an interview or visitation is a sense of where the congregation feels it is heading in its ministry. It requires fully a year or more for a pastor and a congregation to get to know each other.

2. What is at risk?

"That both the pastor and the calling congregation need to be aware of the risk inherent in interview by the calling congregation is obvious to all who have dealt with these matters in an administrative capacity over the years. The greatest danger perhaps is that the aspects of the call which can be observed most readily by the sense, especially the eyes and ears (and the nose, too when the church is located near certain types of industry), may assume supreme importance, while the true spiritual values, which often can be seen only when the congregation is in worship or in action, do not receive the thought they deserve. The condition of the parsonage, the appearance of the sanctuary, and the kind of housing in the neighborhood, the size and variety of the industries in the community—these are values that make first impact on the eyes and ears in a visit of this type. They tell a story and may raise valid questions, but first impressions are not always the most important impressions" (*Calls and Vacancies* CPH, 1967, pp. 46–47).

C. Notes to Congregations

The calling congregation needs to be aware that:

1. As a matter of tradition, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does not object to nor encourage a pre-call interview.
2. Not every LCMS pastor will submit to a pre-call interview. A post-call visitation is generally offered.
3. Pre-call interviews can be time consuming.
4. The interview or visitation process should be the same for each candidate considered.

5. The interview or visitation process should be supervised by the circuit visitor.
6. The interview can be conducted in person, in writing, or by means of a conference call.

D. The Interview Process

The Council of Presidents has prepared "Guidelines for Interviewing." These guidelines may be secured from the district office.

E. The Role of the Circuit Visitor.

The role of the circuit visitor is to assist the calling congregation to develop an interview or visitation process which will maintain the dignity and divine nature of the call. As a matter of policy, he should review and approve the questions to be asked in an interview/visitation. Also, as a matter of policy, the circuit visitor should be invited when the interview and/or visitation is conducted.

V. Guidelines for Assisting Congregations in Dealing with the Calling of Candidates

A. The Delegation of Rights

The congregation has the right to call anyone in the Synod that is eligible to receive a call. However, in the event that the congregation decides to extend a call to a seminary graduate or pastoral candidate accepted by colloquy (Bylaw 2.5.2), its right to choose is delegated to the Board of Assignments of the Synod.

B. The Calling Process

The process of calling a candidate is similar to that of "calling from the field". A self-study should be completed to identify congregational strengths and weaknesses. The Voters Assembly must formally resolve to call a pastoral candidate. The Diploma of Vocation should be filled in and signed, except for the line indicating the name of the man called. This, together with all four copies of the supplement to the Diploma of Vocation, the Information Sheet required by the Board of Assignments, and the accompanying letter, should be sent to the district president, whose signature is required. The district president will represent the calling congregation before the Board of Assignments. In calling candidates, certain deadlines must be observed. The district president will supply this information upon request.

C. Authorization of Ordination

The president of the district in which the calling congregation is located is responsible for authorizing the ordination of a candidate. This applies even if, as is increasingly the case, the ordination takes place at a location other than the calling congregation. If the candidate for ordination has not secured the proper authorization, the circuit visitor should assist him in doing so.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS IN DEALING WITH THE ORDINATION/INSTALLATION OF A PASTOR

A. Preparing for the New Pastor's Arrival

Before the new pastor arrives there are always questions to be settled regarding arrangements, accommodations, etc. The circuit visitor is often in a better position than is the new pastor to guide the congregation in such matters. He should be an advocate for the new pastor to see that he is adequately cared for.

1. Salary.

Already before the call was extended, the circuit visitor will have had an opportunity to advise the congregation regarding matters such as salary, vacation, continuing education, car allowance, etc. He should challenge the congregation to maintain salary levels which comply with the established district salary guidelines and reflect the pastor's experience and responsibilities, etc. The new pastor's salary should begin as soon as it is terminated by his former congregation so that there is no disruption in his flow of income and insurance coverage. Also, the circuit visitor should ensure that the congregation is prepared to pay the pastor's travel expenses upon his arrival.

2. Housing.

If the pastor and his family are to reside in a parsonage, the circuit visitor should insure that it is clean and in good repair. Also, this is an excellent time for the congregation to consider various improvements to the property (redecorating, painting, new carpet and/or drapes, an added appliance, etc.).

If the congregation does not own a parsonage the circuit visitor may need to provide some leadership in this area. All aspects should be carefully described in the call documents. Renting or leasing may initially be prudent. Contacts with local competent real estate agents will be appreciated. Loan policies by the congregation or church extension board, etc., should be discussed.

3. Office.

The circuit visitor should inspect the office facilities for the new pastor and make suggestions for needed improvements.

B. Preparing for the Service of Installation/Ordination

1. Authorization.

The district president, not the calling congregation, authorizes the ordination and/or installation of professional church workers. When a pastor has accepted a call to a new congregation, he should request of the district president authorization to be installed. The circuit visitor should ascertain that this has been done.

2. The officiant.

At his option, the district president will install the newly called pastor. If he does not, he will authorize the circuit visitor, the regional vice-president, or another pastor in good standing to attend to this duty.

3. The date of installation.

The date of the installation service should be determined by the calling congregation, the pastor-elect, and the circuit visitor, in consultation with the district president. The circuit visitor should remind the congregation that the district president is responsible for the installation of professional church workers, and, consequently, the installation date must be approved by him.

4. The installation service.

a. Planning.

The installation of a pastor is a service of the congregation, not of the circuit or district. Therefore, responsibility for the coordination of arrangements, invitations, publicity, etc., should rest with the vacancy pastor and the congregation. However, it is appropriate for the circuit visitor to "take the lead" in planning the installation service. The pastor-elect should be consulted for his preferences regarding the service taking into account the financial condition of the congregation and the importance of local participation. However, the final decisions belong to the congregation. The congregation should be encouraged to hold the service at such a time when neighboring congregations and clergy may be present to participate in the joyful event. Other matters to be considered include the officiant, the service folder, reserved pews (for the pastor's family, church officers, participating clergy), the procession, and a reception for the pastor and his family following the service.

b. Publicity.

The circuit visitor should ensure that announcement of the installation is sent to all pastors and congregations in the circuit, inviting their participation. In addition, there may be opportunities for publicity in the local media and through the community at large.

5. Notification.

Following the installation, the officiant is responsible for sending the official notification to the district president and the Department of Rosters and Statistics of the Synod.

C. Integrating the New Pastor into the Circuit

The circuit visitor should make a special effort to meet, befriend, and integrate into the circuit the new pastor and his family. He should help the new man become oriented to the community (locating hospitals, schools, shopping malls, etc.). He should also see that the new pastor is introduced to his brothers in the circuit. Social gatherings welcoming the pastor and his family are always appropriate. The district president and area vice-president should be invited. The circuit visitor should pay particular attention to the needs of the pastor's wife and family. He

should be especially sensitive to the effects of relocation, adjustments to a new culture, and altered demands on the pastor's time, etc. It is recommended that the circuit visitor make at least one visit within the first 30 days and another within the next 6 months.

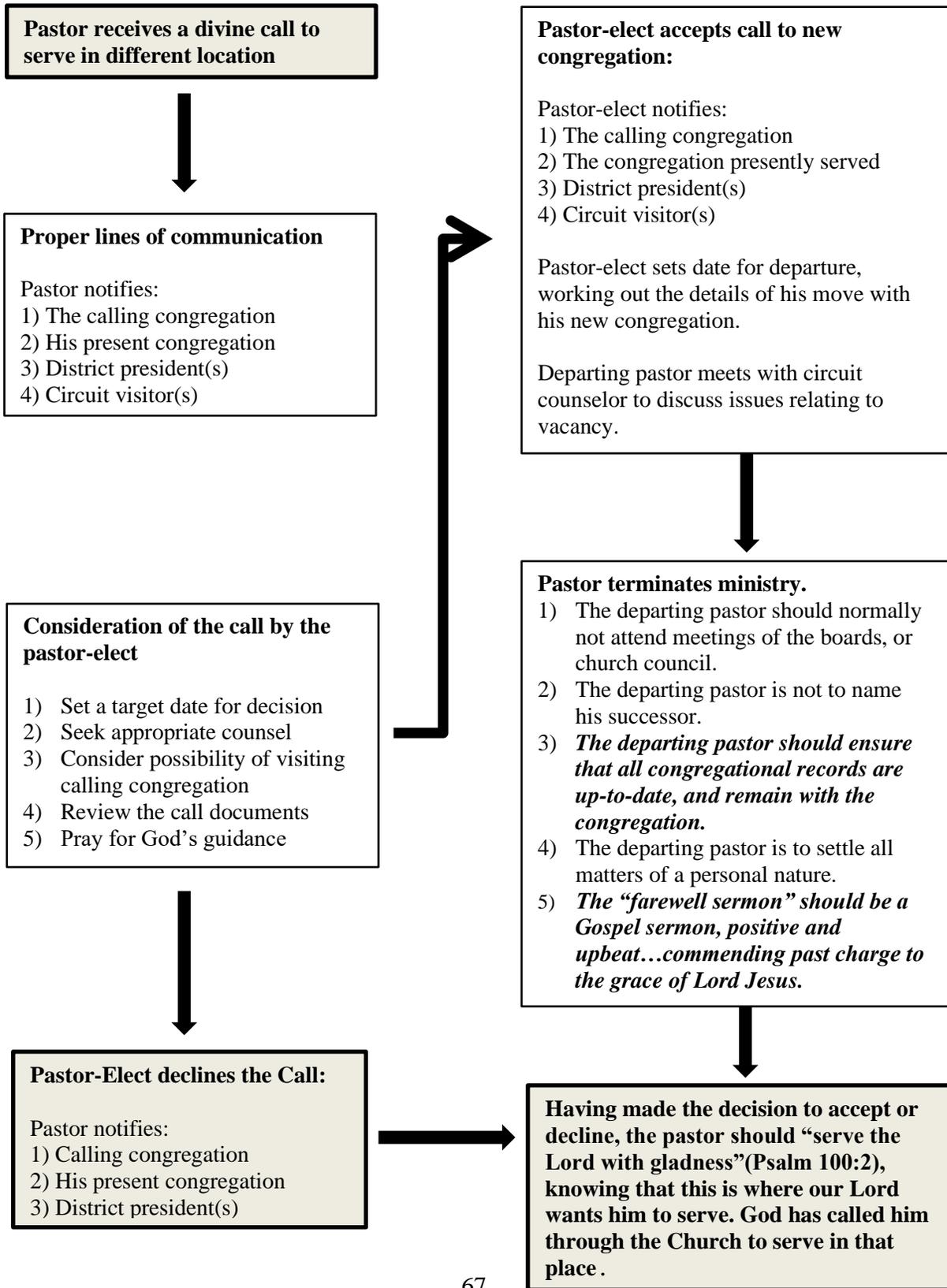
D. Installation of Commissioned Ministers of Religion

Although it is the general custom to allow the pastor of a congregation to install commissioned ministers of religion (teachers, DCEs, etc.), the circuit visitor has the responsibility of ensuring that the pastors of his circuit request proper authorization for the installation from the district president.

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A. FLOWCHART FOR DEALING WITH A CALL



B. CHECK LIST FOR THE CALL COMMITTEE

- () Contact the circuit visitor that a vacancy exists.
- () Arrange for the district president's pre-call meeting.
- () Initiate the congregational self-evaluation process.
- () Check the constitution of the congregation to find out the congregational procedure for calling a pastor.
- () Make arrangements for a vacancy pastor.
- () Inform the district president and the circuit visitor as to who is serving as vacancy pastor.
- () Ask the congregation to suggest names of pastors they would like to be considered in the calling process.
- () Send the names of suggested pastors to the district president.
- () Send a copy of the current budget to the district president.
- () Send a copy of the constitution and bylaws to the district president.
- () Fill out the information sheets that will accompany the call document. (See packet containing call documents.)
- () Prepare a letter that will be sent to the pastor-elect along with the call document, describing the congregation, the facilities, the community, the challenges, the opportunities, etc.
- () After sending all the necessary information to the district president, contact him and the circuit visitor regarding a date for the first call meeting.
- () After each call meeting, send the district president copies of:
 1. The Supplement to Diploma of Vocation
 2. The Information Sheets
 3. All correspondence with the pastor-elect
- () After the call has been sent, make arrangements for a visit from the pastor-elect and his wife.
- () After the call is accepted, contact the district president and the circuit visitor to make arrangements for the service of installation.

C. LAY LEADER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Congregation _____ City _____

Circuit _____ Date _____

Instructions: Your district president needs your help in preparing a call list for your congregation. Your frank and objective answers to the questions below will give him some important insight about pastoral abilities your congregation needs. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.

KEY LAY LEADER'S RATINGS – Please circle the number on the scale which best indicates how important you think it is that your pastor performs that activity. Read all of the items first. Then work through each item and circle the appropriate number on the scale.

- 5 - Most Important
- 4 - Very Important
- 3 - Average Importance
- 2 - Somewhat Important
- 1 - Not Important

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Maps out objectives and plans the overall church strategy and program. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. Teaches and works directly with children. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. Leads public worship. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. Ministers to the sick, dying, and bereaved. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. Counsels with people facing the major decisions of life -- marriage, vocation, etc. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. Fosters fellowship at church gatherings. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. Teaches and works directly with young people. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. Talks with individuals about their spiritual development. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. Visits new residents and recruits new members. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. Supplies ideas for new activities and projects. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 11. Works with congregational boards and committees. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. Recruits, trains, and assists lay leaders and teachers. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. Manages the church office -- records, correspondence, information center. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. Preaches sermons. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. Follows a definite schedule of reading and study. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

16. Promotes and creates enthusiasm for church activities.	5 4 3 2 1
17. Maintains a disciplined life of prayer and personal devotion.	5 4 3 2 1
18. Cooperates with social, legal, medical, and educational workers.	5 4 3 2 1
19. Helps manage church finances.	5 4 3 2 1
20. Administers baptism and communion; conducts weddings and sacred rites.	5 4 3 2 1
21. Participates in denominational activities.	5 4 3 2 1
22. Teaches and works directly with adults.	5 4 3 2 1
23. Counsels with people about their moral and personal problems.	5 4 3 2 1
24. Cultivates his home and personal life.	5 4 3 2 1
25. Participates in community projects and organizations.	5 4 3 2 1
26. Mixes socially to develop contacts.	5 4 3 2 1
27. Maintains harmony, handles trouble-makers, averts or resolves problems.	5 4 3 2 1
28. Assists victims of social neglect or injustice.	5 4 3 2 1
29. Speaks to community and civic groups.	5 4 3 2 1
30. Visits regularly in the homes of the congregation.	5 4 3 2 1

D. SAMPLE LETTERS

**LETTER INFORMING A CONGREGATION THAT
ITS PASTOR HAS BEEN CALLED**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On _____ (date) _____, 20____, The Voters Assembly of _____ (name) _____ Lutheran Church met to elect a pastor. After calling upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and deliberating over the names on our call list, our congregation voted to extend a call to your pastor, the Rev. _____ (name) _____.

As Pastor _____ (name) _____ considers his decision, we ask you to join us in praying that the Holy Spirit may guide him and that the will of God may be done. Should Pastor _____ (name) _____ be led to accept our call, we ask you to grant him a peaceful release so that he may take up his new responsibilities here.

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, guide and bless us all as we minister in His name.

With you in His service,

(signed)
Chairman, Call Committee

LETTER TO CALLING CONGREGATION ACKNOWLEDGING CALL

Dear Members of _____ (name) _____ congregation:

Greetings in the name of Him who is the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, our risen and victorious Savior!

Receiving the call to _____ (name) _____ congregation is at once an exciting and a humbling experience. Thank you for your confidence that I could serve you well as your pastor.

The call documents and accompanying materials have arrived and I am in the process of reviewing them. The information they provide will be most helpful in forming a picture of the congregation and its mission. I will be in contact with you soon to discuss the arrangements for a visit. I am looking forward to learning even more about the people and ministry of _____ (name) _____.

I pledge myself to give the most serious consideration to your call. As you sought the leading of the Holy Spirit in extending this call, so now I implore the same Spirit to guide me in my deliberations so that the will of God for His Church might be done. I hope to reach a decision within three or four weeks. Please remember my family and me in your prayers, as we include you in ours.

With you in His service,

_____ (signed) _____

cc: (both district presidents)

cc: (both circuit visitors)

LETTER TO THE "RECEIVING" DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Dear President _____ (name) _____,

On _____ (date) _____, 20____, I was called as pastor of _____ (name) _____ Lutheran Church of _____ (city, state) _____. After careful and prayerful consideration, I have been led to accept this call.

I have notified my district president that I have accepted the call, and I have requested that my membership be transferred to the _____ (receiving) _____ District.

I plan to arrive at my new charge on _____ (date) _____, and I request authorization to be installed so that I may begin my new duties there. Pending your approval, the date which has been set for the installation is _____ (date) _____.

I look forward to serving at _____ (church) _____ and in the _____ (name) _____ District. You may depend on my support as we work together in the interests of the Kingdom.

With you in His service,

_____ (signed) _____

cc: (new circuit visitor)

LETTER TO THE "FORMER" DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Dear President _____ (name) _____,

As you know from my previous correspondence, I have received a call to _____ (name) _____ Lutheran Church in _____ (city, state) _____. After careful and prayerful deliberation, I have been led to accept this call. My last Sunday in my present charge will be _____ (date) _____. Soon after that, I will be leaving for my new duties. Please transfer my membership to the _____ (receiving) _____ District. I am hoping to receive authorization to be installed on _____ (date) _____.

Thank you for your assistance to me and for your concern for my ministry here. May the Lord continue to bless your service to the _____ (name) _____ District.

Yours in Christ,

(signed)
cc: (old circuit visitor)

E. PROPOSED AGENDAS

1. PRE-CALL MEETING

I. Introduction of district president, circuit visitor, etc.

II. Opening Devotion

III. Vacancy Manual Review

- Vacancy terminology

- Lutheran understanding of the call

IV. Roles of the district president, circuit visitor, Vacancy Pastor, Call Committee, etc.

V. Commitment to Self-study

VI. Calling Process

VII. Target Dates for Calling Process

VIII. Call Documents

IX. Interim Pastoral Care Arrangement

- Establish duties

- Establish compensation

- Choose vacancy pastor

X. Open Discussion

XI. Closing

2. CALL MEETING

- I. Introduction of Circuit Visitor
- II. Opening Devotion
- III. Review of Doctrine of Church and Ministry
- IV. Call Documents Explanation
- V. Constitutional Requirements for Election Explanation
- VI. Procedure for Election Explanation
- VII. Adoption of Call List
- VIII. Presentation of Call List and District President's Evaluations
- IX. Discussion and Questions
- X. Prayer for Holy Spirit's Guidance
- XI. Balloting and Election
- XII. Motion to Telephone Pastor-Elect
- XIII. Intermission (while phone call is made)
- XIV. Motion to Invite Pastor-Elect to Visit
- XV. Signatures on Documents
- XVI. Final Encouragement (prayer and letters for pastor-elect)
- XVII. Closing

GUIDELINES FOR THE CIRCUIT VISITOR TO ASSIST IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

Above Reproach Preserving the Integrity of the Pastoral Office

Prepared by Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
Clergy Call and Roster Committee

The pastoral office is indispensable in the life of the church. C.F.W. Walther writes in Thesis III regarding the pastoral office, “*The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time*” [*Kirche und Amt*, p. 22].

To fill this Office of the Holy Ministry God calls ordinary men through His church to serve as pastors. There is an inherent weakness in that; not in God or His Office, but in the sinful human beings called to fill the office. Though we are ordained, not one of us is perfect. All pastors are frail human beings, sinners. Each is susceptible to the weakness of his own sinful flesh. Each lives in a world and a culture poisoned by sin. Each is vulnerable to the mischief of the evil one. As we admit in one of our confession of sins, “we sin by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault.” The forgiveness for the sake of Christ that we proclaim is also forgiveness even for our own sin.

In spite of the sinful men who fill the Office, our Lord in Holy Scripture maintains understandably high expectations regarding the teaching, the life and the behavior of those who serve in the Office. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7. And those standards ought never be compromised.

So how do we reconcile the high expectations of the Office with the sinful frailties of those who are called to fill the Office? Can any man serve in the Office regardless of his reputation? Can a man’s sin or his hubris disqualify a pastor from serving in the Office? What if a pastor is faithful in his proclamation of God’s Word and his administration of the Sacraments but is on the wrong side of being “above reproach”? Can a pastor who finds himself on the wrong side of “above reproach” be dismissed from his call, and/or removed from the LCMS roster?

In February 2009 Rev. Dr. Lane Seitz shared the following paragraphs as part of a presentation to the Council of Presidents regarding “above reproach”

On February 11, 1980, Dr. Martin Scharleman delivered a paper to the Council of Presidents, wrestling specifically with the topic of “The Pastoral Office and Divorce, Remarriage, and Moral Deviation.” In his presentation he stated, “Where the high standards [of the pastoral office] have been violated in such a way as to scandalize not only members of the church but even outsiders, confession of wrongdoing and absolution extended suffice to restore such a person to the community of believers. But it does not follow therefrom that they may continue in the office of pastor, or be reinstated to it, as the case may be.” Scharleman continues regarding the concept of “reinstatement” to the pastoral office by stating: “Since the church works with principles that are necessarily infused with Gospel values and since it is hazardous to work with absolutes in dealing with any problems that affect people in their sinfulness, it is conceivable that, under very exceptional circumstances, a former pastor could, so to speak, “work out his salvation” to the point of being in a position to be reconsidered as a person qualified to be entrusted once more with the powers of the pastoral office. Such instances will obviously be as rare as the cases of congregational treasurers being restored to that office after absconding with the members’ contributions, even

though they have shown contrition and repentance and are restored to the Christian fellowship." Thus the pastor must live with the reality that there are consequences for sin.

The issue for those involved in admitting men to the seminary, certifying them for ordination, supervising their doctrine and life, removing them from the roster, or reinstating them to the roster is this: 'At what point does the behavior of a man disqualify him from being declared 'fit' to hold the office or continue in the office?' There is no easy answer to this question.

As ecclesiastical supervisors, each of us is forced to wrestle with that question, "At what point does the behavior of a man disqualify him from being declared 'fit' to hold the office or to continue in the office?" In an attempt to answer that difficult question the following theses are offered.

Theses on "Above Reproach:

1. Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, His Bride.
2. The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world. Integrity of life and behavior are critical and necessary elements of the pastoral office.
3. The pastor's life is to model [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; and he dare not be a stumbling block to those inside or outside of the church.
4. Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one's office disqualifies a man from being considered "fit" for the pastoral office, from being declared "fit" to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, and may keep him from being reinstated to the office of the ministry.⁷
5. It is the responsibility of the calling entity, normally the local congregation, and ecclesiastical supervisor to administer a proper discipline for the sake of the Bride of Christ as well as for the integrity of the Pastoral Office.

Theses 1. Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, His Bride.

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

Ephesians 4:11-14 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers [τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους], to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,], until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- **τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους:** If in Eph. 4:11 the common article makes it plain that the διδάσκαλοι are identical with the ποιμένες, this lies in the nature of the case; for the → ποιμήν is the one who is responsible for the life of the community, and therefore διδάσκειν in the widest sense is part of his office. This is in agreement with Did., 15, 1, where the congregation is summoned to appoint ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἁγίους τοῦ κυρίου that these may discharge the λειτουργία τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων; the function of the διδάσκαλος is here, too, a function of divine service. It is self-evident, therefore, that in the first instance the διδάσκαλος does what he teaches [*Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

⁷ What Does It Mean to be "Above Reproach"? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009

- **καταρτισμός** is used at Eph. 4:12, in the context of the edifying of the body of Christ, to denote the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. The establishment of the community in work for the kingdom of God in the widest sense thus constitutes for Paul a material precondition of the upbuilding and consequently the actualisation of the community. [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (476). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]
- **οικοδομή** denotes in the first instance the act of building: [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (145). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Revelation 19:6-8 “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [cf. also Ephesians 5:25ff.]

Testimony of The Lutheran Confessions:

Augsburg Confession: Article V: Of the Ministry

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel* [German: Predigtamt. Latin: ministerium] and administering the Sacraments was instituted [emphasis added]. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. 4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. [*Concordia Triglotta*]

Augsburg Confession: Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order

Of Ecclesiastical Order [emphasis added] they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. [*Concordia Triglotta*]

Theses 2. The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world. Integrity of life and behavior are critical and necessary elements of the pastoral office.

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

1 Corinthians 4:1–2 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God [ὀπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων Θεοῦ]. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

- **ὀπηρέτας Χριστοῦ:** A person who renders service—‘servant.’ Helper. “The special feature of ὀπηρέτης, however, is that he willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth.” [Kittel, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 8:533]

- **οικονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ:** Manager. One who has the authority and responsibility for something—one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager, a steward.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. Εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. **2** δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδασκικόν, **3** μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπιεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, **4** τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος **5** (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;), **6** μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθῆις εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου. **7** δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν ἐμπέση καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου. [Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). *The Greek New Testament* (27th ed.) (544–545). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft]

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- **ἐπισκοπῆς** – overseer, bishop, one who watches over. 1 Peter 2:25
 - At a first glance, it would seem that ἐπίσκοπος here merely strengthens ποιμήν, and thus denotes one who keeps watch over the flock.
 - In 1 Tm. 3:1 ἐπισκοπή is a distinct office which one may seek. To attain it, certain qualifications must be met. It is to be noted that the passage simply outlines the qualifications and not the duties. The author has clear rules by which the congregation must be guided in its selection. The sobriety with which the requirements are stated, some of them being assumed as self-evident, and the fact that in regard to endowment for the episcopal office there is no further reference to the Holy Spirit but simply to essential human qualifications, show how strongly the development is already affected by everyday needs. [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
 - With pastoral wisdom 1 Tm. lists the requirements to be sought in those who bear it. First comes moral reliability. No particular ascetic attainment is demanded. The leader of a Christian community is also exposed to very human temptations. But he must lead an honourable and exemplary life, avoiding excess. This is what is meant when it is said that he must not be intemperate or quarrelsome or avaricious. Secondly, he must give proof in his own home of his ability to direct the life of the congregation. [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (617). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
 - **Gerhard:** It (ἐπισκοπή) is attributed in general to *all ministers of the church*. The duty of them all is ἐπίσκοπος, to watch out for the flock entrusted to their protection[fides] and to have diligent care for it. In Acts 20:28 the apostle Paul says to the presbyters of the church

of Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops to feed the church of God." [Johann Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, Pages 35-36]

➤ **Gerhard:** Specifically, it is attributed to those ministers of the church who have been entrusted not only with the care of the flock but also have been put in charge of inspecting the shepherds [pastores]; to them has been committed both the duty of teaching the church and of examining the teaching, life, and behavior of the shepherds. [Johann Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, Pages 36] ed. comment: Today we call them "district presidents".

- **ὀρέγομαι:** to eagerly desire to accomplish some goal or purpose—"to strive to attain, to aspire to, to eagerly long for."
- **ἀνεπίλημpton** – "invulnerable," "unassailable," "blameless". In the NT it occurs only in 1 Tm. 3:2; 5:7: one who cannot be attacked (even by non-Christians) because of his moral conduct. [Vol. 4: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (9). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **μῖς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα** – the husband of one wife.
- **νηφάλιον** – sober-minded, may be idiomatically rendered as "one who holds himself in" or "one who always has a halter on himself".
- **Σώφρονα** – self-controlled, pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one's behavior.
- **Κόσμιον** – respectable, pertaining to being modest in the sense of moderate and well-ordered.
- **Φιλόξενον** – hospitable, showing hospitality to strangers.
- **Διδακτικόν** – able to teach, being able to teach.
- **μὴ πάροιον** – not a drunkard, person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard person.
- **μὴ πλήκτην** – not violent but gentle, pugnacious and demanding—bully, violent person.
- **μὴ** – a marker of emphatic negation – "by no means, certainly not, God forbid".
- **ἐπιεικῆ** – gentle, gracious, forbearing.
- **ἄμαχον** – pertaining to a lack of conflict and contention, not quarrelsome, not contentious, peaceful.
- **ἀφιλάργυρον** – not a lover of money, not being desirous or greedy for money, not loving wealth.
- **τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον** – to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—influencing his own household well.
- **τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος** – children being in subjection with all propriety; i.e., with behavior which is befitting, implying a measure of dignity leading to respect—propriety.
- **μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθῆς** – certainly not a recent convert, to be so arrogant as to be practically demented—"to be insanely arrogant, to be extremely proud, or to become puffed up with conceit.
- **εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου** – fall(ἐμπέση) into the condemnation of the devil
- **δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξώθεν,** – It is necessary to have a good testimony from those outside.
- **ὄνειδισμὸν,** "insult," "abuse," "reproach,"
- **ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν** "lest into reproach". In 1 Tm. 3:7 blamelessness of walk is required of the ἐπίσκοπος. This is to find expression in the testimony of those who do not belong to the Christian community, lest the ἐπίσκοπος should come under reproach and defamation (ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν ἐμπέση). [Vol. 5: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (241). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- **παγίδα**, snare or noose. In 1 Tm. 3:7 and 2 Tm. 2:25 f. there is ref. to the *παγίς τοῦ διαβόλου*. Acc. to 1 Tin. 3:7 bad conduct on the bishop's part has two results: the *ἐπίσκοπος* is rightly despised by the people (→ *ὀνειδισμός*, 241, 20 ff.), and he is an easy prey for Satan, who thus gets him in his power and renders him unfit for service to the congregation. [Vol. 5: Theological dictionary of the New Testament. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (594). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- Footnote to the above: through slanders on the part of the *ἕξωθεν* the wrongly calumniated bishop “may easily err in his faith and be unfaithful in the discharge of his office.” “In such a situation Satan may with prospect of success cast a snare in his way by which he will come into Satan's power and fall away completely from the faith.” Cf. also Dib. Past., ad loc.: “‘The snare of the devil’ is easy to understand after the ref. to *ὀνειδισμός*: one should not give the old accuser even the appearance of a reason for complaint (in the form of calumnies by opponents).” H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar z. NT, III, 234 supplies *τοῦ διαβόλου* with *εἰς ὀνειδισμόν* and interprets the v. as follows: “The idea, then, is that a Christian can first fall under slander, then into captivity, and finally under the judgment of the devil.” This is in itself a true thought, but it is not what the verse says. [Theological dictionary of the New Testament. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Titus 1:5-9

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διαταξάμην, **6** εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα. **7** δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδῃ, μὴ ὀργίλον, μὴ πάροινον, μὴ πλήκτην, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, **8** ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὅσιον ἐγκρατῆ, **9** ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾖ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- **ἐπιδιορθώσῃ** to cause matters to be ordered in the correct manner—‘to set right, to correct, to put into order.’ *ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ* ‘I left you in Crete for you to put in order the things that still needed doing’ Tt 1:5. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (611). New York: United Bible Societies.]

- **καταστήσῃς, καθίστημι**, “To set in an elevated position, in an office,” “to install”. [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (444). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- **ἀνέγκλητος** This term denotes a person or thing against which there can be no *ἔγκλημα* and which is thus “free from reproach,” “without stain,” “guiltless”; [Vol. 1: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- **πρεσβυτέρους** In the NT there are three examples of ordinary usage in the Pastorals. In Tt. 1:6 it is demanded that Titus should see to it in presbyters: *εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος ... δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον* (v. 7). The predicates which follow show us that

in relation to these offices we have a demand for the blamelessness (in the sense of civic ethics) which they must have for their work as that of a θεοῦ οἰκονόμος. [*Vol. 1: Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (356). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

Luther: 2. *He must be above reproach.* This is the first quality he must have. The man who wants to investigate, correct, and teach others should be above reproach. To be beyond comparison is shameful for a teacher; that is, that he is beyond accusation and can neither rightly nor justly be accused. After all, there is no one who is above reproach before God. Paul writes: “I am conscious of no evil” (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4). Let the Our Father stand: “Forgive us.” Before God no one is above reproach, but before men the bishop is to be so, that he may not be a fornicator, an adulterer, a greedy man, a foul-mouthed person, a drunkard, a gambler, a slanderer. If he is falsely accused, no harm; he is still above reproach; no law can accuse him before men. Samuel and Moses are good examples. Samuel said, “If I have defrauded anyone, etc.” (cf. 1 Sam. 12:3). There he showed how innocent he was, as far as men were concerned. Moses spoke this way before Korah (cf. Num. 16:15). To live this way, that you do not harm your neighbor by theft or adultery, means that no man can accuse you of anything. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 28: 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (1 Ti 3:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: As for the rest, read what the apostle says in 1 Tim. 3:2 and in Titus 1:7 and 2:7: “For a bishop must be above reproach.” Therefore every priest should know that he is a priest not for himself but for others, and he should strive above all to be endowed with the greatest mercy, in order that he may know how to bear the sins and the ignorance of others. For thus one reads throughout the Book of Judges: “And the Lord raised up a deliverer for them.” Therefore they are pictured as priests, called priests, and commanded to be priests who should have the same reputation that formerly the kings of Israel had, so that even their enemies were confident of their mercy. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 29: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Heb 5:1). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: But St. Paul, 1 Timothy 3[1–7], describes what a true bishop is like: “This is indeed sure: Whoever desires a bishopric seeks a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt preacher, no drunkard, one who does not curse, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church, or the common good? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the slanderer. Moreover he must be well thought of by unbelievers, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the slanderer.” Now see whether it is not a noble task to be a bishop in whose office are so many noble virtues! St. Paul does not want him to be a recent convert who has just come to the faith or one who is young in the faith, so that the slanderer may not have good cause and reason to judge him and to say, “See how they put a fool over the eggs.” Instead, he should be an experienced and brave man so that the slanderer must be ashamed to speak evil of him. [Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 39: Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (254–255). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.]

Testimony of the Church Fathers:⁸

Gerhard: Now that we have explained why God ordinarily wants to use the work not of angels but of men in the ecclesiastical ministry, it still remains for us to explain *what sort of persons are to be selected from among men for the ministry*. On this topic we said earlier in the chapter on the Examination of Ordinands that they are required to have “sincerity of confession, dexterity in teaching, and integrity of life and behavior.”...To say it briefly, persons to be selected for the ministry out to be *right in faith, approved in life, and equipped with the gifts of teaching*...The common virtues are expressed, first, with general words: that he should be “blameless and without reproach [1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6]. They are expressed, second, with a specific list of some of them, [in two ways] *Through affirmation: ... Then, through negation*. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 264-265]

Theses 3. The pastor’s life modeling [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; and dare not be a stumbling block to those inside or outside of the church.

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

Luke 17:1-3 And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.

1 Peter 5:1-4

5 Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός· 2 ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποιμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως κατὰ θεόν, μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως, 3 μὴδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου· 4 καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- **ἐπισκοποῦντες**, exercising oversight. The official work of presbyters, who are obviously the same as the ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι of communities in the Gk. world (→ 615 f.), is thus to follow the pattern of the ποιμὴν καὶ ἐπίσκοπος Jesus Christ, consisting in ποιμαίνειν and ἐπισκοπεῖν, in feeding the community and in responsible care for it, in watching over its eternal welfare. The comparison of this responsibility of the elders in the individual church with the work of Jesus Christ in relation to the universal Church conveys to us the dignity of the office as it was understood by early Christianity. Luther says concerning this passage: “To be an *episcopus* or bishop is to give good heed, to be honest, to watch diligently.” [Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (604). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς**, not out of obligation, because it is a must, by compulsion

⁸ “Patres fuerunt lumina, non numina, indices, non iudices, ministri, non magistri” (the fathers were lights and not gods, teachers and not judges, servants and not masters). [Walther, C.F.W. Walther’s Works: Church Fellowship (Kindle Locations 3599-3601). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

- **μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες**, Domineering: 1 Peter 5:4 κατακυριεύω, overpower, gain dominion over, subdue. In the 6th cent. A.D. it came to mean “to have title to something.” 2 Cor. 1:24
 - i.e., the elders, each over his portion, are not to exercise their power for themselves and therewith against those entrusted to them. [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (1098). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **τῶν κλήρων**, the κλῆρος is the portion allotted to each individual elder [Vol. 3: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (764). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Τύποι**: a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided— The more a life is moulded by the word, the more it becomes τύπος, a model or mould. It is not a mould which forces nor is it an example which can be imitated. It can just be lived out again in freedom, namely, by faith. Along the same lines as in Paul, the exhortation in 1 Pt. 5:3 admonishes those who represent the word to become τύποι ... τοῦ ποιμνίου, “examples to the flock.” The word cannot just be recited; it can be attested only as one’s own word which shapes one’s own conduct. The office-bearer is thus admonished: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word (i.e., preaching), in conversation,” 1 Tm. 4:12; cf. Tt. 2:7: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern (in the doing) of good works” [Vol. 8: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (250). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans]
- **ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου**: “but becoming models or visible patterns for the flock to imitate.” Cf. Philippians 4:8-9, Titus 2:7

Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

Luther: For it does not become a pastor to live in a dishonorable manner or to administer his household and home in a disgraceful manner. It is far better to bear the contempt and hatred of adversaries than to fall into reproach and into the snare of the devil, as Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:7. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 6: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ge 37:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Luther: Away now with those who want to be shepherds of many places, yes, shepherds of many shepherds; and let them glory in their own power, though meanwhile they fail to provide pasture even for themselves! In fact, so thoroughly corrupt are men’s attitudes today that they take what Christ said to Peter—“Feed My sheep” (John 21:17)—and interpret it to mean: “Be a superior over My sheep, and lord it over them.” This is all it means today to feed Christ’s sheep, even if they have not seen a syllable of the Gospel, which alone is the pasture of the sheep. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 27: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (Ga 5:7). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Testimony of the Church Fathers:

Gerhard: 182. The apostle mentions those common virtues for this reason: integrity of life and honorable behavior are required chiefly and especially of a bishop, not just because of those general reasons that demand these from all other Christians but also particularly for this reason; that they may be “examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3), that in all things and in every respect they may offer themselves as “a pattern of good works” (2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7), that they not, because of their wickedness of life, expose their ministry to the reproaches of enemies and set up an impediment or hindrance to the Word’s fruit-bearing, and thus cause the name and doctrine of the Lord to be blasphemed. [Gerhard, Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1, pages 265-266]

Walther: Finally, let the following from Seidel’s Pastoraltheologie be included here: The apostles of the Lord have not prescribed such emphatic rules of behavior for any estate besides the office of teaching (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). If we summarize everything that constitutes the content of the apostolic admonitions, it comes down to the following items:

(1) A preacher must present himself to his congregation as a model and example of discipleship and must therefore never do something that he has presented to his congregation as wrong; otherwise he would certainly lead them to think that something must be wrong with his teaching and that he is only preaching in order to earn his bread...

(3) *A preacher must arrange all his actions so that his congregation recognizes that his only and true purpose is their salvation. Whoever thinks only about how he may collect something of temporal goods or indulge his comfort will very soon lose the trust of his congregation. [emphasis added.]*

(4) A preacher must most seriously guard against giving offense to anyone and must therefore constantly examine his words, mannerisms, and actions so that nothing punishable is found in them.” ([Pastoraltheologie], pp. 330ff.) [Walther, C.F.W. Walther’s Works: Pastoral Theology (Kindle Locations 10966-10970). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Theses 4. Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one’s office disqualifies a man from being considered “fit” for the pastoral office, from being declared “fit” to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, and may keep him from being reinstated to the office of the ministry.⁹

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

Exodus 2:14 Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.”

1 Corinthians 8:9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

- **πρόσκομμα** cause of falling, the stone on which there is the stumbling, which leads to a fall, destruction.
- **πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν:** that which provides an opportunity or occasion for causing someone to sin—“that which causes someone to sin” or “that which provides an occasion for someone to sin.” In other words, this action or lifestyle gets in the way of the Gospel, handicapping the pastor’s ministry, preventing people from hearing the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 6:3ff We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry [**Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**], ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way [**ἵνα μὴ μομηθῇ ἡ διακονία**]: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known;

⁹ What Does It Mean to be “Above Reproach”? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009

as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

- **Μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν**, lit. “Not once in nothing”. Paul lays down for himself as an apostle the principle: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἢ διακονία, 2 C. 6:3. According to the context προσκοπήν διδόναι has to be an act which makes reproach possible, and this Paul wants to avoid for the sake of the cause whether the offence be well-founded and justified or not,... Here too, however, the ultimate concern is the salvation of the community. [Vol. 6: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (754). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **Προσκοπήν**, “occasion of falling, of taking offence,” also “reason for antipathy”: μηδεμίαν ἐν μηδενὶ διδόντες προσκοπήν, 2 C. 6:3. [Vol. 6: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (747). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]
- **ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἢ διακονία** to find fault with someone by implying blame—‘to criticize, to censure, to find fault with.’ ἵνα μὴ μωμηθῆ ἢ διακονία ‘we don’t want anyone to find fault with our work’ 2 Cor 6:3. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (435). New York: United Bible Societies]

Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther:

Luther: Paul’s frequent use of the word “stewardship” or “household,” “ministry,” “minister,” “servant,” “one serving the gospel,” etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers. In this view of the ministry, the so-called “indelible character” vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. A minister may be deposed if he proves unfaithful. On the other hand he is to be permitted in the ministry as long as he is competent and has the favor of the church as a whole; just as in civil matters any administrator is treated as an equal among his brethren. In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. [LW, volume 40, p. 35]

Testimony of the Church fathers:

Walther: Right now my nephew Robert Engel is visiting here, who was a former Saxon pastor but who had to resign his office because he had written a love letter to a girl although he was already married, at a time when he was overburdened with work. It is truly regrettable for him as a person. He is as good as useless for our church since this case has become known in our circles. He was unusually well grounded in doctrine and besides is a philologist and an accomplished dialectician. Thus the devil takes those few who have the gifts and the desires to serve the church and makes them useless. [C.F.W. Walther, Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther, Letters CPH, vol 6, pages 117-118.]

Theses 5. It is the responsibility of the calling entity, normally the local congregation, and ecclesiastical supervisor to administer a proper ecclesiastical discipline for the sake of the members of the Bride of Christ, as well as for the integrity of the Pastoral Office.

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

Jeremiah 10:20-21, My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are not; there is no one to spread my tent again and to set up my curtains. For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.

Ezekiel 34:8-10 “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.”

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

3 John 9–11 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority [ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς]. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης:** to like or love to be first in rank or position—“to desire to be first, to desire to order others.” “love to have the preeminence”
- **οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς:** to listen or pay attention to a person, with resulting conformity to what is advised or commanded—to pay attention to and obey.
- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς:** “but Diotrephes, who always wants to order others, will not pay any attention to us”.

Testimony of The Lutheran Confessions:

60] [In our Confession and the Apology we have in general recounted what we have had to say concerning ecclesiastical power. For] The Gospel assigns to those who preside over churches the command to teach the Gospel to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent.

61] And by the confession of all, even of the adversaries, it is clear that this power by divine right is common to all who preside over churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops. **62]** And accordingly Jerome openly teaches in the apostolic letters that all who preside over churches are both bishops and elders, and cites from Titus 1, 5f.: *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city* [and afterwards calls these persons bishops]. Then he adds: *A bishop must be the husband of one wife.* Likewise Peter and John call themselves elders [or priests] 1 Pet. 5, 1; 2 John 1. And he then adds: *But that afterwards one was chosen to be placed over the rest, this was done as a remedy for schism, lest each one by attracting [a congregation here or there] to himself might rend the Church of Christ. For at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist to the bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the elders always elected one from among themselves, and placed him in a higher station, whom they called bishop; just as an army would make a commander for itself. The deacons, moreover, may elect from among themselves one whom they know to be active, and name him archdeacon. For with the exception of ordination, what does the bishop that the elder does not?*

63] Jerome, therefore, teaches that it is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct. And the subject itself declares this, because the power [the office and command] is the same, as he has said above.

64] But one matter afterwards made a distinction between bishops and pastors namely, ordination, because it was [so] arranged that one bishop should ordain ministers in a number of churches.

65] But since by divine authority the grades of bishop and pastor are not diverse, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine law [if a pastor in his own church ordains certain suitable persons to the ministry, such ordination is, according to divine law, undoubtedly effective and right].

66] Therefore, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Church, or are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right. [Because the regular bishops persecute the Gospel and refuse to ordain suitable persons, every church has in this case full authority to ordain its own ministers.]

[*Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (electronic ed., pp. 521–523). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.]

Testimony of Dr. Martin Luther.

Luther: Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, p. 55)

Luther: “In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else.” [*LW*, volume 40, p. 35]

Testimony of the Church Fathers:

Martin Chemnitz: It is the work of God to remove a person from the ministry. Therefore as long as God endures His minister, who is teaching correctly and living blamelessly in his ministry, the Church does not have the authority to remove this servant. But when he no longer edifies the Church with his doctrine or his life but is destroying it, then God Himself will remove him... There are two reasons for God's removing ministers from their office: 1. because of their doctrine when they teach error; 2. because of their life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed ... For just as God calls, so also He removes through means. [Chemnitz, *The Locus on The Church, Loci Theologici*, Translated by Dr. J. A. O. Preus (CPH) – 1989 Volume II, page 698ff.]

Quenstedt: The right to call qualified ministers and to remove wicked ministers belongs to the whole Church. [*The Holy Ministry*, 1696 edition translated by Poellot, 1979]

Walther: 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”: So when [our thesis] says: The Synod should protect the congregations, one should not think this means that a congregation may not do it—that, for example, a congregation cannot judge anything at all [and] that the Synod must judge whether the pastor is teaching true or false [doctrine]. [Nor should we think] that the congregation cannot depose anyone because of godless living and that it cannot get rid of one who oversteps his authority and proves to be domineering, that only the Synod could free them. No; the congregation has full power to depose as well as to install and to judge regarding its pastor’s doctrine....

Finally, according to Thesis II, a synod that is faithful to the Confessions should...c. protect the congregations against pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle and are domineering in their office. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

Walther’s 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: But, of course, the congregation must proceed properly. The Synod cannot sit idly by if the congregation proceeds improperly. Then the Synod also has the right to say: “If you do so and so with a pastor, then you can no longer be in the Synod.” For example, *if a pastor is dismissed by a congregation because he proclaims the truth to it, the congregation would be admonished by the synod: and if that would do no good, one would have to say: “you can no longer belong to us.”* But no more. That would be all. [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 35]

Walther: Therefore, when a pastor uses God’s Word in his congregation, whether by teaching, admonishing, reproving, or comforting, either publicly or privately, then the congregation hears Jesus Christ Himself out of his mouth. In that case it owes him unconditional obedience as the one by whom God desires to make known to it His will and lead it to eternal life, and the more faithfully a pastor administers his office, the more highly it should esteem him. A congregation has no right to depose such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, it rejects Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name he ministers to it. A congregation can depose an incumbent of the holy ministry only if it is clear from the divine Word that God Himself has deposed him as a wolf or hireling. Of this we read in the Holy Scriptures:

“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). [Walther, C. (1999). *Church and Ministry: Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry* (electronic ed.) (pp. 303–304). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Walther’s 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: There are also pastors who cause a great deal of annoyance. But the congregations should not require the pastor to live like an archangel; that he cannot do. He has flesh and blood like other Christians, and so weaknesses appear here and there. Then, if mature Christians are present, they will say to their pastor, “Dear pastor, it was not right to do what you did.” If they are merely weaknesses, one must bear with them and not demand perfection [*nicht Alles auf der Goldwage wagen*] “and with the measure you use it will be measured to you” [Matthew 7:2]. But this should not be used to defend a pastor who lives in sins that dominate [him]. *If he refuses to be instructed, one should show no mercy.* If the congregation members of such a pastor then come to the [District/Synod] President and tell him, “This is the situation; will you agree with us if we dismiss him?” he will then reply, “Of course, that is right; such a rascal doesn’t belong in the Holy Office.” But the opposite also occurs,

that [some] individuals make the sin greater than it is. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 6223-6230). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther: Congregations shall not be so presumptuous as to arbitrarily depose their pastors and others who administer an ecclesiastical office. But if they fall into pernicious errors and are found guilty by lawful procedure (1 Timothy 5:19; “Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses”) and refuse to accept instruction from God’s Word either by the congregation or by the pastors called in for this purpose; or if they become manifest as contumacious impenitent sinners; or if they have committed an offense by which they have lost their good report among those who are without and by which they cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, then Christian congregations in Christian order (to which under circumstances belongs a provisional suspension) must remove them from office as such as God Himself has put out. (Matt. 7:15: Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Hos 4:6: Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest to Me. John 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. 1 Tim. 3:7: He must have a good report from them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.) [*The Form of a Christian Congregation*, CFW Walther, p. 128]

Walther’s 1879 Convention Essay *The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*: You see, a Synod will always support the congregation if it can prove that its pastor is unfaithful to his office, lazy, indifferent, immoral, power-hungry stubborn, or is living in manifest sins. Through the District President the Synod will visit the congregation and will support those who are right. He may know best how to disarm those who support the unfaithful, wicked pastor. From John’s Third Epistle, verses 9 and 10, we learn that already in apostolic times a congregation was provided help by a District President, even though that title was not in use at that time. John writes: “I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who lives to be their leader, won’t listen to us. So, when I come, I’ll bring up what he’s doing when he talks such wicked nonsense about us.” [1879 Essay, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, p. 36]

LCMS Constitution, Article XII, 7. The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit visitors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president. [page 14]

Concluding Thoughts:

- 1) The issue surrounding the words “above reproach” is the integrity of the Office of the Holy Ministry.
- 2) “Above reproach” is an umbrella term under which the biblical writers list specific qualifications that one must possess to pursue the pastoral office, be declared “fit” for the pastoral office, remain in the pastoral office, or be reinstated to the pastoral office.
 - Gerhard from page 7: The common virtues are expressed, first, with general words: that he should be “blameless and without reproach [1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6]. They are expressed, second, with a specific list of some of them, [in two ways] **Through affirmation... Then, through negation.** [Gerhard, *Common Places: On the Ministry, Part 1*, pages 264-265]
- 3) Those who occupy the Office of the Holy Ministry must be moral, ethical, spiritual, and exemplary individuals. (ed. comment: Men of character and good report.)

4) We dare not confuse “forgiveness” and “fitness for ministry”. They are two different things. One needs to be “fit” to hold the pastoral office. Though forgiven, a pastor may not be fit for the Office.

5) Grievous sin, an obviously sinful lifestyle, or unusually poor administration of one’s office disqualifies a man from being considered “fit” to pursue the pastoral office, from being declared “fit” to hold the pastoral office, from being allowed to remain in the pastoral office, or to be reinstated to the office of the ministry.

6) Most important of all, a person is not “above reproach” if his specific sin, his lifestyle, or the administration of his office genuinely causes people to stumble in their faith, hinders the spread of the Gospel, or causes people to reject it. [What Does It Mean to be “Above Reproach”? by Rev. Dr. Lane R. Seitz, President Minnesota South District, Council of Presidents February 2009]

With the ebb and flow of life in the church this requirement that those who fill the pastoral office are to be “above reproach” is especially important now as we find ourselves in this post-modern, post-Constantinian culture. That true, we find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right, where the gross sins formerly scorned by society are now not only accepted but paraded for all to see, and where morality has been replaced by immorality as accepted norm for society, at times even within the church.

The culture in which we live can easily taint and even corrupt our understanding of “above reproach”. We live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, our Law and Gospel proclamation, and where our Christian morality, are increasingly challenged, even despised. That pressures us to temper our confession, to compromise our ethical standards, to turn a blind eye to a worker’s sinful behavior. But that dare never happen. This is about the integrity of the Office and the honor of the Bride.

For those reasons, it bears upon us as church workers and ecclesial supervisors to be exceptionally diligent to be “above reproach”. There is much at stake: the salvation of the people we are called to serve, our own salvation, as well as the standing of the church in the eyes of the world around. It is essential that pastors be “above reproach.”

Addendum:

While not an exhaustive, **C.F.W. Walther** lists the following in his 1879 essay *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* as reasons for a congregation to admonish its pastor and even remove its pastor from his divine call. These are items that may move a pastor into the area of reproach.

- Offensive lifestyle
- Domineering in office
- unfaithful
- indifferent
- immoral
- living in manifest sins
- lazy
- careless about official acts
- falling into sins of drunkenness and other great vices
- becoming obstinate, so that no one can get along with him
- becoming power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way
- taking the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled
- becoming lax about visiting the sick and snapping at people when they come to see him

The BPE Adopted Motion on Above Reproach Issues

The Board for Pastoral Education adopted the following motion during its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, 22 January, 2009:

The following is a list of items, that, in the opinion of the BPE, fall short of the "above reproach" standard for those who seek to serve in the office of the pastoral ministry. The items are offered, not as an exhaustive list, but rather as an example of items that should be discussed by the Council of Presidents and the two seminaries.

- Two or more divorces, though candidates with one divorce may be declined admission based upon the details of that divorce;
- Convicted of a felony;
- Convicted of a sex offense (felony or misdemeanor);
- Recent (within five years) conviction of drug or substance (including alcohol) abuse, and/or selling and trafficking in the same;
- Recent (within five years) acknowledged substance abuse;
- Recent (within five years) addictive behavior (e.g., gambling, pornography, internet pornography);
- Homosexuality.

It is understood that extremely rare and exceptional cases may present themselves, and under extremely rare circumstances may constitute possibilities for exceptions. Care should be taken that the extremely rare does not become the commonplace.

The 2019 Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS state:

1.2.1(i) *Ecclesiastical supervision:* The responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies. Such supervision, subject to the provisions of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions, includes visitation, evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures to assure that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are followed and implemented. Thus, ecclesiastical supervision is also the presenting, interpreting, and applying of the collective will of the Synod's congregations. Ecclesiastical supervision does not include the responsibility to observe, monitor, control, or direct the day-to-day activities of individual members of the Synod, whether in the conduct of their work or in their private lives (cf. Bylaw 2.14.1 [a]). Further, those constitutional articles and bylaws pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision.

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 Constitution Art. II or the conditions of membership laid down in Constitution Art. 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.

4.4.5 Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the ordained or commissioned ministers who are members through his district or are subject to his ecclesiastical supervision, and shall inquire into the prevailing spiritual conditions of the congregations of his district.

GUIDELINES FOR INSTALLATION AND ORDINATION

I. Ordination and Commissioning

A. Bylaw Provisions

The following bylaw references designate the resource material which a circuit visitor needs in order to understand the definitions, eligibility requirements, and prerequisites for ordination and commissioning.

1. Definitions: Bylaw section 2.6 Individual Membership (2019 Handbook, pages 57)
 - a) Ordained Ministers
 - b) Commissioned Ministers
2. Eligibility: Bylaw section 2.7 (2019 Handbook, page 57-58)
3. Assignment of First Calls: Bylaw section 2.8 (2019 Handbook, pages 58)
4. Ordination, Commissioning, and Initial Installation: Bylaw section 2.10 (2019 Handbook, pages 59-60)

B. Practical Considerations

Bylaws 2.10.3 and 2.10.4 point to practical considerations with which the circuit visitor should be familiar, such as:

1. Responsibility for Rites

The district president is responsible for the rites of ordination and commissioning of candidates. This provision means, first of all, that the circuit visitor, if he is the ordaining or commissioning agent, should have received written authorization from the district president for either activity or that he has advised the calling entity that either activity will require the written authorization of the district president regardless of who is the ordaining or commissioning agent.

Secondly, this provision ordinarily does not mean that the district president or his office will provide the actual order of service in which the ordaining or commissioning will take place. Rather, the actual rite or formal words which constitute the ritual of ordaining or commissioning ought to be cleared with the district president, if such rite is not from *The Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*. In all events, regardless of the specific rite, the candidate shall be solemnly pledged to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures.

2. Location for the Rites

The location of the Rite of Ordination or Commissioning shall ordinarily take place in the presence of the congregation or other entity to which the candidate has been called. A service of celebration on the part of the candidate's home congregation is encouraged. If an unusual circumstance warrants it, the appropriate district president may authorize that the rite take place in the home congregation of the candidate or other appropriate congregation with the permission of the calling congregation or other entity.

3. Diploma of Ordination or Commissioning

The district president issues a Diploma of Ordination or Commissioning.

4. The Rite of Installation

The Rite of Installation shall always take place in the presence of the calling congregation or other calling body.

It is recommended that only missionaries, members of the faculty of a synod institution, or institutional chaplains have the rite of installation take place in another location.

Authorization by the district president is required in every case.

II. Installations

A. Bylaw Provisions

While the *Handbook* of the Synod covers the subjects of ordination, commissioning, and initial installation with considerable material (Bylaws 2.10.2 and 2.10.3), there is very little which applies to subsequent installations. Only Bylaw 2.10.4 speaks to the matter: "The rites of ordination and commissioning and the rites of installation should be in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, and in all events the minister shall be solemnly pledged to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures." (LCMS Bylaws, page 60)

B. Practical Considerations

1. Service to the Congregation

In all likelihood, the Service of Installation culminates a period of service performed by the circuit visitor for a congregation. The circuit visitor may offer his continuing service to the congregation by suggesting worship settings for the rite of installation. He should encourage the participation of the elders and/or worship committee in making decision about the type of service chosen. He should also be sensitive to the desires and possible requirements of the person being installed. The circuit visitor should become aware of local customs. Many congregations, for instance, permit or encourage the person to be installed to choose the speaker for the occasion.

2. Alternate Worship Settings

The circuit visitors of a district can assist one another by compiling an assortment of service settings suggested for installations. Some alternate settings express different values present in the calling process and in the relationship to be established by the installation. Other settings may reveal other sensitivities. It may be appropriate, for instance, to highlight an understanding of the mission of the church. While *The Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* offers a rite for installation, it does not suggest a given worship setting. In any event, the occasion will become a time when the circuit visitor is helpful to the congregation.

3. Alternate Rites

The traditional rite of installation emphasizes the faithfulness of the installed person to God, the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Confessions. Other rites of installation have appeared. They keep the traditional emphases but also allow participation of the officers of the congregation in the rite. In so doing, the rite gives expression to the substance of the relationship being established and gives emphasis to the ministry which the people of the congregation have with the person being installed.

Regardless of the multiplication of such rites, the general principle should be observed, namely, that "The rites of ordination and commissioning and the rites of installation should be in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose and in all events the minister shall be solemnly pledged to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures." (Bylaw 2.10.4) The appropriate use and real benefits of alternate rites should be a subject of discussion at meetings held by the district for circuit visitors.

THE CIRCUIT VISITOR SUPPORTS THE NEW PASTOR IN HIS EARLY YEARS OF MINISTRY

The new pastor, a recent graduate, has many expectations, hopes, and enthusiasm for the ministry, but he is not an expert at ministry. He has mastered only entry-level skills. Now the work of ministry truly begins.

It is not unusual during the first months in ministry to experience doubts. There will be times when the newly ordained pastor feels that he is like a "fish out of water" as he adjusts to parish ministry and develops identity and style as a pastor. This entry experience cannot be avoided but the road can be made less lonely and more productive.

The circuit visitors and other circuit pastors and teachers can assist in this transition from seminary to congregation. Research indicates that ministry patterns developed in the first five years set the style for an individual's ministry. To assist in this transition many districts have an active "PALS" group which is coordinated through the district in which the pastor serves.

The pastor has unique needs in this point of his ministry. These may be divided into three areas: personal, professional, and relational. Following are some additional suggestions regarding the transition from seminary into the pastoral ministry.

A. Personal Needs

1. Growth as a Person. The pastor needs to grow in self-understanding by getting to know his limitations and strengths. He needs to set his personal goals. Adopting a personal vision statement helps to define the direction for one's life and one's ministry. There are several excellent resources to help in this process. They are included in the bibliography at the end of this section.
2. Spiritual Growth. The pastor needs to develop a disciplined devotional life. He needs to study the Word for his own spiritual renewal. The key is scheduling the when and where for devotional time.
3. Family Growth. This is a time of major adjustment in family. Perhaps it is a new school for the children; a different community and a different role for the pastor and his wife. The pastor's wife has a special need for developing new friends and being accepted by the congregation. While the pastor is accepted because of his position, his wife is many times not affirmed or accepted. There is also a change in finances. What is the availability of career/employment options for the pastor's wife?
4. Physical Growth. The pastor needs to maintain himself physically, maintaining his energy and health level. He also needs to develop appropriate ways for handling stress.
5. Role Model/Counselor. The pastor has a need for someone outside the congregation and family to be the loyal friend, sounding board, and agitator for his growth. It would be good to identify one or two brothers in the ministry on whom the new pastor can call for advice. Some have called this his "personal board of directors." Such people and their advice are especially essential in dealing with the crises that will occur.

B. Professional Needs

1. Professional Assessment. The pastor needs feedback on his ministry. These may be self-assessments and reflection methods or may be more formal sessions with key leaders. The willingness to receive feedback and build upon it is key.
2. Time Management. How to organize the available time? One must manage the complex demand of parish ministry with family time and personal time. This depends on the size of the congregation and its current ministry goals. It is very easy for a pastor to be consumed with his calling and to neglect family and self. It is essential that each pastor carefully block out time for family and for self. Doing so results in great blessings for the ministry, for the family, and for self.
3. Organizational/Administrative Management. Developing an appropriate range of leadership styles and knowing what style a situation requires is very helpful for a pastor, as is, understanding the history, norms and traditions of the congregation and learning the congregation's culture and centers of influence.
4. For the Associate Pastor. Building the team relationship is critical to ministry effectiveness. Mutual understanding and appreciation is required. It is essential to clarify ministry responsibilities and agreeing on measurement of success.

C. Relationship Needs

1. Building and Managing Relationships. Developing effective skills in inter-personal and inter-group relationships are essential for accomplishing the ministry.
2. Conflict Management. Conflict has many levels and some conflict may be helpful for the growth of the congregation. There are conflicts which are counter-productive for growth and frustrating to the congregation. A pastor needs a framework for understanding and managing conflicts between congregational groups and members or between the people and himself. (There is more regarding this in another section of this manual.)
3. Peer Relationships. A pastor has need for relationships with peers in the ministry. A pastor needs someone he can call "friend." There are needs for ministry insight, affirmation, and challenge. The circuit *Winkels* and district pastors conferences are wonderful opportunities for pastors to share. Also important are informal gatherings for lunch, golf, or whatever.
4. Role Identification and Expectations. What are the expectations people have for their pastor? How does the pastor know what they are and evaluate their appropriateness for ministry? What are the pastor's expectations of his people? How are role expectations mutually shared? The congregation's board of elders and/or board of directors can help in defining these.

D. Key Assumptions about the Pastor in Early Years of Ministry

1. Seminary education cannot fully prepare a pastor for all that he will encounter during his early years of ministry. Seminary training only provides the foundation upon which ministry is carried out.

2. The shift from seminary to parish is always accompanied by a variety of dramatic and significant changes.
3. The expectations of seminary graduates are generally unrealistic.
4. The district has an appropriate role in assisting its pastors to survive the first five years of ministry.
5. The state (condition) of the parish relates directly to the ease or difficulty of the early years of the ministry.
6. Identification of a trusted personal advisor is critical to the early years of ministry.
7. The role of pastor is more than the sum of specific, learned pastoral skills.
8. Success at the seminary does not necessarily lead to success in parish ministry.
9. The norms of parish culture (what behavior is encouraged/discouraged) often conflict with the norms of seminary culture.
10. The early years of an assistant pastor will differ substantially from the early year needs of a "sole pastor."
11. Experience and reflection are necessary components to continuing education.

E. Circuit Visitor's Role

1. Be Available. A new pastor needs someone to share his concerns and test his ideas. Take the initiative and make routine contacts.
2. Be A Friend. Develop a supportive relationship with both the pastor and his wife. Pray for them and their ministry.
3. Be A Consultant. Make suggestions and share alternative solutions when the pastor has a problem. Do not give orders! Provide an environment for growth and reflection.
4. Encourage A Mentorship and/or Support Group. It is helpful if a new pastor has a mentor relationship with a more experienced pastor. A person must choose his own mentor or support group. These may be formal or informal relationships. Contact your district office to see if the district supports the "PALS" process for newly ordained pastors.

F. Circuit Pastors

1. Schedule topics at pastors' meetings which may be helpful to a new pastor (e.g. time management, developing and nurturing a devotional life, etc.)
2. The circuit visitor may enlist the help of other pastors in assisting the new pastor, especially when he is an assistant pastor. The new assistant pastor may not be comfortable sharing with the circuit visitor if he perceives the visitor and the senior pastor are close friends. Another pastor or teacher could provide the needed support relationship.

3. Circuit fellowship is important. Opportunities for the pastors and wives to share together in fellowship and become acquainted are especially helpful.

G. Books

Pastor and Elders, Rev. Tim Mech, Concordia Publishing House, 2011

How Your Church Family Works, Rev. Peter Steinke, Alban Institute

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times, Rev. Peter Steinke, Alban Institute

A Door Set Open, Rev. Peter Steinke, Alban Institute

Holding Up the Prophet's Hands, Dr Bruce Hartung, CPH

Training Resources such as "The Timothy Series: The First Five Years in Ministry," a series of annual training events developed by East Coast Common Endeavor. For more information, contact the Center for Urban Education Ministry, Concordia College, Bronxville, New York.

THE CIRCUIT VISITOR'S ROLE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

I. The Circuit Visitor assists the District President with informal conflict resolution.

A. He serves as an assistant to the District President.

The *Bylaws of the Handbook* of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod designate the circuit visitor as a spokesman for the district president when he authorizes it, and as an assistant in doctrinal and spiritual supervision. He may also be appointed by the district president as a mediator to bring about reconciliation within the circuit (5.2.3.a, b, and i).

5.2.3 Each circuit visitor shall assist the district president within the circuit.

- (a) He shall serve under the direction of and be accountable to the district president and shall serve as his spokesman when so authorized and directed and shall assist him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision.
- (b) He shall serve in a servant role.
- (c) He may, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under dispute resolution of the Synod as outlined in section 1.10 of these Bylaws.

B. He directs the troubled parties to act according to Scripture

1. Circuit visitors are often the first to hear about a conflict in a congregation. When the circuit visitor is contacted by a congregational member who is troubled about the actions of his/her pastor or the actions of another LCMS rostered church worker in that congregation, or about a congregational controversy, he should:
 - a. ascertain whether or not the congregational member has taken the issue to the pastor or the professional church worker directly;
 - b. ascertain whether or not the congregational member has taken the issue to the congregation's Board of Elders with the pastor or professional church worker's knowledge of doing so;
 - c. indicate to the congregational member that either of the above steps needs to be done in order to properly employ Matthew 18:15-16 as an ambassador of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21.);
 - d. indicate to the congregational member that the circuit visitor may set a designated period of time before he informs the pastor, professional church worker and/or board of elders about the congregational member's presentation of the conflicted issues to the circuit visitor.
 - e. The circuit visitor shall immediately inform the district president regarding and such contacts or information regarding conflicts in a circuit congregation.

- f. periodically check with all parties to assess their progress toward resolution;
 - g. refer to letter D below when such conflict may involve allegations of either sexual misconduct or criminal behavior.
2. When a circuit visitor is contacted by a congregational officer(s) (i.e. elder (s) or chairman) acting on behalf of the congregation who is/are troubled by the actions of the pastor or an LCMS rostered professional church worker in the officer's congregation, or a conflicted controversy within that congregation, the circuit visitor should:
- a. ascertain whether or not the congregational officer(s) has/have taken the issue directly to the pastor or professional church worker;
 - b. indicate to the congregational officer(s) that this needs to be done in order to properly employ Matthew 18:15 as an ambassador of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21.);
 - c. indicate to the congregational officer(s) that in order to proceed with processing this conflict report he may set a designated period of time before the circuit visitor informs the pastor or professional church worker of the officer's presentation of the conflicted issues to the circuit visitor.
 - d. The circuit visitor shall immediately inform the district president regarding and such contacts or information regarding conflicts in a circuit congregation.
 - e. Periodically check with all parties to assess their progress toward resolution;
 - f. refer to letter D below when such conflict may involve allegations of either sexual misconduct or criminal behavior.

C. He reports unresolved conflict to the District President.

1. It is vital that the circuit visitor report the conflict situation to the district president. Upon reception of such a report, the district president will determine the next course of action. He may ask a vice president to work together with the circuit visitor. Either that vice president or the district president may ask and equip the circuit visitor to:
- a. evaluate further the nature, scope and magnitude of the conflict;
 - b. determine whether or not it is part of a long history within the congregation;
 - c. provide mediation services to the parties in conflict;
*(See note below on mediation)
 - d. offer to the congregation the services of district reconcilers for informal mediation;
*(See Notes below about informal reconciliation, reconcilers, and informal reconciliation);
 - e. offer to the congregation the option of using Synod approved peacemaking services to conduct a conflict intervention.

***Note about mediation:**

Mediation is distinct from arbitration. Mediation calls for assisting the conflicting parties to utilize the Scriptures to confess and absolve and then to create their own solution to their conflict.

Arbitration is judging the positions of the conflicting parties after receiving permission from the conflicting parties to determine the solution to their conflict for them. District presidents will make mediation training available to circuit visitor prior to assigning them to this task.

***Note about informal reconciliation:**

District presidents can assign district-appointed and Synod trained reconcilers to provide informal reconciliation services. Such informal efforts do not satisfy bylaw requirements for formal reconciliation efforts, which can only apply (where congregations are concerned) when a lay person is acting on behalf of a congregation (Bylaw 1.10.2). When Synod-trained reconcilers are used informally, Synod's Bylaws 1.10.4 (l) and 1.10.5 apply:

Reconciler: 1.10.4 (l) As used in this chapter, a member of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod or of an LCMS congregation who is appointed to be available to assist parties to a dispute with a view toward reconciling them or enabling them to adjust or settle their dispute and who has completed the Synod's training program. A reconciler does not judge or take sides but rather, with the help of God, assists both parties to find their own resolution to the dispute.

Informal Efforts toward Reconciliation; Consultation

1.10.5 Before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the parties involved in a dispute must meet together, face-to-face, in a good-faith attempt to settle their dispute in the manner described in Matthew 18:15 and may involve the informal use of a reconciler. And further, before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the complainant must meet and consult with his or her ecclesiastical supervisor to seek advice and also so that it can be determined whether this is the appropriate bylaw procedure (Bylaw section 1.10) or whether the matter falls under Bylaw sections 1.8, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, or Bylaws 3.10.5.7.9, 3.10.6.7.1, and 3.10.6.7.5.2. [i]n regard to this consultation...

D. He reports to the district president all allegations of sexual misconduct or criminal behavior by rostered professional church workers.

The circuit visitor may be informed of an allegation sexual misconduct or criminal behavior by a Synod rostered professional church worker before the district president has received knowledge of the allegation. Since the circuit visitor is an assistant to the district president and the district president is charged to investigate such allegations, the circuit visitor must immediately report all such allegations to the district president. Synod's Bylaw 2.17.3 also states:

Prior to any formal written complaint or accusation, when any person is aware of information or facts that could lead to the expulsion of an individual member from the Synod, including a district president, an officer of the Synod, or the president of the Synod under Article XII of the Constitution for alleged sexual misconduct or criminal behavior, the person shall consult with the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor, which would be a district president of the Synod or the President of the Synod, to seek advice, direction and spiritual ministry as the

needs and circumstances dictate. If the accused is the President of Synod, the person shall consult with the chairman of the Council of Presidents.

Note: Immediate reporting of alleged professional church worker sexual misconduct or criminal behavior protects the accused rostered professional church worker, the alleged victim(s), the congregation, district and Synod from failure to follow proper biblical and Synod protocol as well as potential litigation.

II. The Circuit Counselor and Synod’s Dispute Resolution Process

The *2019 Handbook* of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Bylaws 1.10.1–1.10.1.6) addresses how important it is to the life of the Synod that conflicts occurring among Synod member congregations and professional church workers receive biblical ministry.

1.10 Dispute Resolution of the Synod

Preamble

- 1.10.1 When disputes, disagreements, or offenses arise among members of the body of Christ, it is a matter of grave concern for the whole church. Conflicts that occur in the body should be resolved promptly (Matthew 5:23–24; Eph. 4:26–27). Parties to disputes are urged by the mercies of God to proceed with one another with “the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). In so doing, individuals, congregations, and various agencies within the Synod are urged to reject a “win-lose” attitude that typifies secular conflict. For the sake of the Gospel, the church should spare no resource in providing assistance.
 - 1.10.1.1 The Holy Scriptures (1 Cor. 6:1–7) urge Christians to settle their differences by laying them before the “members of the brotherhood.” Therefore, the Synod in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6 calls upon all parties to a disagreement, accusation, controversy, or disciplinary action to rely exclusively and fully on the Synod’s system of reconciliation and conflict resolution. The use of the Synod’s conflict resolution procedures shall be the exclusive and final remedy for those who are in dispute. Fitness for ministry and other theological matters must be determined within the church. Parties to disputes are urged, in matters of a doctrinal nature, to follow the procedures as outlined in Bylaw section 1.8.
 - 1.10.1.2 The words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15–20 provide the basis for church discipline for the local congregation. The same passage also grants Christ’s guidance to all Christians in seeking to settle other disputes, many of which fall outside the purview of church discipline involving the congregation. In either case, the steps of Matthew 18 should be applied lovingly in both formal and informal settings. Matthew 18 does not apply directly in cases of public sin, but face-to-face meetings are required nonetheless, even in the case of public sin, toward the goal of reconciliation and winning the brother or sister. The parties and others attempting to effect resolution of a dispute must always remain mindful that the church has been given the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Hence, conflict resolution in the church is to lead to reconciliation, restoring the erring member in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Its aim is to avoid the adversarial system practiced in society.
 - 1.10.1.3 The heart and center of all Christian conflict resolution is the justification of the sinner through grace in Christ Jesus. Biblical reconciliation of persons in conflict begins with God’s truth that we are all sinners who have been reconciled to God through the death and

resurrection of Christ Jesus. Christ's "ministry of reconciliation" is one of the church's foremost priorities.

- 1.10.1.4 Christian conflict resolution seeks to resolve disputed issues in a manner pleasing to God. Those in conflict are urged to proceed prayerfully in good faith and trust. Disputes are more likely to be resolved harmoniously if those involved in the conflict recognize one another as redeemed children of God.
- 1.10.1.5 Christians involved in conflict must always stand ready to ask for or extend forgiveness in accordance with Scripture. As the church endeavors to help bring about peace, truth, justice, and reconciliation, it always seeks to do so with a proper distinction between Law and Gospel, that is, in the context of God's judgment and mercy. We are ever to be mindful that it is God who judges the hearts of sinful men and grants His gracious word of forgiveness to us all.
- 1.10.1.6 When there is repentance and reconciliation, the body of Christ rejoices in its oneness with Christ and with one another.

Purpose

- 1.10.2 This procedure is established to resolve, in a God-pleasing manner, disputes that involve as parties, (1) members of the Synod; (2) corporate Synod or an agency of the Synod; (3) members of congregations challenging the procedure used in their excommunications; or (4) members of congregations of the Synod elected or appointed to positions with the LCMS Board of Directors or an agency of the Synod. It shall be the exclusive remedy to resolve such disputes that involve theological, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical issues except those covered under Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17 and except as provided in Bylaw 1.10.3, and shall be binding on all parties. It is applicable whether the dispute involves only a difference of opinion without personal animosity or is one that involves ill will and sin that requires repentance and forgiveness. No person, congregation, or agency to whom or to which the provisions of this dispute resolution process are applicable because of their membership in the Synod may render this procedure inapplicable by terminating that membership during the course of the dispute resolution process.

Exceptions

- 1.10.3 This chapter provides evangelical procedures to remedy disputes only and does not set forth procedures for expulsion from membership (Constitution Art. XIII and Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17) nor does it set forth procedures for board of regents' supervision of faculty and administration as specified in Bylaws 3.10.5.7.5–3.10.5.7.9, 3.10.6.7.1, and 3.10.6.7.5–3.10.6.7.5.2. While Christians are encouraged to seek to resolve all their disputes without resorting to secular courts, this chapter does not provide an exclusive remedy for the following matters, unless such matters involve theological, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical issues, including those arising under the divine call of a member of the Synod:
- (a) Disputes concerning property rights (e.g., real estate agreements, mortgages, fraud, or embezzlement); and

- (b) Disputes arising under contractual arrangements of all kinds (e.g., contracts for goods, services, or employment benefits).

Even in the case of disputes concerning property rights or disputes arising under contractual arrangements, this dispute resolution process may be used if both parties to a dispute sign written statements agreeing to use and honor the outcome of the process.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: INFORMATION FOR CIRCUIT VISITORS

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The office of visitation and conflict in the Synod

Res. 7-01A of the 2013 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod set forth clear expectations for the office of visitation, as carried out by the Synod and district presidents, with the aid of vice-presidents and circuit counselors. To the latter, Res. 7-02A, noting this “return to the historic office of visitation,” restored the former name of *circuit visitor*. Thus, the office you hold is manifestly grounded in the biblical concept of *episkopé, visitation*, and in the historic focus of the Lutheran church on the same, from Melancthon’s 1528 *Visitation Articles* and Luther’s memorable *Small and Large Catechism* prefaces down to our present-day “life together” in the Synod. 2013 Res. 7-01A notes (underscore added):

In his 1879 essay “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” Walther indicated: “A Synod that is ‘faithful to the Confessions’ must also ‘supervise the faithfulness of its members.’” In the essay, Walther clearly bases the supervision polity of the Synod on Scripture and Confessions as well as the provision and practice of the Early Church and the Reformation, as evidenced by “church-visitations,” “visitorial responsibility,” and the “true episcopal and supervisory Office.”

In this essay, Walther also stated: “However, for the welfare of the church we set up a system of supervision....[T]he church must be beautifully united by the bond of love; it must work together under the best possible system of supervision.” Walther also quoted Gerhard: “In our churches, however, we maintain a system of supervision among church workers ..., and we insist that such supervision must be continued, so that there are ‘some bishops’ [supervisors], ‘some presbyters’ [pastors], ‘some deacons’ etc....[T]he establishment of a system of supervision among church workers promotes harmony and unity, prevents divisions that arise from self-love and ambition on the part of lower-level (*Niedrigerer*) church workers and curbs the presumption of those who want to destroy the tranquility of the church.” (2013 *Proceedings*, pp. 173–175, worth reading as a whole)

Here Walther and Gerhard recognize the reality that where the pure Gospel is working with divine power, the devil redoubles his efforts. He may sow false doctrine or bad practice. Or he may simply sow ambition, selfishness, and strife, perhaps, even, under guise of piety—replacing the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” with self-preservation, self-affirmation, self-aggrandizement, and self-congratulation. Unity and harmony in the Synod, if simply assumed, will not long last. These must be actively sought and assiduously guarded. Not, of course, for the *Synod’s* self-preservation, self-affirmation, self-aggrandizement, or self-congratulation, but for the sake of souls her churches serve and of her Lord’s ministry of the Gospel.

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph 4, also worth reading as a whole). If Synod is such an anatomical model, and it must be, then you, circuit visitor, are the collective mess of joints tying fingers together and, together, to forearms. Your job in the Synod is seeing that the body stays usefully connected close to the fingertips, the congregations, where the work gets done. That job, like a wrist, may have many moving parts. But a good part of that, as the Walther passage suggests, is in holding together a body whose members will often be in conflict.

Your job is not the *elimination* of conflict. St. Paul says there's a reason there are divisions among us—"that those who are approved should be made manifest" (1 Cor 11). Jesus comes not to bring peace, but a sword (Matt 10). A body without conflict is like a body without pain—it would all of a sudden find its whole self in a whole mess of trouble. Some conflict, like pain, is necessary and salutary. The conservation and promotion of the unity of the faith is a fundamental good. But that may often involve a part of the body, in *caritas*, in love for a weaker part, speaking the truth in love, and the receiving part not perceiving it as such. So Paul confronted Peter (Gal 2) and his beloved Galatians, bewitched by the lie (Gal 3). There the body is served, even if through pain. Such conflict can't be ignored, outlawed, or wished away. The church benefits, rather, from dealing with it in such a way that those in error are gently and patiently, but thoroughly and confidently, restored.

Other conflict does not serve, but threatens to chop up, the body. One part of the body, acting out of *cupiditas* rather than out of *caritas*—out of self-love—tries to take advantage of a weaker part for its own purposes, perhaps even with pious guise. Maybe a party, like Paul's opponents (Gal 6), aims to boast in exacting the other's "pound of flesh." Maybe one's own justification is sought, rather than in Christ and the forgiveness of sins, in the condemnation of another. Neither can that sort of conflict be ignored or wished away. And outlawing it doesn't undo our sinful nature.

More likely, though, a conflict is not either-or, but both-and. Those in conflict are conflicted themselves, motivated in part by *caritas* and in part by *cupiditas*. There is a war in our members—sin, taking opportunity through the commandments, making us exceptionally sinful. We may want good, but do evil. It is a law, in fact, that "when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand" (Rom 7). It is natural, I suppose, for those in conflict to be conflicted about it—and for those in the "fog of conflict" not to know the extent to which they themselves are conflicted. This is a serious matter for the cure of souls and the evangelical care of pastors, other church workers, and congregations—something far beyond simply a way of "settling beefs." As you have a part of the "historic office of visitation," you have a part in that, along with the President of the Synod and district presidents—as well as those involved in the dispute resolution process.

Those beefs, of course, may be intricate enough, as may be the distinction of particular roles in the Synod's attempt to address them in an orderly fashion. Conflict may be between pastors or between congregations, or between a congregation and its pastor, or between factions or families of a congregation (and when it involves the shattered pieces of a congregation, it can be particularly intense and challenging to deal with). The role you take as circuit visitor, as an officer of your district and the nearest representative of the whole Synod to your congregations, when confronted with conflict requires some thought about your proper place in the whole "body." That proper place is clarified in our Synod's bylaws. Resources are also available to help you and those in your circuit grow in the skills necessary (or to bring in the backup necessary) to bring the conflicted to the cross, where truth ever shines and mercy ever flows.

The role of the circuit visitor in conflict

In days gone by (1949–1992), the bylaws gave the circuit visitor (then, counselor) the formal administrative role of being the first to try to settle any case in which an excommunicated member challenged his excommunication or (at least earlier on) when congregations in the circuit were at controversy with one another. When the circuit visitor couldn't resolve the issue, it went to the district president and then to a district commission of adjudication or board of appeal. From 1924–1989, the visitor was charged explicitly, when differences would arise between a pastor and his congregation, to "use all diligence, in a Christian manner (Matt. 18:15–17; 1 Tim 5:19) to bring about a peaceful adjustment."

Today, the circuit visitor plays less of a formal or administrative role. He speaks for the district president, when so authorized, and "assist[s] him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision." He serves "in a servant role." "He shall seek to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers, and

congregations.” The circuit visitor may also, in assisting the district president in his triennial visitation, “endeavor to strengthen the spirit of unity among circuit congregations.” “He may, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under dispute resolution of the Synod as outlined in section 1.10 of these Bylaws” (Bylaws 5.2.3–5.2.3.1, *passim*). He shall also “serve the pastors of the circuit as a collegial and brotherly adviser” (Bylaw 5.2.3.2).

Clearly there remains a role for the circuit visitor in conflict resolution within the circuit, even if it is less formally administrative than it once was. Two features are important to note:

- 1) If you function as *mediator* in disputes in the circuit, it is *when requested to do so by the district president*. (A mediator, of course, is one who works with the parties in conflict to unwind the interpersonal issues preventing them from resolving their material issues, helping them to reconcile and resolve their conflict in a Christian way.) That implies that if there is a dispute in your circuit, whether between congregations or pastors or within a congregation, the district president should *first* be informed so that you can act, in the situation, with his delegated authority and with the benefit of his counsel and perspective—or perhaps so he can call in needed help. The authority and responsibility to act in such a situation is originally his (Const. Art. XII 7; Bylaw 4.4.6). He also may determine that a given situation may need to be assigned a district reconciler for informal (Bylaw 1.10.5) or formal (Bylaw 1.10.6) reconciliation efforts. Or you might ask that he put you in touch with a district reconciler for advice and support.
- 2) You may wind up serving as a *mediator* in disputes *not under dispute resolution of the Synod* (Bylaw section 1.10). That is, Synod has laid out that system and its roster of reconcilers, to be “the exclusive remedy” to disputes involving as parties: “(1) members of the Synod; (2) corporate Synod or an agency of the Synod; (3) members of congregations challenging the procedure used in their excommunications; or (4) members of congregations of the Synod elected or appointed to positions with the LCMS Board of Directors or an agency of the Synod.” “It is applicable whether the dispute involves only a difference of opinion without personal animosity or is one that involves ill will and sin that requires repentance and forgiveness.” (Bylaw 1.10.2)

The circuit visitor does not replace or serve as an alternative to the Bylaw section 1.10 dispute resolution process. He channels disputes that are appropriate to that system toward it (by recommending consultation with the district president), and augments it (as an agent of the district president) to assist certain disputes that it might not cover (such as those between factions in a congregation that exceed the capacity of the pastor and the congregation to deal with).

When called upon by the district president to assist in such conflicts, you might well, through the district president, call upon one of your district’s trained reconcilers to assist or coach you, or to become involved, at least informally, in the situation. Synod reconcilers have received intensive training in dispute resolution, provided for the Synod by Ambassadors of Reconciliation. They are trained to be a useful resource for the Synod as a whole—so put them to work!

This is a good time to note that congregations embroiled in conflict (with factions, boards, pastors and other workers set against each other) are a serious reconciliation challenge. Ambassadors of Reconciliation advises (and provides) special training for those addressing “whole-church” (as opposed to simply person-to-person) conflicts. Interventions into these situations often require teams to exhaust hundreds of hours. A hasty and perhaps not completely informed “resolution” of the matter can, in fact, make the situation worse. Seek the advice of experienced brothers, and get necessary help, before taking on one of these situations.

The preamble to Synod’s dispute resolution procedure and its application to conflict in the circuit

Synod is served by a system adopted in 1992 and “continually improved” in our conventions and through the development of its *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* by the Commission on Constitutional

Matters in consultation with the Secretary and the Council of Presidents. The preface is useful, not only in laying out the parameters of that system, but to guide you as you assist in general with conflict in the circuit, and as you assist pastors and congregations of your circuit in becoming better equipped to deal with it themselves. In fact, 1992 Res. 5-01B, with which the Synod adopted its dispute resolution process, finally resolved that: “we encourage that the procedures outlined in chapter VIII [now Bylaw Section 1.10] be adapted and used by congregations and individuals in resolving controversies which may arise at the local level.” Thus the preface, as adopted by the 1992 Convention of the Synod, is commended as generally useful in handling conflicts in and among the churches:

When disputes, disagreements, or offenses arise among members of the body of Christ, it is a matter of grave concern for the whole church. Conflicts that occur in the body should be resolved promptly (Matthew 5:23–24; Eph. 4:26–27). Parties to disputes are urged by the mercies of God to proceed with one another with “the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). In so doing, individuals, congregations, and various agencies within the Synod are urged to reject a “win-lose” attitude that typifies secular conflict. For the sake of the Gospel, the church should spare no resource in providing assistance.

The Holy Scriptures (1 Cor. 6:1–7) urge Christians to settle their differences by laying them before the “members of the brotherhood.” Therefore, the Synod in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6 calls upon all parties to a disagreement, accusation, controversy, or disciplinary action to rely exclusively and fully on the Synod’s system of reconciliation and conflict resolution. The use of the Synod’s conflict resolution procedures shall be the exclusive and final remedy for those who are in dispute. Fitness for ministry and other theological matters must be determined within the church. Parties to disputes are urged, in matters of a doctrinal nature, to follow the procedures as outlined in Bylaw section 1.8.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15–20 provide the basis for church discipline for the local congregation. The same passage also grants Christ’s guidance to all Christians in seeking to settle other disputes, many of which fall outside the purview of church discipline involving the congregation. In either case, the steps of Matthew 18 should be applied lovingly in both formal and informal settings. Matthew 18 does not apply directly in cases of public sin, but face-to-face meetings are required nonetheless, even in the case of public sin, toward the goal of reconciliation and winning the brother or sister. The parties and others attempting to effect resolution of a dispute must always remain mindful that the church has been given the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Hence, conflict resolution in the church is to lead to reconciliation, restoring the erring member in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Its aim is to avoid the adversarial system practiced in society.

The heart and center of all Christian conflict resolution is the justification of the sinner through grace in Christ Jesus. Biblical reconciliation of persons in conflict begins with God’s truth that we are all sinners who have been reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Christ’s “ministry of reconciliation” is one of the church’s foremost priorities.

Christian conflict resolution seeks to resolve disputed issues in a manner pleasing to God. Those in conflict are urged to proceed prayerfully in good faith and trust. Disputes are more likely to be resolved harmoniously if those involved in the conflict recognize one another as redeemed children of God.

Christians involved in conflict must always stand ready to ask for or extend forgiveness in accordance with Scripture. As the church endeavors to help bring about peace, truth, justice, and reconciliation, it always seeks to do so with a proper distinction between Law and Gospel, that is, in the context of God’s judgment and mercy. We are ever to be mindful that it

is God who judges the hearts of sinful men and grants His gracious word of forgiveness to us all.

When there is repentance and reconciliation, the body of Christ rejoices in its oneness with Christ and with one another. (Bylaws 1.10.1–1.10.1.6)

Resources for the circuit visitor and circuit congregations, pastors, church workers, and laypeople

As you approach conflicts in your circuit, know the power of the Word of God, of confession and forgiveness, but also your own limitations. Even Synod’s trained reconcilers are advised to know the limits of their training and experience, especially when it comes to congregations with internal conflict. Know when to seek the counsel of experienced brothers or specialized assistance.

Resources are available to help you in this important aspect of a circuit visitor’s work. Your district president can connect you with a trained district reconciler, who may be able to provide counsel and resources on conflict resolution. Ambassadors of Reconciliation [<http://www.hisaor.org/> or (406)-698-6107] also provides a variety of web and print resources which approach Christian conciliation with all the richness a Lutheran perspective (i.e., recognizing the authority, clarity, and efficacy of the Word of God and the centrality of baptismal identity, confession, and absolution) brings to bear. Three books are worth particular mention, all used as part (not all) of the training of Synod reconcilers. All are available (along with other helpful resources) from Ambassadors of Reconciliation, a Recognized Service Organization and training and consulting provider for the Synod:

- *Forgiven to Forgive* is a six-week program of daily devotions for use individually, with staff, or congregationally. One-page devotions focus on preparing for reconciliation through coaching, mediation, or group assistance. (46pp., 2010)
- *Go and Be Reconciled: What Does This Mean?* Presents a Bible study in six lessons, applying the chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism to the task of reconciliation. The approach is grounded in our common baptismal identity, seeks to identify the idols whose worship can mire us in conflict and to repent of them, leads us to hear God’s forgiveness, and then in boldness to confess our sins to another and to ask for his or her forgiveness. This would be a fine resource for many situations, grounding reconciliation in the doctrine by which we live, and making each day’s conflicts (or “opportunities for reconciliations”) into chances for the Holy Spirit to, as the apostles said (Luke 17), “increase our faith.” (131pp., 2019)
- *Cultivating Lifestyles of Reconciliation: Introducing Leaders to Reconciliation Ministry* is a three-part guide to living reconciliation, guiding people in reconciliation (coaching, mediating, and arbitrating), and organizing a reconciliation ministry. This is a helpful introduction to Christian conciliation, including the background behind our Synod’s processes (coaching in informal reconciliation, mediation in formal reconciliation, and arbitration in the panel process). It has been used in training sessions for circuit visitors, with the aim of establishing reconciliation expertise in the circuit and its congregations. This book would be a useful guide to carrying out the 1992 mandate of the convention that the principles of the Synod dispute resolution process should be “adapted and used...at the local level.” (117pp., 2009)

THE CIRCUIT VISITOR ASSISTS WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP

From time to time the circuit visitor may be asked questions regarding, or become involved in, disputes about worship. The key insight to be remembered regarding Worship is that it is not primarily about what we do, but about God serving us through Word and Sacrament. Secondly, the response of faith, also a gift of God, is called, in the Confessions, the highest form of worship.

When it comes to changes in the Divine Service the visitor will encourage congregations and pastors to move very slowly, taking care to communicate with members. Congregations ought also to be encouraged to remember that they are not alone. Significant changes in the Divine Service will impact other local congregations and perhaps beyond. Circuit meetings are designed as places where these changes may be discussed in a loving, brotherly manner.

Perhaps the best tactic the circuit visitor can implement in regard to the issue of worship is to be proactive. The visitor could begin a series of studies on the topic at the Winkel meetings. One resource that may be used to foster discussion is a series of Theses the Council of Presidents has provided for that purpose. The Theses alternate between the parameters set by the Scripture and the freedoms the Scripture gives to the people of God as they seek to order the Divine Service. Another resource offered here is entitled, "What is Basic in Lutheran Worship?"

What follows are Worship Theses that have been discussed and accepted by the LCMS Council of Presidents.

1. **Worship is not an adiaphoron.**

a. Worship is commanded by God.

...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." (Luke 4:8)

b. The highest form of worship is faith.

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:29)

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:9)

It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from him what he promises and offers. (AP IV, 49)

The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the highest way of worshiping Christ. (AP IV, 154)

God wants us to believe him and to accept blessings from him; this he declares to be true worship. (AP IV, 228)

In short, the worship of the New Testament is spiritual; it is the righteousness of faith in the heart and the fruits of faith. (AP XXIV, 27-28)

See also: AC XXVI, 4; AC XXI, 3-4, AP IV, 59.

c. Worship is Trinitarian, and centered on Jesus Christ.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (II Corinthians 13:14)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith... (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” (John 6:28-29)

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” “Spiritual worship” is a worship in which the spirit knows and takes hold of God, as it does when it fears and trusts him. Therefore the contrast is not only with Levitical worship, where cattle were slaughtered, but with any worship where men suppose they are offering God a work *ex opera operato*. (AP XXIV, 26)

d. The means by which faith is created and nurtured are essential to worship.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (I Corinthians 11:23-25)

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. (AC V, 1-2)

It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. (AC XIII, 1)

This use of the sacrament, when faith gives life to terrified hearts, is the worship of the New Testament, because what matters in the New Testament is the spiritual motivation, dying and being made alive. For such use Christ instituted it, as he commanded (1 Cor. 11:24), "Do this in remembrance of me." (AP XXIV, 71)

2. The Scriptures and Confessions give the people of God considerable freedom in choosing those forms, rites, and ceremonies that aid the worship of God.

a. Neither the Scriptures nor the Confessions prescribe forms, rites or ceremonies for worship.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (Ephesians 5:19)

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

We are talking about true spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God. For this unity, we say, a similarity of human rites, whether universal or particular, is not necessary. The righteousness of faith is not a righteousness tied to certain traditions, as the righteousness of the law was tied to the Mosaic ceremonies, because this righteousness of the heart is something that quickens the heart. To this quickening human traditions, whether universal or particular, contribute nothing . . . (AP VII/VII, 30-32)

We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church. (FC SD X, 9)

Therefore we reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word the following teachings: 1) That human precepts and institutions in the church are to be regarded as in themselves divine worship or a part of it. . . . 4) When such external ceremonies and indifferent things are abolished in a way

which suggests that the community of God does not have the liberty to avail itself of one or more such ceremonies according to its circumstances and as it may be most beneficial to the church. (FC Ep X, 8, 912)

See also: FC SD 9, 30.

b. The liturgy, a true service, is that which aids both the proclamation and the hearing of the Gospel for the sake of faith, that is, true worship.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. (AC IV)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (AP XXVI, 3)

3. The liturgy of the Church builds a framework for the worshipper to live the life of faith.

a. Liturgy of the Church teaches the full counsel of God.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 3-4)

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity. This is the true Christian faith, that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God. (Athanasian Creed, 1-3)

And the Apology says: "The preaching of the law is not sufficient for genuine and salutary repentance; the Gospel must also be added to it." Thus both doctrines are always together, and both of them have to be urged side by side, but in proper order and with the correct distinction. (SD, V, 15)

b. The elements of liturgy, (*ordo*), tell the full story of salvation.

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Psalm 78:4-7)

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:35)

Nowhere do they teach that sins are forgiven freely for Christ's sake and that by this faith we obtain the remission of sins. Thus they obscure the glory of Christ, deprive consciences of a firm

consolation, and abolish true worship (that is, the exercise of faith struggling against despair). (Treatise, 44)

c. The liturgy of the Church moves worshippers into the world to live for and to proclaim the Good News to others.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:1-4)

Thus far we have learned the first three commandments, which are directed toward God. First, we should trust, fear, and love him with our whole heart all the days of our lives. Secondly, we should not misuse his holy name in support of lies or any evil purpose whatsoever, but use it for the praise of God and the benefit and salvation of our neighbor and ourselves. Thirdly, on holy days or days of rest we should diligently devote ourselves to God’s Word so that all our conduct and life may be regulated by it. (LC, 103)

After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our afflictions. Then we also begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses. (AP IV, 125)

4. Imposing a certain form, rite or ceremony on the Church burdens men’s consciences, thereby militating against the Gospel.

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:9)

And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.” (Luke 11:46)

The Gospel clearly testifies that traditions should not be imposed on the church to merit forgiveness of sins or to be acts of worship that please God as righteousness or to burden consciences so that their omission is judged to be a sin. (AP XXVIII, 11)

Therefore we reject and condemn as false and contrary to God’s Word the following teachings: . . . 2) When such ceremonies, precepts, and institutions are forcibly imposed upon the community of God as necessary things, in violation of the Christian liberty which it has in external matters. (FC Ep X, 8, 10)

See also: FC SD X, 15, 21, 27.

5. Great care is necessary in choosing forms, rites and ceremonies because they either support or hinder true worship. There are no “neutral” forms.

a. Forms of true worship are in accord with the Word of God.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

Your Word is truth. (John 17:17)

. . . take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.” You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way . . . (Deuteronomy 12:30-31)

. . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25)

We should not consider as matters of indifference, and we should avoid as forbidden by God, ceremonies which are basically contrary to the Word of God, even though they go under the name and guise of external adiaphora and are given a different color from their true one. (FC SD X, 5)

See also: FC EP X, 5; AC XXVIII, 23, 30.

b. Forms of true worship help to preserve order.

But all things should be done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

We on our part also retain many ceremonies and traditions (such as the liturgy of the Mass and various canticles, festivals, and the like) which serve to preserve order in the church. (AC XXVI, 40)

Neither are useless and foolish spectacles, which serve neither good order, Christian discipline, nor evangelical decorum in the church, true adiaphora or things indifferent. (FC SD X, 7, 13-14)

See also: AP XV, 20.

c. Forms of true worship do not burden the consciences of the people of God.

At the same time, however, the people are instructed that such outward forms of service do not make us righteous before God and that they are to be observed without burdening consciences, which is to say that it is not a sin to omit them if this is done without causing scandal. (AC XXVI, 41)

This subject of traditions involves many difficult and controversial questions, and we know from actual experience that traditions are real snares for consciences. When they are required as necessary, they bring exquisite torture to a conscience that has omitted some observance. On the other hand, their abrogation involves its own difficulties and problems. (AP XV, 49)

d. Forms of true worship are edifying to the local congregation and therefore also to the surrounding community.

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. (Acts 15:28-29)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. Therefore we keep Latin for the sake of those who study and understand it, and we insert German hymns to give the common people something to learn that will arouse their faith and fear. This has always been the custom in the churches. Though German hymns have varied in frequency, yet almost everywhere the people sang in their own language. (AC XXIV, 3-4)

See also: AC XXVIII, 73-74.

e. Forms of true worship teach the faith.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ. (AC XXIV, 3)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (AP XXIV, 3)

See also: AP XV, 20.

6. Uniformity in forms, rites and ceremonies while desirable, is not essential to the unity of the Church.

But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility. So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's Day, and the other more important feast days. With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced. (AP VII/VIII, 33)

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. (AC VII, 2-3)

But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men . (AP VII/VII, 33)

If human traditions are not acts of worship necessary for righteousness before God, it follows that somebody can be righteous and a child of God even if he does not observe traditions that have been maintained elsewhere . . . (AP VII/VIII, 34)

The ancient Fathers maintained such liberty with respect to outward ceremonies, for in the East they kept Easter at a time different from that in Rome. When some regarded this difference a divisive of the church, they were admonished by others that it was not necessary to maintain uniformity in such customs. Irenaeus said, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy unity in faith," . . . (AC XXVI, 43-44)

7. The polarization that is affecting the Church concerning the issue of forms, rites and ceremonies is sinful and hinders the proclamation of the Gospel.

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:24-25)

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. (Galatians 5:19-21)

We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith." (FC Ep X, 7)

8. The people of God are commanded by God to keep talking with each other, under His Word, so that divisions are healed and the Church is united in doctrine and practice.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . . (Ephesians 4:15)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

In the church we must keep this teaching, that we receive forgiveness of sins freely for Christ's sake by faith. We must also keep the teaching that human traditions are useless acts of worship, and that therefore neither sin nor righteousness depends upon food, drink, clothing, and similar matters. (AP XXVIII, 7)

WHAT IS LITURGY?

When one thinks of “liturgy,” the first thing that may come to mind is a structured, perhaps even elaborate, worship service. This first impression is not entirely mistaken, for liturgy can find expression in such a formal way. However, the basic meaning of the underlying Greek word is simply “service or “work of the people.” The distance from the Greek definition of liturgy to its most specialized use is vast, and it is helpful to examine how the church of Jesus Christ has come to understand this old and venerable word.

In the first instance, “liturgy” refers to work people perform as an act of service to others, particularly to a community. In its more usual and specific religious sense, liturgy is the work performed by the whole people of God. As applied to Christian worship, the “service of God,” it is **the design or pattern through which the congregation gathers to hear and receive anew the Gospel promise in Word and Sacrament, and then to respond collectively to the abundant gifts and gracious presence of the Triune God.**

Liturgy recognizes above all that the primary “action” of Christian worship is not ours, but God’s. The “Divine Service,” the basic shape of Lutheran worship, is just that: Gods serving us in His Gospel and Sacraments (of. Acts 2:42). God speaks to us through the life-giving Word of His Son (John 1:18; Heb. 1:1-2); and, in worship, this word comes to us in the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and the regular administration of the sacraments. Then and only then, having heard the quickening promise of forgiveness and nourished by our Lords’ body and blood in His Supper, can we begin to respond through acts of faith and obedience—sometimes described as adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (cf. Ps. 89; 96; 98; 100; 103; 106; 111).

Because “liturgy” is not expressly defined for us in the New Testament, there will always be some flexibility of usage. This is reflected in the Lutheran practice of using the word to refer first to “The Order of the Holy Communion,” or the traditional “mass form” (see “What is “Basic” in Lutheran Worship?”), and then derivatively to those serves in which the Lord’s Supper is not celebrated such as Matins and Vespers.

The Christian liturgy attempts to relate everything in the worship service to the central event and proclamation of the church: what a merciful God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, incorporate us into His family, and make us heirs of the kingdom of heaven. To this end, many of the “essentials” in Lutheran worship are deliberately lifted from Holy Scripture, God’s very own story of His rescue of prodigal sons and daughters. (Again, see “What is “Basic” Lutheran Worship?”)

Liturgy is an important medium through which Christians hear God’s promise afresh and then speak back to Him His word to us. But liturgy, no matter how well done, is never an end in itself. At its best, Christian liturgy will help God’s people incorporate their thanksgiving and praise into the varied tasks of daily life. Then the care and planning will have met their goal, for life and worship will have become our abiding liturgy, our service of God.

This statement is recommended to the parishes and people of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as a guide and a discussion piece. It may be photocopied as needed. Commission on Worship, LCMS 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, Mo 63122

WHAT IS “BASIC” IN LUTHERAN WORSHIP?

What makes a service of worship Lutheran? Some might think the question is improper since there should be nothing that marks a service as specifically Lutheran. Some would say that the “Order of Service” is a matter of *adiaphora* (in-different things, not commanded or prohibited by God). Others would answer that only cultural matters of style mark it as Lutheran, that is, Germanic or Nordic. But in a church that has a confessional theology and calls itself “Lutheran”, there are, in fact, basic theological norms that bound and mark the service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church confesses that the article on justification is the chief article by which the church stands or falls. Ephesians 2:8-9 expresses it best. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (NIV). The **Augsburg Confession** in Article IV restates this biblical teaching as the chief article of Christian faith. The understanding of the relationship of God to the sinner through grace for the sake of Christ accepted by faith is the foundation for any service of worship held in a Lutheran Church.

Furthermore, Lutherans have understood that Christian doctrine is expressed in the twin poles of Law and Gospel a concept clearly enunciated both by Dr. Luther and Dr. Walther. Lutheran worship, then must be firmly rooted in the *scriptural principle of sola gratia* (by grace alone) and the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.

The Law and the Gospel is then presented in the twin *foci* of the Word of God proclaimed and the sacraments administered as the chief parts of the service of worship. If Law and Gospel are properly divided when speaking of “Lutheran worship”, a major recognition must take place. True worship is *Divine Service*. God is the initiator. He comes to us by His means of grace. All we can do is respond to His grace. True worship receives gladly what God does to us and for us. Therefore, the means of grace (Word and Sacrament) are central for Lutheran worship and all true Christian worship.

In addition, the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church clearly state that the Mass (order for The Sunday Service of Word and Sacrament) is retained. The **Augsburg Confession XXIV** says, “Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained among us and celebrated with the highest reverence.” And the **Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV** says, “We do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord’s Day and on other festivals.”

Are there basic ingredients in a service that mark it as Lutheran? Yes. A Lutheran service is one that is built on the article of justification by grace through faith. It is a service that expounds the Word of God as both Law and Gospel. It is centered in the reading of Scripture and its exposition and the administration of the sacraments. It follows the “mass form” inherited from many cultures and peoples of the last twenty centuries. It is not culturally biased to one group. In fact, most of the material found in the “mass form” is a direct quotation of Scripture or a paraphrase.

What would such a service look like in its barest essentials?

(Confession and Absolution)

Praise and Prayer

Reading of the Word of God (according to a pericopal system)

Exposition of the Word of God (sermon)

Prayer for all sorts and conditions and offering of the people

Preface and Consecration of bread and wine with the Words of Institution

Reception of the Sacrament of the Alter

Dismissal with the Lord's Blessing

These theological norms and the "mass form" are what's basic to worship that can be called "Lutheran".

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THE CIRCUIT VISITOR AND STEWARDSHIP CONVERSATIONS

Circuit visitors have a unique opportunity to encourage pastors and congregations in the vital area of Christian stewardship. One way to do this is by initiating Stewardship Conversations.

I. Talk with pastors about their own lives as stewards.

A steward is one who manages what belongs to another. St. Paul writes about pastors, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, ESV) Pastors are to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God and more. J. E. Herrmann suggest the following about pastoral self-analysis, “Every so often—and it ought to be often—the Christian clergyman will look at himself. He will honestly ask himself questions which others do not have the courage to ask him. He will take himself apart as a leader to see just where and how he might improve himself.” (Page 35)

Herrmann suggests a pastor ask himself the following questions:

1. Am I working aimlessly? Have I prepared an adequate plan for congregational work which will stimulate the imagination and fire the enthusiasm of my people?
2. Am I planning carefully enough? Have I followed through on my good ideas or have they failed because I was careless in organizing the activities I planned?
3. Do I become discouraged too easily? Have I become so accustomed to listening to Thomas Jones (who is against everything) that I have lost touch with the ten John Smiths (who want the work of Christ to go forward)?
4. Is my work grounded in a deep personal conviction that Christ cannot be defeated and that, so long as I work with and for Him, I cannot fail?
5. Is attendance at my services what it should be? If not, have I the courage to analyze the situation honestly, and do something about it?
6. Is the Sacrament sufficiently appreciated by my congregation? If not, am I perhaps at fault? What can I do to vivify the Sacrament for my people, and will I do it?
7. Do my people know the meaning of ‘searching the Scriptures?’ Have I imparted to them my own burning thirst for the Word of God? What can and will I do about this matter?
8. Do my people really dedicate their time, talents, energy, and enthusiasm to God? Have I been a good example to them in this matter? Have I given them opportunity for service by organizing Christian activities whereby they may gain experience in faith?

9. What kind of goals have I set for myself and my congregation? For my young people? Are those goals too easily reached? Or have I given them and myself something big to shoot for?

10. Am I willing to live my life and do my work in the public eye in order that my community will be constantly aware that I am a Christian pastor and that I serve a Christian congregation?

The above questions deal primarily with the relationship of the pastor and the congregation he serves. There are other relationships the pastor has that will also be well served by self-examination. R. Scott Rodin, in *Steward Leader*, suggests some additional questions in the following areas:

The pastor's relationship with God.

- In what ways am I living as a faithful steward of my relationship with God?
- How does my time reading God's Word, in prayer and in private devotion reflect a heart of joyful obedience?
- How do I assure that my worship time is one of true doxology?

The pastor's relationship with himself.

- In what ways am I living as a faithful steward of my relationship with myself?
- Do I tend to be pulled toward either pride or self-abasement? Which way and why?
- Do I live a balanced life in Christ in body, mind, and spirit?

The pastor's relationship with others.

- In what ways am I living as a faithful steward in my relationship with my family?
- In what ways am I living as a faithful steward in my relationship with my neighbor?
- What action demonstrates that I value my relationship with my neighbor as an end in itself?
- What must I do to invest the time necessary to build community and meaningful relationships with others?

The pastor's relationship with God's creation and material possessions.

- In what ways am I living as a faithful steward of my relationship with God's creation?
- Do I pray over decisions on what I buy, consume and use? Why or why not?
- Am I a good steward of the finances God has entrusted to me so I am both faithful in their use and a good example to others?
- What must I do to ensure that I place everything into God's control and seek to be obedient in caring for His creation?

"Each pastor," concludes Herrmann, "ought to check up on himself. Where this effort is not productive of desired results he should confide in one of his fellow clergymen. Unless we measure ourselves occasionally we will shrink in stature as pastors and leaders." (Page 37)

Conversation Starter: "Stewardship Conversation Two"

Digging Deeper: Read *The Chief Steward* by J. E. Herrmann at faithaflame.lcms.org

II. Talk with pastors about Christian stewardship.

Stewardship is what stewards do. Leading in this important area of ministry requires that the pastor have a proper understanding of and an appreciation for the fullness and richness of Biblical stewardship. Christian stewardship begins with the grace of God in Christ. We are Christians because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. We do not find favor with God because of what we do. Stewardship (what I

do as God's child) is not the cause of our salvation, but a response to it. Christian stewardship is the response of the believer to what God has done for them in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Brattgard writes in *God's Stewards*, "The background for all that the Bible says about the steward is found in this, that God in his goodness thinks so highly of the human being that he will trust him to administer that which belongs to God. The steward's calling rests upon confidence... What is remarkable about the biblical idea is the fact that the steward has a unique authority. He is a fully authorized representative, free to deal independently on behalf of his master, at the same time he is completely dependent upon his master. When his stewardship is over he will have to give an account." (Page 42)

Seminary Professor Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann writes in *Stewardship: A Theological Perspective*, "The Christian life begins at the baptismal font. God calls and claims his own, Christ's gifts are given, and the Spirit indwells the newly redeemed. Yet, in another sense, it is right to say that the Christian life begins even before time when God makes his sovereign choice. Stretching also the other way, into an infinite future within Christ's eschatological fulfillment, the Christian life is vast and comprehensive. Rightly conceived, the Christian life is simply the description of a child of God living all of life as a child of God.

This Christian life has been variously named and understood. Words and terms like discipleship, holy living, Christ-likeness, conformity to God's will, new obedience, and sanctification have been used to capture the reality of the Christian life. Another term that must be added to the list of descriptors of the Christian life is *stewardship*. Some may object that while stewardship may well be a part of the Christian life, it hardly captures the whole of it. But such thinking about stewardship is far too narrow and ultimately inadequate. Stewardship is but a synonym for the life of a Christian who is living rightly within all of his relationships: before God as well as before his fellow creatures. Stewardship is the Christian life and the Christian life is stewardship."

Christian stewards understand the privileges and responsibilities they have in all the relationships of life. Christian stewardship impacts our relationship with God, with our neighbors, with ourselves, and with all of creation. To limit it to issues related only or even primarily to finances misleads the believer and robs the Christian steward of the rich, full, and fruitful life that God intends for His children (John 10:10; Titus 2:11-15). Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family the church in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes.

Conversation Starter: "Stewardship Conversation One"

Digging Deeper: Request a copy of Dr. Biermann's paper "Stewardship: A Theological Perspective" with discussion questions from Rev. Wayne Knolhoff at stewardship@lcms.org. Read *Stewardship Primer 4* at faithaflame.lcms.org.

III. Talk with pastors about the need for an enlarged and elevated role for stewardship in the congregation.

Christian stewardship education is necessary in the Christian congregation. Ronald Vallet writes in *Stewards of the Gospel*, "Though many church leaders deny it and argue otherwise, stewardship is a critical component of congregational life. Denials of and arguments against this statement reflect a radical misunderstanding of the nature of stewardship." (Page 9)

Jesus desires that His people have the *abundant life* He came to give (John 10:10). This abundant life consists of knowing Jesus Christ and learning from Him (2 Peter 3:18). It also includes living in obedience to God's Word (Colossians 1:9-10).

A critical question for the steward leader is, “Does what we say we believe about Christ come to life in what we do?” For many churchgoers the answer is mixed at best. *The Lutheran Study Bible* contains an article by Robert Benne titled, “Living the Wholly Christian Life.” He writes on pages 2138 – 2139:

Too many of us are ‘partial Christians.’ Our Christian convictions apply only to a small part of our life—and that portion is shrinking. It will continue to shrink unless we regain a comprehensive vision of life that helps us reunite what modern life breaks apart. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to live wholly and in God’s presence. But we can work to make things open for the workings of the Spirit in our individual and churchly lives.

Practically, alert congregations concentrate on Christian education, especially for adults. Partial Christians need a holistic Christian vision of life to live wholly. One way to do this is to anchor people in the biblical vision of life. The Bible reveals God as living and moving through all of life and history. This God who is active in all areas of human life also demands and elicits human response in all those areas.

Another way to impart a whole view of life is disciplined theological study. Theologians have thought through the faith comprehensively. They have sketched out how God relates to our complete lives. To study a popular theological writer such as C. S. Lewis or a more technical theologian such as Reinhold Niebuhr will make clear to serious seekers that the Christian meaning system applies to all of life, not to a few gaps left over after the world has done its job. Serious churches must be in the business of helping members develop a comprehensive vision of life.

Many Christians need help to relate the biblical or theological vision of life to the ‘independent’ sectors in which they spend most of their waking time. Thus, churches who truly understand their task have courses that help laypeople make the connections between Sunday and Monday. After all, these connections do not come automatically.

Sin gets in the way of our living in obedience and faithfulness. Thomas Schulz writes in the article *The Pastor as Stewardship Leader*, “We and our fellow Christians are sinners. We live in a sinful world that loves to tell us how to manage our lives. We live in a world that encourages selfish, me-first, living. We are people who are justified by faith whose life of sanctification may be a horrible mess. If we are not willing to teach ourselves and our fellow believers how to manage our lives for the Savior, the sinful world is more than willing to teach its brand of self-centered living.”

“One of the most pressing needs of pastoral ministry is to develop, sustain, and legitimize reflection on Christian faith not simply as a set of propositions to believe, commandments to obey, or rituals to perform, but as an orienting force that impacts every aspect of daily life” writes Christian Scharen in *Faith as a Way of Life*, page 5.

Conversation Starter: “Stewardship Conversation Five”

Digging Deeper: Read *Stewardship Primer 1* at faithaflame.lcms.org. Read the entire article by Robert Benne in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

IV. Talk with pastors about their role as Chief Steward in the congregation.

The pastor is the chief steward in the congregation. Of necessity the first thing the chief steward does is examine his own stewardship life in the light of God’s Word. He begins by asking, “What kind of steward am I of all that God has entrusted to my care?”

J. E. Herrmann writes in *The Chief Steward*, “It is the privilege and responsibility of the pastor to teach the broad Spiritual conceptions of Christian stewardship to his people. He is also to lead them to a practical and fuller expression of the principles as individual Christians and as members of a Christian congregation. Stewardship belongs to the whole counsel of God. The levels of Christian stewardship in a Christian congregation are set in the main by the pastor... The principles and practice of Christian stewardship must become the absorbing passion in his life. He should endeavor to become the number one steward in his congregation. His entire activities as pastor, his personal life, must be convincing proof that he practices what he preaches.” (Page 19)

Roy Bleick, in *Much More Than Giving*, writes, “To help each member be a good manager of what God has entrusted to him is one of the functions of the Christian church. Pastors are God’s gifts to the church to perform this service... Christian growth takes place through the Holy Spirit’s activity in the means of grace. As the pastor seeks to help people become better stewards, he needs to remember that two things are required for growth to take place. The first is to confront the believer with God’s expectation for his life; the Scriptural truth that everything belongs to God; the need for a personal examination of his attitude toward God’s Word, of his individual stewardship performance, and of his future goals and objectives; and the Gospel’s strong, unequivocal promises of grace and mercy. The second requirement for growth is a commitment to living according to the will of God, specific measurable objectives, and a strategy for reaching those objectives.” (Page 26)

“If,” writes Richard Borg in *The Chief Steward*, “you’ve never given serious thought to chief-steward leadership, it may indicate that you’ve experienced one or more of three diversions.” (Page 27) The three diversions he mentions include: (1) not being trained to lead the church in stewardship and feeling uncomfortable in that role, (2) because stewardship has been narrowly defined as “money,” misguided mentors and fearful colleagues advised you to avoid the subject altogether, (3) well-meaning lay leaders talked you out of this leadership role.

The pastor has a vital role to fill in leading the congregation in a holistic stewardship process. He has the opportunity to address the issue of stewardship from the standpoint of faith and to be an example and a model of stewardship that faith calls forth. The pastor, as chief steward in the congregation, has the wonderful opportunity and the great responsibility to lead the congregation in this important aspect of ministry.

Conversation Starter: “Stewardship Conversation Three”

Digging Deeper: Read *Stewardship Primer 8* at faithaflame.lcms.org.

V. Communicate with congregations regarding their privileges and responsibilities in the area of Christian stewardship.

Christian stewardship has both an individual aspect and a corporate aspect. Congregations have the responsibility to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted to their care.

A vital role the congregation assumes in corporate stewardship is that of modeling what it means to be a good steward. The congregation will model good stewardship in each of the following areas:

The Stewardship of the Gospel.

- a. The church is commissioned to preserve the truth of the gospel.
- b. The church is to share the gospel with everyone

The Stewardship of Church Leaders.

- a. Professional Church workers are supported and cared for.

- b. Leaders are identified and trained.
- c. Leaders encourage and challenge members to grow in faith and love

The Stewardship of Persons

- a. Caring for those in the household of faith
- b. Showing mercy to all

The Stewardship of Financial resources

- a. Keeping the financial house in order
- b. Integrating personal and corporate responsibilities.
- c. Modeling generosity in giving

The Stewardship of District and Synod

- a. Walking together as family
- b. Communicating the mission
- c. Supporting generously the work of the church at large

- Adapted from *Creative Stewardship* by Richard B. Cunningham

Corporate stewardship is the faith of the church in action. It is more about identity than activity, more relational than functional, and accentuates mission and ministry more than budget.

Conversation Starter: “Stewardship Conversation Seven”

Digging Deeper: See year three of *Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees* “Living as God’s Family” at faithaflame.lcms.org.

Note:

To assist you in facilitating discussion of these important stewardship issues a series of ten “Stewardship Conversations” have been prepared for pastors as they meet together. These conversations are intended to be a starting place for discussion of the foundational elements of Christian stewardship. One “Stewardship Conversation” can be used at each Circuit Meeting to initiate a few minutes of reflection and discussion.

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST THE CIRCUIT VISITOR IN FORMING OF MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH RELATIONSHIPS

When one congregation desires to enter into a multi-congregation parish relationship with another congregation or congregations, the voters of the initial congregation would present a formal resolution (passed by the voters) to the other congregation. The resolution would request a joint voters meeting to discuss the possibility of the future relationship. If the receiving congregation is willing to engage the topic, they will coordinate a date, place and time for the meeting. It is recommended that the initial meeting include the Church Council and Board of Elders from each congregation. The district office should be notified of this meeting and the district president should be in attendance to offer advice and procedure protocol. Items to be discussed:

1. Each congregation remains its own governing body. The joint relationship forms a new parish but not a new congregation. Each congregation retains its constitution and by-laws.
2. The Divine Call would be extended by both congregations meeting in a joint assembly. The pastor would be the called pastor of both congregations.
3. There would need to be a "Statement of Agreement" signed by both congregations. The agreement would concern itself with:
 - a. Sunday morning and weekly schedules expected of the pastor at each congregation.
 - b. What percentage of compensation each congregation would contribute to the salary and benefits of the pastor.
 - c. If the relationship were ever to be dissolved, a separation strategy should be in place.
4. There would be one vote per parish and one vote per the pastor of the parish at district conventions. (not one vote per congregation, but one vote for the two or more congregations).
5. It is recommended that the delegate representing the parish come from one congregation at one convention and from the other congregation at the next convention. This alternating process assures both congregations they are able to participate in district conventions on an equal basis.
6. When all arrangements and agreements are finalized and signed, send a copy to the district office for their files.

DEFINITIONS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONGREGATIONS

New Church Start

A New Church Start is: “1) an intentionally organized gathering which; 2) comes together on a regular basis for worship and/or Bible study, and; 3) is intended to grow into a member LCMS congregation.” The term “New Church Start” replaces the terms “mission congregation” and “preaching station,” which were used previously.

Satellite Worship Site (i.e., “Second Site”)

A Satellite Worship Site is not intended to become a separate LCMS congregation. The establishing of a Satellite Worship Site is not to be reported by the district president or the mission executive. Instead, it will be reported by the sponsoring congregation on forms that will be provided annually to congregations by the Office of Rosters and Statistics.

Specialized Ministry

A Specialized Ministry is a specific type of ministry offered by a congregation, such as a ministry to Hispanics, ministry to the deaf, etc. Like the Satellite Worship Site, Specialized Ministries are not to be reported by the district president or the mission executive. Instead, they will be reported by the sponsoring congregation on forms that will be provided annually to congregations by the Office of Rosters and Statistics. Specialized Ministries reported by the sponsoring congregations will be published in The Lutheran Annual and on the LCMS website.

Multi-Congregation Parish (i.e., “Dual Parish,” “Multiple Parish”)

Two or more congregations served by the same pastor.

Calling Congregation (i.e., “Vacancy,” “Pastoral Vacancy”)

A congregation which is in the process of calling a pastor following the departure of its previous pastor or which has definite plans to call a pastor in the near future.

Temporary Non-Calling Congregation

A congregation, which intends to fill the pastoral vacancy created by the departure of its former pastor, but has suspended that process for a period of time.

**CIRCUIT VISITORS CHECKLIST WHEN FORMING
OF MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Meet with both congregations lay leadership and clergy if clergy are present in each congregation.
2. Review the meeting with the congregations with the district president and get his input. Make sure that the by-laws of each congregation are being upheld and honored.
3. Assist one of the congregations in producing a resolution from the voters to approach the other congregation to form a multi-congregation (or how many congregations are involved) parish.
4. When a date and place has been set for the congregations to meet, attend that meeting. It may be a good idea to have the DP attend if possible.
5. Assist the congregations in drawing up a "statement of agreement" concerning the issues mentioned above. (This is the most critical step).
6. Make sure each congregations voters assembly adopts the joint meeting proposal.
7. If all is agreed upon, adopted, and signed, send a copy to the district office to be filed.
8. If a pastor needs to be installed, arrange for that to happen. If one congregation absorbs the pastor of the other congregation, make sure that each congregation knows that the pastor is called to both of the congregations.

**POSSIBLE AGENDA
FOR CONGREGATION'S VOTERS MEETING
MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH EXPLORATION**

Opening Devotion

Discussion Questions regarding the Forming of a Multi-congregation Parish

The Pros and Cons of Forming a Multi-congregation Parish

Steps of Negotiation in Forming a Multi-congregation Parish

The Multi-congregation Parish Agreement

The Pastor

Dissolution of the Multi-congregation Parish Arrangement

The Timeline for Establishing a Multi-congregation Parish

A Trial Period

Questions and Answers

Next Steps

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS REGARDING THE FORMING
OF A MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH**

1. What is the primary reason/need that brought you to discuss the possibility of forming a multi-congregation parish?

2. In your estimation how would cooperation between the congregations empower or inhibit the mission of
 - a. Each congregation?

 - b. The church-at-large?

3. What is peculiar to the history of the congregations that would make a multi-congregation parish arrangement.
 - a. Highly likely?

 - b. Highly unlikely?

4. What areas of negotiation would need the least attention?

5. What areas of negotiation would need the most attention (What one thing might cause this process to deteriorate)?

6. In your estimation is a multi-congregation parish partnership feasible?

THE PROS AND CONS OF FORMING A MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH

Pros

Able to afford a pastor (meeting costs of salary, benefits, housing, etc.)

Prolongs the life of congregation

Combine programs, activities, events

Preserves identity of congregation

Convenience for members (i.e., minimal disruption to members/ministry)

When life is challenging in one congregation for the pastor, they tend to be a joy and blessing for him in the other congregation

Fosters working together for the sake of the mission

Share expenses (bulletins, S.S. materials, VBS materials, office equipment, etc)

Cons

Loss of congregational independence

One congregation/ministry may be slighted

Tendency toward maintenance ministry

Congregations do not always get along with each other

Scheduling tensions (e.g., worship, Sunday School, Confirmation, Ladies' Aid, etc.)

Location of pastor's residence

The "Leah/Rachel Syndrome" (i.e., one congregation may be more loved than the other)

Lack of outreach and new initiatives

Time wasted in travel between congregations

Budget and equity issues

One congregation may feel left out of the communications loop; communications challenges

Time consuming duplications because many things need to be done twice (e.g., Sunday bulletins, orders of service, etc.)

The congregation in which the pastor's family will hold membership

STEPS OF NEGOTIATION IN FORMING A MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH AGREEMENT

1. Both congregations agree to pursue the possibility of forming a multi-congregation parish.
2. A joint committee discusses the concerns/needs of each congregation.
3. A joint committee negotiates the particulars of the agreement (see checklist).
4. A draft of the multi-congregation parish agreement is developed by the joint committee.
5. The multi-congregation parish agreement is presented to the Voters Assembly of each congregation for consideration.
6. The multi-congregation parish agreement is formally accepted by the Voters Assembly of each congregation.
7. The multi-congregation parish agreement is ratified by the Voters' Assembly of each congregation.
8. The beginning of the multi-congregation parish arrangement is marked by a special worship service which includes the installation of the pastor.

THE MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISH AGREEMENT

1. Should be drafted by a joint committee following discussion of the concerns/ needs of each congregation.

2. Should be presented to each congregation for consideration and feedback

3. Should be revised, as necessary, by the joint committee.

4. Should be adopted by the Voters Assembly of each congregation.

5. Should be ratified by the Voters Assembly of each congregation.

6. Should be signed and dated by the following representatives of each congregation:
 - a. Chairman of the congregation

 - b. Secretary of the congregation

7. Should be signed and dated by the pastor (if one is serving one of the congregations under a call) which indicates his willingness to serve the other congregation as its called pastor.

8. Should be signed and dated by the district president.

**CHECKLIST
FOR
MULTI-CONGREGATION PARISHES**

Pastoral Duties and Expectations

- _____ Identification of pastoral duties requested by each congregation in the parish
- _____ Expectations of time to be spent in each congregation in the parish
- _____ Expectations of pastor as parish and congregation administrator
- _____ Expectations of pastor as confirmation instructor and spiritual overseer of the parish's educational program
- _____ Expectations of pastor as visitor in members' homes and as pastor for shut-ins, the youth, inactive members, hospitalized members, etc.
- _____ Expectations of pastor as counselor and advisor to congregational and parish committees and boards
- _____ Provision for periodic review and adjustment by pastor and parish of their expectations

Pastoral Support

- _____ Determination of pastor's total compensation (i.e., salary, benefits, housing, utilities, professional expenses, etc.)
- _____ Identification of each congregation's obligation for pastoral compensation
- _____ Determination of method of payment of compensation to pastor (e.g., one or more congregations pays its obligation to one congregation in the parish, which then pays the pastor directly, or some other arrangement)
- _____ Location of pastor's residence
- _____ Provisions for home savings fund allowance if a parsonage is provided
- _____ Determination of method for allocating professional expenses and mileage expenses to the congregations in the parish

Multi-congregation Parish Organization and Structure

- _____ Separate congregational voters assemblies
- _____ Joint oversight board or committee for parish agreement
- _____ Arrangements for periodic review of parish agreement
- _____ Arrangements for joint oversight and review of pastor's service
- _____ Coordination of congregational schedules within the parish
- _____ Coordination of congregational programs within the parish
- _____ Identifying times for Sunday or weekend worship services at parish congregations
- _____ Provision for changing Sunday or weekend worship services schedule on an annual or seasonal basis

- _____ Determination of times of worship services for festivals and special occasions (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Confirmation, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, etc.)
- _____ Determination of method for selecting lay delegates to District conventions from the congregations of the parish.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS WITH CROSS-DISTRICT AND CROSS-CIRCUIT CHURCH PLANTING

1. Assumptions and Principles --- As the circuit visitor assists congregations desiring to carry on mission work beyond its immediate community and especially in a district other than its own he needs to be aware of the following assumptions and principles:
 - a. The ministry of Word and Sacrament is carried out within the context of the Christian congregation and, consequently, the congregation calls pastors to Word and Sacrament ministry normally for the sake of its members and the immediate community the congregation serves.
 - b. The called pastor “equip(s) the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:11-12)
 - c. Jesus Christ gave command to His Church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). Lutheran congregations will therefore always be concerned about those who do not yet believe in Jesus and will do everything possible to bring the Gospel to them so that they may come to faith in Him.
 - d. In today’s mobile society, congregations may have opportunity to carry out our Lord’s Great Commission with people located in circuits or districts other than their own.
2. As the circuit visitor assists congregations with Cross-District and Cross-Circuit Church Planting he will find the following references useful:
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
 - b. Acts. 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - c. St. Paul’s many mission trips throughout most of then known world.
 - d. Acts 15 (The Jerusalem Council) Paul and Barnabas appeared before the Jerusalem Council to insure that there was harmony in doctrine and practice in the early Christian church.
[Accountable to one another]
 - e. The apostolic admonition to “walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).
3. Proper lines of communication when dealing with cross-district and cross-circuit church planting is important (Cf. Bylaw 4.1.6.2). It is important that proper communications be maintained as follows:
 - a. Within the congregation keeping the members informed as to the plan and progress.
 - b. When a congregation concludes that it has an opportunity to plant a church or ministry across circuit boundaries, it shall inform its own and the other circuit visitor as well as inform and

- get the concurrence of the district president and the District Mission Board before initiating such activity.
- c. The circuit visitor of the circuit where the church planting is proposed to occur shall assist the church-planting congregation to inform and obtain the assistance of the congregations within the circuit. Ideally, the two affected circuit visitors should help the congregations agree regarding the church plant, and to that end there needs to be clear communication of intentions and plans.
 - d. The circuit visitor of the church-planting congregation shall assist that congregation, when doing cross-district church planting, to keep both its own district president and the president of the other district regularly and fully informed of its activities. They must also have the concurrence of the respective District Presidents and the Districts' Mission Boards. This information sharing and concurrence should take place before the church planting activity is initiated. The circuit visitor of the circuit in which the church planting will occur must also be included in the information loop.
 - e. The church planting congregation's circuit visitor shall assist it to at all times maintain regular, ongoing communication with the circuit or district where the church plant is occurring.

4. The Process for Cross-Circuit and Cross District Church Planting

- a. When a circuit visitor becomes aware that a congregation in his circuit intends to engage in church planting outside of its own circuit, he shall encourage the congregation to inform the circuit visitor of that circuit as well as the district president.
- b. When a circuit visitor becomes aware that a congregation in his circuit intends to engage in church planting outside of its own district he shall advise the congregation to inform and seek the concurrence of its district president and the president of the district in which the church planting is proposed to take place [Bylaw 4.6.1.2 (a)]. Both the circuit visitor and the presidents of both districts should make every effort to encourage that all involved come to agreement regarding the mission effort.
- c. The Circuit visitor shall monitor the progress of the church planting of the congregation within his circuit to encourage harmony within the congregation and with the circuit congregations and the district where the church planting is occurring. It is important to maintain clear communication throughout the process. As congregations in Synod we walk together and are mutually accountable to one another.
- d. The church planting congregation's circuit visitor shall also advocate on behalf of that congregation to assist in the process of gaining the support of the circuit and/or district in which the mission plant is taking place. In that way, congregations may be guided to provide mutual care and support for the mission effort.

CIRCUIT VISITOR ASSISTS PASTORS IN ESTABLISHING PROPER, GOD-PLEASING VOCATIONAL BOUNDARIES

I. Pastors are called by God through their congregations.

Lutherans believe, teach and confess that the call into the Office of the Holy Ministry is a Divine call. That is to say, God calls a man into the Office. The man does not create, assume, or usurp the Office. Since we agree that God creates and sustains the Office we will also agree that God defines the parameters of the Office. The pastor cannot say whatever he feels like saying. The pastor cannot behave however he feels. Both the pastor's teaching and his behavior are to be governed by and congruent with the Word of God. It is true to say that a pastor serves God through orthodox teaching and godly behavior.

Lutherans are not enthusiasts. We do not believe that the call to a man to enter into the Office of the Holy Ministry is immediate. He does not hear the voice of God telling him to become a pastor. Rather, the call comes to a man as mediated by a Lutheran congregation. God uses the congregation, in all its calling procedures to ensure that the right man is called to the right place. So, it is also true to say that the pastor serves God through his service to the congregation.

II. The call defines vocational boundaries.

All calls into the Office of the Holy Ministry are not identical with respect to duties or scope. Some pastors serve as senior pastors and some as assistants. Some serve full-time and some part-time. Some focus on youth and some focus on the elderly. Some are chaplains to an institution or to the military. Some are called to teach at the Seminary. We have this practice based on the understanding that God gifts men differently and that God gives the Church the freedom, (*jure humano*), to construct calls as best accommodates the needs of the Church in the proclamation of the Gospel. (Eph. 4:11, Tr 63-65)

Through this understanding of the call God creates order in the Church. The call of a congregation, (or the Synod), creates boundaries that assist the proclamation of the Gospel. Boundaries benefit the Church because they are the benchmarks of order. The only way that pastors can know what congregations expect of them is through the call documents. The explicit connection between the call document and the expectations of the congregation is essential, lest the congregation or pastor begin to think of the arrangement as one of employee/employer. This theological and practical order is maintained by a proper understanding of the call.

Senior Pastors and assistant Pastors are enabled to function properly together because the congregation has called them into that order. Congregations have an idea what to expect from a part-time Pastor because they have called the Pastor into that order. Chaplains understand that their duties are different than that of a parish Pastor because the call tells them so.

If it is true that God calls men into the Office of the Word, then it is also true that by means of that call, mediated by the congregation, God establishes order. Due to the connection with the call this order can

be referred to as vocational boundaries. As we shall see this order is good. It is healthy for the Church to do all things decently and in order.

III. When each part does its work the body is healthy and grows. (Eph. 4:16)

One of the Apostle Paul's favorite images of the Church is that of the body of Christ. In I Corinthians 12 he goes into great detail about how the various parts of the body function according to individual gifts and yet at the same time together as one body. In Ephesians Paul revisits this concept of functioning together as a body.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph 4:15-16 NIV)

a. Each man works within his vocation.

Vocational boundaries help the body grow together into Christ, and to be built up in love. It is healthy, and beneficial to realize that every Pastor is called to certain duties. No pastor is called to preach to and care for another pastor's members. Chaplains of institutions are not called to teach confirmation to members of another pastor's congregation. Seminary professors are not called to administer the sacraments. While these functions may occur occasionally, we recognize that they are done on a temporary basis as a service to the pastor and under his authority.

One of the vocational boundaries that is consistently crossed is that of ecclesiastical supervision. The Synod has created an office, which because of its duties, must be within the office of the Word. The office of district president is charged with the supervision of doctrine and behavior of the ordained and commissioned ministers of the Synod. This supervision can only be carried out by the power of the Word of God. While every pastor is responsible to care for purity of doctrine, not all are called to supervise as district presidents. The Synod has established an order through vocational boundaries that is healthy for the work God has given.

b. Each man respects and trusts his neighbor to work within his vocation.

When the body is functioning properly each part does its work. When pastors respect vocational boundaries they do so on the basis of love for and trust in their neighbor. We readily understand that each pastor is not gifted in the same way. Each pastor has idiosyncratic strengths, weakness, abilities, interests and personality. The best way for the Church to function is when pastors respect and trust their brothers to work within their personal call.

c. When a brother sins, his brothers restore him gently.

When a Pastor sins he is transgressing not only the Word of God, but also his call. This is why James says that those who teach will be held to a stricter judgment. This is a serious matter and ought to be handled through a godly order. The goal is to restore the brother. This can only occur when each part does its work. If a pastor is made aware of a sin in his brother he should, according to the order of the Word, go to his brother, many times, with the purpose of restoration in mind. Pastors are not called to make their brother's sin public. If, after reasonable efforts have been exhausted, restoration has not occurred, the next part of the body is called in to do its work. The district president, who has been given the responsibility of supervision, is trusted to further seek restoration, and if that is not possible, removal.

If the district president does not fulfill the duties of his office an order has been established for his supervisor, the Synod President, to seek to restore him. The best way for the Church to function is when pastors respect and trust their brothers to work within their personal call.

In all of these cases much grief could be avoided and much order could be maintained if the pastor would simply think about his vocational boundaries. If the pastor would simply ask himself, "How does my call direct me to handle this situation?" the Synod would benefit greatly.

IV. When each part is not working properly the body is unhealthy.

- a. Each man covets his neighbor's vocation.

Ignoring vocational boundaries is a sure recipe for disaster. When the parameters of the call are ignored then each Pastor is free to covet his neighbor's vocation. If a pastor is allowed to think he could do a better job than his brother at being a chaplain, a seminary professor, or a district president all order is called into question. The question may also be asked if the brother is seeking to fill someone else's call how can he have the time and energy to fill his own. In this scenario the body is not functioning properly and the proclamation of the Gospel will suffer harm.

- b. Each man disrespects and distrusts his neighbor.

In addition, the lack of vocational boundaries breeds distrust and fosters disrespect. If a pastor sees it as his duty to accomplish the call of his brother neither will trust the other. If a pastor refuses to respect the order that has been established by the Synod he will likely disrespect the brothers as well. The Synod cannot be healthy when vocational boundaries are ignored.

- c. When a brother sins, his brother attacks him publicly.

When pastors are allowed to think that they have a responsibility to make every infraction of their brother a matter of public interest all boundaries are called into question. There can be no order in such a circumstance and nothing of benefit to the Church can be accomplished. These are all signs that each part is not doing its work and that the body is not growing into its head Christ, and that it is not being built up in love. To a great degree, the health of the Synod, and the accomplishment of its objectives, depends on careful attention to vocational boundaries.

V. The circuit visitor helps Pastors to establish vocational boundaries.

Therefore, the circuit visitor can do much to benefit the health of the Synod by seeing to it that vocational boundaries are a regular part of the discussion of at circuit meetings.

- a. The doctrine of the call is reviewed.

From time to time it would be beneficial to discuss what we understand by the call into the Office of the Word. A wholesome exercise would be to discuss what the call documents actually say the congregation is asking the pastor to do. If there are men in the circuit who serve other than the congregational pastoral office it would be fitting to compare and contrast those vocational boundaries.

- b. Establishing healthy boundaries is discussed.

While examining those boundaries the circuit visitor can help the discussion by asking for concrete examples as to how to put into effect. It would be good to encourage the brothers to ask the question, “How does my call direct me to handle this situation.”

c. Living within the Eighth Commandment is discussed.

In today’s world, when matters can be made public at the press of a button, and when too often buttons are being pressed in an isolation that fosters ungodly gossip, it would be well, under the discussion of vocational boundaries to discuss the Eighth Commandment. The call into the Holy Ministry does draw clear lines for how we talk to and about each other. The call demands that those who are in the Office respect the Office, and others who hold it. The circuit visitor can build up the pastors he serves by initiating discussion about how they fulfill the Eighth Commandment.

Conclusion

When each part does its work the body is healthy and is able to accomplish what God has in mind. The circuit visitor can be a large part of this health through an honest discussion of vocational boundaries.

Along with what is presented above concerning proper vocational boundaries in regard to the Divine Call there are several other items to consider as a circuit visitor discusses appropriate professional boundaries with the pastors in the circuit. First we offer a selection from Martin Luther who touches upon proper pastoral boundaries in his commentary on Galatians. The next two documents were written by Dr. George Wollenburg, past president of the Montana District. Each of these three documents is timely these days when it is easy to violate the boundaries of the 8th Commandment not only in our relationship with brothers but also and most especially as pastors post information on blogs where reputations and a pastor’s ministry can so easily be destroyed by the publication of half-truths, false information and blatant slander.

LUTHER'S WORKS, VOL. 26: LECTURES ON GALATIANS

1. Paul an apostle—not from men, etc.

At the very outset Paul deals with those false teachers. They claimed to be the pupils of the apostles, sent by them; and they despised Paul as one who was neither the pupil of the apostles nor sent by them to preach the Gospel but had entered in some other way and had intruded himself upon the ministry on his own initiative.

Against them Paul defends his calling and says: “Your preachers look down on my calling. But whoever it is that has come to you, he is sent either from men or through man; that is, he has either entered on his own, without a call, or has been called by someone else. But my calling is not from men or through man; it is superior to any calling that can come after the apostles. For it is ‘through Jesus Christ and God the Father.’”

When Paul says “from men,” I take this to refer to those who call and intrude themselves, when neither God nor man calls or sends them, but who run and speak on their own. Today the sectarians do this. Either they lurk in corners, look for some place to spew forth their venom, and do not come into public churches; or they go where the Gospel has already been planted. These I call “from men.” But when he says “through man,” I take this to refer to those who have a divine calling, but one that has come through man.

God calls in two ways, either by means or without means. Today He calls all of us into the ministry of the Word by a mediated call, that is, one that comes through means, namely, through man. But the apostles were called immediately by Christ Himself, as the prophets in the Old Testament had been called by God Himself.

Afterwards the apostles called their disciples, as Paul called Timothy, Titus, etc. These men called bishops, as in Titus 1:5 ff.; and the bishops called their successors down to our own time, and so on to the end of the world. This is a mediated calling, since it is done by man. Nevertheless, it is divine. Thus when someone is called by a prince or a magistrate or me, he has his calling through man. Since the time of the apostles this has been the usual method of calling in the world. It should not be changed; it should be exalted, on account of the sectarians, who despise it and lay claim to another calling, by which they say that the Spirit drives them to teach. But they are liars and impostors, for they are being driven by a spirit who is not good but evil. It is not lawful for me to forsake my assigned station as a preacher, to go to another city where I have no call, and to preach there. (As a doctor of divinity, of course, I could preach throughout the papacy, provided that they let me.) I have no right to do this even if I hear that false doctrine is being taught and that souls are being seduced and condemned which I could rescue from error and condemnation by my sound doctrine. But I should commit the matter to God, who in His own time will find the opportunity to call ministers lawfully and to give the Word. For He is the Lord of the harvest who will send laborers into His harvest; our task is to pray (Matt. 9:38).

Therefore we should not intrude into someone else’s harvest, as the devil does through his sectarians. With ardent zeal they claim to be saddened that men are being so miserably led astray, and to want to teach them the truth and rescue them from the devil’s clutches. Therefore even when a man seeks, with pious zeal and good intentions, to rescue with his sound doctrine those who have been led astray into error, this is still a bad example, which gives ungodly teachers an excuse to intrude themselves, after which Satan himself occupies the See. This example does a great deal of damage.

But when the prince or some other magistrate calls me, then, with firm confidence, I can boast against the devil and the enemies of the Gospel that I have been called by the command of God through the voice of a man; for the command of God comes through the mouth of the prince, and this is a genuine call. Therefore we, too, have been called by divine authority—not by Christ immediately, as the apostles were, but “through man.”

[Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 26: Luther's works, vol. 26 : Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ga 1:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

STICK TO YOUR CALL

I Peter 5:3

By

Dr. George Wollenburg

Presented to the Circuit Counselors of the Texas District
1989

You have invited me to discuss with you two subjects. The first is the subject of the particular "Kleeros" which God assigns to each pastor through His call. The second subject is that of "close" or closed communion. While at first glance these two subjects may seem to be totally unrelated, nevertheless, they are intimately related to each other, and we shall discuss both of them on the basis of two passages from the First Letter of Peter in the New Testament.

There is a little word found in I Peter 5:3. That word is "kleeroon." At first glance in the reading of this passage, the word may seem to be insignificant, and we will probably follow our accustomed practice of ignoring this little word of the Holy Spirit, and focusing on other words in the passage. But since the words of Holy Scripture did not fall from the Holy Spirit by accident, I would invite you to give your close attention to this word in the passage. The entire section reads, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partner in the glory which is about to be revealed; shepherd the flock of God which is among you, not out of compulsion, but willingly according to God, nor from a desire for base gain, but eagerly, nor as lording it over the shares which belong to you, but becoming examples to the flock." We will focus on that little word "shares".

In order to avoid any confusion on the meaning of the term "elder" a brief review of pertinent passages in the Sacred Scriptures in which the word occurs is needed to clarify the identity of the elder in the church. In Paul's instructions to Titus to ordain suitable elders for the churches in Crete, the elder is identified as an 'episcopos', a bishop. "Appoint elders in every town. . . "then the qualifications of the person who is appointed are given, and verse 7 continues, ". . . for a bishop must be blameless." The word occurs in conjunction with two other words in Acts 20:17, 28. The elders of Ephesian churches are called by Paul to meet with him. He instructs them, "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (bishops, episcopoi). Be shepherds (pastor) of the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." English translations generally reflect the view of their translators in these passages. But it is evident that elder (presbyter), overseer (episcopos, bishop) and pastor (poimenos) are synonymous terms in the New Testament. The only divinely appointed bishop in the church which the New Testament speaks of, is the pastor of the local church or congregation.

Various translations deal differently with the word "kleeros" in I Peter 5:3. NIV translates it with the phrase, "those entrusted to you," RSV with "those in your charge," KJV with "God's heritage," GWN with, "the people entrusted to you," Luther's German Bible only with the word "volk" or people. Volk in German is not a word that refers to individuals together forming a group called people, but to the corporate nature of the group as "the people." (cf. I Peter 2:9, "You who were not a people, are not the

people of God. . .") While all these translations with the exception of the KJV try to catch the sense of the word, it is difficult to do in any translation. The KJV simply translates the word as "inheritance" (a literal translation) and the translators had the difficulty of deciding whose inheritance it was. They decided it was God's inheritance, so they supplied the word God in their translations. What none of the translations are able to do is to convey the sense of the word as "a portion, or part which is assigned by lot."

In the New Testament the word used in Acts 1:17, where Peter addresses the assembled disciples following the ascension and urges them to select two suitable men, one of whom might be chosen to replace Judas "who also received a share (ton Kleron) of the apostolic ministry. After two men are presented to the apostles, the lot (kleeros) fell upon Matthias (Acts 1:26).

An examination of the word in Kittel, "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament", Vol. III, p. 758 ff, reveals the use of the term in the LXX and in Jewish and Christian literature. Of special importance is the use of the term in the LXX. There "kleeros" is that portion of the land of Canaan which was apportioned, or allotted to each individual tribe of Israel, and also to individual clans or families within the tribes. That portion of the land which is assigned by lot to the tribe is their "kleeros." A significant passage is Number 33:54, "You shall divide the land by lot (kleeros) for an inheritance among your families . . . every man's inheritance (kleeronomia) shall be in the place where their lot has fallen."

The kleeros is that concrete portion of the land assigned to each family or individual. The ninth commandment guards that kleeros from the covetous lust of others. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." The use of the term kleeros and kleeronomia are reminders to Israel that they did not conquer the land by their own achievement . . . but that God's free and sovereign grace gave Israel this land as its share of all the earth, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus kleeros expresses the fact that each has received his allotted share from God, by God's free and sovereign grace.

The use of this term by Peter in his exhortation to the elders indicates that it is God who has assigned to each of the elders (episcopoi) his own allotted portion of the people, the flock of God, whom he is to shepherd and toward whom he is to exercise his episcopal duty. To be a pastor or bishop means to be a pastor or bishop with a specific assignment, a specific church, a specific portion which has been allotted to the pastor by God. The office does not rise out of, nor is it created by a utilitarian consideration or functional necessity. (There are certain tasks which need to be done. Someone needs to do these tasks. Therefore we find someone who is qualified and assign these functions to that person.)

The church does not ordain "pastors at large," neither does God call "pastors at large," who function or perform as pastor whenever and wherever they choose, with whomsoever they choose. Dr. Arthur Karl Piepkorn in an examination of the rise of the monarchical episcopate in the church of the first five centuries quotes the Council of Chalcedon (451a.d.): "The sixth canon of the Council of Chalcedon declared the absolute ordination of priests and deacons (i.e. without attachment to a particular church, city, etc.) as 'akyron' (void). The one so ordained is assigned to no one and can work nowhere". God's call is always to a specific place and specific work or assignment.

The call of God assigns or allots to the pastor his specific and particular portion. That is his responsibility. That which God has assigned to another is not your responsibility, neither are you to intrude yourself into that which God has given another. The church does not have men in the clerical profession the way in which there are persons in the legal profession or in the medical profession. The church has pastors or overseers who are called by God and to whom a specific portion (kleeros) is given by His grace. The professionals in the legal or medical field build a practice by gaining a reputation. They have clients or patients. They perform well, or poorly for their clients or patients. But the church has pastors, not professionals, shepherds who are to tend the flock, bishops who are to oversee, to visit, to come to look at, and to teach, discipline, exhort, encourage, comfort, admonish, and correct. They are to tend the flock

by teaching, not by becoming experts in paper shuffling, management, or finding all the little slots into which the members of the congregation will fit so that each one can exercise his/her "spiritual gifts." They are not counselors who seek to help people sort out their personal relationships so that they can feel good about themselves and thus to build up a clientele. The pastors are confessors to hear confession and to speak absolution in obedience to the command of their Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:21-23). They have a specific kleros over which God has made them overseers and to which he has called them. They do not function in a general church public to gain adherents, clients, patients, or followers upon whom they may exercise their skills or their "spiritual gifts."

When through the plotting of Joab, Absalom was pardoned and restored from his exile by his father David, he would get up early in the morning and spend the entire day at the gate of the king's palace. Those people who came to have an audience with the king in order to have the king settle their disputes were greeted by Absalom at the gate. "From what city did you come? What tribe of Israel?" he would ask. After receiving the answer he would say, "Your claims are good and right, it's just too bad that the king doesn't have the wisdom to appoint deputies to hear you, that you have to wait and find justice delayed while the king tries to settle every matter by himself. If only I were a judge in Israel! Then everyone who has some matter of justice to bring would be able to come to me, and I would see to it that justice is done". . . so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." (II Sam. 15)

I don't remember whether or not this story is still in our Sunday School literature. If it is not, it ought to be. But even more important, it ought to be included in the courses in pastoral theology, or read periodically in the pastoral conferences. My sainted mother taught me this story as a very small child. She impressed upon me a single truth with this story. "What God has assigned to another is not your responsibility, neither are you to badmouth those whom God has placed in authority, in order to steal the hearts of the people from him." "If I were your pastor. . ."

An inordinate amount of mischief in our Synod today is caused by this sort of lusting after that which God has assigned to another. How easy it is to justify our lusting after the flock which God has assigned to another, or that portion or assignment which God has given to another, and to justify such lust by saying, "He just isn't doing his job the way he ought to." We covet. We covet the members of a neighboring parish. We covet the success of another pastor. We covet the salary and material benefits which our brother has. We covet the influence which another has in the church. We covet the positions of authority in the Synod. We covet the congregation of another. We bad-mouth one another, the officers of the Synod, and our people bad-mouth us.

It is my personal conviction that this has happened as a result of two things. The first is the dislocation of the pastoral office within the congregation and within the church. We no longer know where a pastor belongs in relationship to his congregation, to his brothers in the ministry, and to the synod. We have the religious entrepreneur who operates his own religious enterprise, lusts after success, and measures his success by his personal popularity and the statistical figures of church membership, etc., in his congregation. The religious entrepreneur is indifferent to the particularity of parishes other than his own and sees every individual, whether or not a member of another congregation, as an appropriate "client" for his 'practice.'

The dislocation of the pastoral office also produces the cult figure. The identifying marks of a cult leader is his absolute need to control others, and the unwillingness to tolerate any deviation from the cult-norm, determined by him, no matter how slight. The cult may not be confined to one single individual, but may include all those who are like-minded. The Saxon immigration under Stephan is an example of a cult. The cult figure sees every individual as an appropriate subject to be drawn into his sphere of influence, and to be brought under his authority since he is the only one who has the whole truth and his words are the same as the Word of God.

Secondly, we have adopted the cultural and social ideas of our society which evaluates on the basis of function and performance. We speak of the functions of the pastoral office. The office is defined as the number of functions which an individual performs. Performance is what counts. We evaluate our pastors on the way in which they perform. The great cry for more "practical" courses in our seminaries and for continuing education courses which will enable the pastors to perform more adequately supports this distortion of the pastoral office. Our literature, as well as synod and district resolutions reinforce this distortion. Those resolutions which deal with women and the pastoral office specifically limit the ministry of women to those "functions" which are not specifically the functions of the pastoral office. The CTCR study on the pastoral office also to some extent divides the pastoral office into a number of functions. Certain of those functions may be performed by unordained male and female persons.

This obviously raises the objection, "If the office is simply a matter of functions, then if I am able to perform the functions better than another, I certainly ought to be able to "use my gifts", and no one has the right to deny me the right to serve with my gifts." If a lay person can perform the function of preaching better than the ordained pastor, then certainly the lay person has the right to preach.

In the secular realm the office of father and mother has been reduced to the performance of functions. Since the experts trained in child psychology, etc., can certainly perform these functions in a much better manner, father and mother can be replaced by such experts to rear and nurture the child. In marriage, self-serving people live in "relationships." Relationships are based on performance which is satisfactory to both parties. If you perform adequately, the relationship is satisfactory. If not, the relationship is ended. This same sort of thinking has come into the church concerning the pastoral office. The pastor and the people in the congregation have a relationship. "Does he relate well?" If each performs adequately, the relationship continues. If the pastor does not perform adequately, the congregation, or at least some within it, seek to end the relationship. If the congregation performs adequately, the pastor remains in the relationship, if not, he "seeds" another "call," a new relationship.

An actor performs. An actor has a role to play. He gives a performance. If it is done well, the audience applauds. If not, he will soon have no audience. The use of these words in connection with the sacred office of the Holy Ministry reduces the office to a role, and the pastor to an actor who performs and who is to be evaluated on the basis of his performance.

The result in the church is the mischief which is presently being done. Everyone does what is right in his own eyes. God does not hunt for performers in order to give them a role to play, when he calls men to the pastoral office and assigns to each his own *kleeros*. He does not want men who are able to perform, he does not seek someone to fill a role. He seeks men who will be, not men who will perform. It is worthy of note that the qualifications for a bishop which are given by the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture, describe what a man is, not his ability to perform functions.

ALLOTRIEPISCOPOS

"Of course, none of you should suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or one who meddles in the affairs of others." (I Peter 4:15). The word "allotriepiscopos" is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament. It only occurs in this passage from the first letter of Peter. The exact meaning of the word is debated by scholars and most regard its meaning as obscure. Like many other Greek words, it is a combination of two words; "allotri," meaning that which belongs or pertains to another, and "episcopos", one who is charged with the responsibility of overseeing. Whenever allotri is combined with another word, it denotes an activity which is foreign to the doer, which is not his concern. Various meanings have been suggested for the word.

KJV translates, "a busybody in other men's matters; NIV "meddler"; RSV "mischiefmaker"; GWN "one who meddles in the affairs of another". The Arndt-Gingrich lexicon cites E. Zeller, SAB '93, 129ff, referring to the claim by Cynic preachers to be overseers of all men (Epic. 3:22, 97). Thus the meaning of the word is defined as "one who meddles in things that do not concern him, a busybody." I prefer the word, "mischiefmaker". Mischiefmaker is defined as: "An inciter of quarrels or enmity." The fact that this sin is listed with such sins as murder, theft, criminal activity, certainly says that the meddling mischief-maker is guilty of a much more grievous sin than simply a violation of good manners. While the admonition is addressed to all Christians, it is certainly a far greater naughtiness when pastors are guilty of such mischief.

Luther understood the word to mean, "one who interferes in the work of another. In his exposition of Psalm 83, (1530) he writes, "...every bishop or pastor has his definite diocese or parish. For this reason St. Peter calls them *kleeroon*, that is, parts, indicating that to each of them a part of the people has been committed as St. Paul writes to Titus (Titus 1:5). No one else, no stranger should undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent".

This rule should be so rigidly enforced that no preacher, however upright or pious, shall take it upon himself, either to preach to the people of a papistical or heretical pastor, or to teach them privately without the knowledge and consent of that pastor. For he has no command to do this, and what is not commanded should be left undone."

Concerning those who intrude upon the parish of another without a call or command, Luther says, "no one should let them in or listen to them, even if they were to preach the pure Gospel, nay, even if they were angels from heaven, and all Gabriels at that! For it is God's will that nothing be done as a result of one's own choice or decision, but everything as a consequence of a command or call". (Luther's Works, Vol. 13: p. 64 ff)

The strong opposition to the meddling preachers who came into parishes without a call or command is expressed in his tract: "Regarding Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers" (LW, Vol. 40: p. 384 ff). "For to the pastor is committed the pulpit, baptism, and the Sacrament, he is charged with the care of souls. But now these want to dislodge the pastor secretly. They are indeed regular thieves and murders of souls, blasphemers, and enemies of Christ and his churches."

"These intruders... destroy and bring to naught the parish system ordained of God."

"...church officials should press the matter of the call, questioning the infiltrator or his host... Whence do you come? Who sent you? Who has bidden you to give this intruder the right to divide this parish and cause dissension among us? Who has commanded you to despise your pastor, to judge and condemn him behind his back without a charge or fair hearing?"

The call of God is what authorizes the pastor in his own office and parish. "Each one should pay attention to his own commission and call, allowing another to discharge his office unmolested and in peace. This is the order that God established. If He wishes to accomplish something over and beyond this order, He will demonstrate this with signs and deeds. When He does not do so, we are to remain obedient to the offices and authority already ordained."

The infiltrators, "...attach any preacher in Christendom, judging and condemning, and arrogate to themselves a call and power to pass sentence on pulpits not theirs. It is indeed nothing but thievery and murder to interfere in another's office with wantonness and violence. Against such St. Peter warns (I Peter 4:15)".

This same judgment concerning the matter of attending to one's own call, and not interfering in the kleros of another is found in CFS Walther's book, "The Proper Form of a Christian Congregation" (CPH 1963).

"Every congregation shall agree with its neighboring sister congregations on their mutual local boundaries (Titus 1:5; Gal. 2:9). It shall not receive into its parish those who live in the area of other congregations (I Peter 4:15)." (p. 166).

He cites the opinion of the Wittenberg faculty (1638), "Concerning your fourth question, the pastor is not permitted privately to perform official pastoral functions in another diocese without the permission of the regular pastor, even though a large, or perhaps the largest part of his parishioners have followed him there, for the call is limited not only to a certain number of parishioners but also to a definite place."

The opinion of Deyling (Pastoral Theology) is also quoted, "No pastor or minister of the church should administer the most blessed sacrament to anyone not belonging to his parish without the permission of the superintendent, except to sick persons who are traveling. No one is permitted to roam about as he chooses and to frivolously change his pastor, which commonly stems from hatred or animosity... nor can one who turns his back on his pastor and leaves him with malicious intent be regarded as a penitent and be admitted to the use of the Holy Supper." (p. 168, 169)

"A congregation shall ask of those who come to it from other orthodox churches a testimony written by their former congregation... and shall give to those who transfer a similar testimony" (Acts 18:27; 3 John 8, 9, 10). (p. 170) "Exceptions are made in the case of those unjustly excommunicated, and all guests coming from other orthodox congregations (I Peter 1:9; I Cor. 16:10, 11)". (p. 170).

The only spirit appointed episcopos or bishop in the church is the pastor of a congregation. Other episcopal offices in the church, e.g. the President of the Synod, the district president, are by human right, and certainly salutary arrangements within the church. Luther recognized the necessity of such oversight when he made arrangements for the visitation of the churches in Saxony in 1527, and prepared a church order for the Saxon churches. Such offices are established by the freedom of Christian people to preserve the unity of the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel. In so far as such offices have as their object and purpose, the preservation of the unity of the true faith, and to prevent schism and sectarianism, they hold a divine authority, the authority of the Word of God. By virtue of the fact that such offices have been established for the sake of order within the church, honor and reverence is due to such offices, even though they are not directly established by the Holy Spirit in the sacred scriptures. Honor and respect are due to the offices of civil Government (Romans 13:1-7), who serve only our temporal well-being, but who have been established by God, and therefore are His servants. No less honor and due reverence are due to the offices within the church, which serve our eternal well-being, even though they have been established by human authority (de jure humano). The very arrangement made by the constitution of the Synod which designates such offices for the supervising (overseeing) of the doctrine and life of pastors and congregations, demands that such offices be regarded as divinely ordained (tetagmenai Rom. 13:1), even though not divinely commanded.

The quickest way to destroy the unity of the confession of the true faith is to permit every individual pastor to appoint himself as a "watchdog" and "overseer" of every brother and every brother's congregation. Such self-appointed overseers are indeed "allotriepiscopoi" and produce a naughtiness within the church that breeds mistrust, confusion, and chaos. The most effective way to bring a social system into almost total dependence upon the practice of power is to eliminate, or attempt to eliminate all forms of authority from the system. The primary principle of revolutionary philosophy is the destruction of authority within a system in order to substitute power for authority. The power which is seized

becomes the means to impose the will of the revolutionary movement upon the social system. This same principle is at work in the church when self-appointed persons intrude upon the office of another.

The purpose of synodical authority as defined within the constitution of the Synod is to protect the rights of pastors and congregations, as well as the preservation of the unity of the true faith (Art. III of the Constitution). Provision is made for the election of officers and their duties are constitutionally defined and controlled. Authority, undefined and unregulated deteriorates into an abuse of power. Authority, on the other hand, when it is defined, places limitation on the use of power by constitutional limitations. In other words, the precise purpose of constitutional limitations or bylaws is to control the abuse of power. The destruction of authority with its constitutional limitations destroys the protection of the rights of congregations and pastors, and also the unity of the true faith. The chaos which is produced is more than simply a rebellious child sticking out his tongue and saying "I won't"! The source of chaos is the lord of chaos, Satan. The command of the Lord, not to become allotriepiscopos is given to prevent such mischief.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the responsibility of every pastor of the synod in guarding the unity of the confession of the true faith?
 2. What should be done when you become convinced that the pure doctrine is no longer being preserved?
 3. What if a neighboring pastor's member comes to you and complains about their pastor, especially his doctrine and teaching?
 4. Do members of the synod have the right to criticize their district president, or the President of the synod?
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SELF-APPOINTED WATCHDOGS IN THE CHURCH

By
Dr. George Wollenburg
1993

When through the plotting of Joab, Absalom, David's son, was pardoned and restored from his exile he would get up early in the morning and spend the entire day at the gate of the king's palace. People came from every tribe of Israel to have an audience with the King. They were interested in having the King settle their disputes, to carry out his duty as the God-appointed supreme judge. Absalom greeted them as they came and went. "From what city did you come? What tribe of Israel?" After receiving their answer he would say, "Your claims are good and right, it's just too bad that the king doesn't have wisdom to appoint deputies to hear you. You have to wait and find that justice delayed is justice denied, while the king tries to settle every matter himself. If only I were a judge in Israel! Then everyone who has some matter of justice to bring would be able to come to me and I would see to it that justice is done. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Samuel 15).

My sainted parents taught me this story when I was a child. They impressed upon me a single truth with this story. "What God has assigned to another is not your responsibility, neither are you to bad-mouth those whom God has placed in authority in order to steal the hearts of the people from them. (7th, 8th, 9th & 10th Commandments)

SELF APPOINTED JUDGES

An inordinate amount of mischief in our Synod today is caused, not only by such bad-mouthing of authority, but by those who have appointed themselves as judges. Much of this is nothing more than simply lusting after power which may be disguised as concern for doctrine in the church. The lust for power is the original sin, inherited from Adam. The original sin is the desire to be like God. We are born with this desire. We are also born with a false or counterfeit image of God, a satanic image. That counterfeit image of God is the notion that God is almighty and in absolute control of everything, and that whatever will not submit to his control he destroys.

This inborn lust for power expresses itself in the small child and is easily observable. Not only does the child seek to control, but given a toy which he/she cannot control, the toy is smashed. "What, and whomever I cannot control, I will destroy." This lust for power is not removed from the Old Adam when we come to faith and grow into adulthood. It is still there in our hearts and expresses itself in the struggle for control, in marriage, between spouses; in the family between brothers and sisters, between parent and child; in the church between pastors and laity as well as between members of the clergy. Those whom we cannot control our wicked flesh seeks to destroy. We destroy them with words, by name calling, by gossip, by innuendo, as well as by false accusation. The Holy Spirit condemns such action in the clear words of Sacred Scripture; in the words of our Lord who equates anger, insult, and name calling with the sin of murder (Matthew 5:22, 23) and places those sins under the severe judgment of almighty God.

ALLOTRIEPISCOPOS

"Of course, none of you should suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or one who meddles in the affairs of others." (I Peter 4:15). The word "allogotriepiscopos" occurs only once in the New Testament. It is a combination of two Greek words; "allogotri," meaning that which belongs or pertains to another, and "episcopos," one who is charged with the responsibility of overseeing. Various meanings have been suggested for the word.

The King James Version translates, "busybody in other men's matters". God's Word to the Nations translates, "one who meddles in the affairs of another. The Revised Standard Version translates, "mischief maker." The Arndt-Gingrich lexicon of the Greek New Testament cites E. Zeller, SAB '93, 129ff, referring to the claim by Cynic preachers to be overseers of all men (Epic. 3:22, 97). The meaning of the word is defined as one who meddles in things that do not concern him. I prefer the word mischief maker. Mischief maker is defined as, "an inciter of quarrels and enmity." That fact that the mischief-maker or meddler is listed with murderers and thieves indicates that this is a much more grievous sin than simply a violation of good manners.

Luther in his exposition of Psalm 83 (1530) writes, ". . . every bishop or pastor has his definite diocese or parish... No one else, no stranger should undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent." Luther applies it even to the parishes which have a heretical pastor. "...no preacher, however upright and pious, shall take it upon himself, either to preach to the people of a papistical or heretical pastor, or to teach them privately without the knowledge and consent of that pastor. For he has no command to do this, and what is not commanded should be left undone."

Concerning those who intrude upon the parish of another without a call or command Luther writes, "no one should let them in or listen to them, even if they were to preach the pure Gospel, nay, even if they were angels from heaven, ad all Gabriels at that! For it is God's will that nothing should be done as a result of one's own choice or decision, but everything as a consequence or a command or call." (Luther's Works, Vol. 13 p. 64 ff.)

He writes about self-appointed overseers that they "...attack any preacher in Christendom, judging, condemning, arrogating to themselves a call and power to pass sentence on pulpits not theirs. It is nothing but thievery and murder to interfere in another's office with wantonness and violence. Against such St. Peter warns 1 Peter 4:15." (Luther's Works, Vol. 40 p. 384ff.)

CULT LEADERS

The identifying marks of a cult leader is his absolute need to control others and the unwillingness to tolerate any deviation from the cult-norm, determined by him, no matter how slight. The cult may not be confined to a single individual, but may include all those who are like minded. The Saxon immigration under Stephan is an example of a cult. (By God's grace they were rescued from this cult and returned to the church.) The cult figure sees every individual as an appropriate subject to be drawn into his sphere of influence and to be brought under his authority, since he is the only one who has the whole truth.

Self-chosen service of God is Idolatry!!

THE APOSTOLIC WARNING

St. Paul warns against persons who demonstrate "...a morbid craving for controversy and for dispute about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among men..." 1 Timothy 6: 4, 5.

He likewise instructs Timothy to, "...charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers." 2 Timothy 2:14.

Luther recognized the need for some sort of church or constitution when he made arrangements for the visitation of the churches in Saxony (1527). He prepared a church order for the Saxon churches, and requested the Elector to appoint visitors, or supervisors. Such offices are established by the freedom of Christian people to preserve the purity of the Gospel and to prevent schism. In so far as such offices have as their object and purpose the preservation of the unity of the faith and to prevent schism and sectarianism, they possess divine authority, the authority of God's Word.

By virtue of the fact that such offices have been established for the sake of order within the church, honor and reverence is due to such offices, even though they are not directly established by the Holy Spirit in the sacred scriptures. Honor and respect are due to the offices of civil government (Romans 13:1-7) who serve only our temporal well-being, since these offices have been established by God. No less honor and due reverence are owed to the offices within the church which serve our eternal well-being. Although they have been established by Christian freedom, they are no less divinely ordained than offices of civil government, even though they are not divinely commanded. Whoever defiantly vilifies those who occupy these offices, sins against God, against all of the Holy Priesthood, and creates grave offense in the true biblical sense of the word.

The quickest way to destroy the unity of the confession of the true faith is to permit every individual to appoint himself as a "watchdog" and "overseer" of everyone else. Such self-appointed overseers produce a naughtiness within the church which breeds distrust, confusion, and chaos. God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. (1 Corinthians 14:33) There is another one who is the author of chaos.

The most effective way to bring a social system into almost total dependence upon the practice of power is to eliminate, or attempt to eliminate all forms of authority within the system. The primary principle of a revolutionary movement and philosophy is the destruction of authority within a system in order to substitute power for authority. The power which is seized becomes the means to impose the will of the revolutionary movement upon the social system. This same principle is at work in the institutional church when self-appointed persons intrude upon the office of another.

The purpose of synod authority as defined in the constitution of the Synod is to protect the rights of pastors and congregations as well as the preservation of the unity of the true faith. (Constitution of the Synod, Art. III) Provision is made for the election of officers and their duties are constitutionally defined and controlled. Authority, undefined and unregulated deteriorates into an abuse of power. The constitution places limitations on the use of power by those holding offices of the synod. In other words, the precise purpose of constitutionally defined authority and limitations is to control the abuse of power, and thus to secure the rights of pastors, teachers, and congregation. The destruction of authority with its constitutional limitations destroys the protection of congregations, pastors, and teachers and places them at the mercy of those who are able to wield power. The chaos that is produced is more than simply a rebellious child sticking out his tongue and saying, "I won't!" In such a situation there is no possibility of preserving the purity of the doctrine of the Gospel.

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST THE CIRCUIT VISITOR WHEN WORKING WITH A CONGREGATION WHOSE PASTOR HAS BEEN DEPLOYED BY MILITARY.

Issues and Concerns:

1. Concern for the congregation whose pastor is now gone for an extended period of time.
 - a. Federal Law regarding National Guard and Reserve Component deployments requires that the position of the deployed be maintained until deployment is over and the soldier can return to his civilian position. A congregation is advised to abide by this statute in accord with the 4th Commandment. (Inquire regarding this law by contacting the LCMS Chaplaincy Department.)
 - b. Work in conjunction with LCMS Armed Forces Commission
 - c. A congregation would do well to express its respect for the pastor who is serving those who are defending our nations and our freedoms. (cf. letters, cards, and care packages for the chaplain and for the troops he serves.)
 - d. A circuit visitor working on behalf of the district president will work to provide pastoral coverage during the pastor's deployment. While the situation is not technically a vacancy, generally speaking it would be good to approach the situation much as one would a vacancy. A vacancy pastor, either fulltime or part-time, can be put in place to provide pastoral coverage while the pastor loci is deployed.
 - e. Though not advisable, the congregation could ask pastor/chaplain to resign his call to the congregation for good of the ministry.
2. Concern for the pastor's family whose husband/father is gone for an extended period of time.
 - a. The military does an excellent job of caring for the families of deployed troops if those families are near a military based. However, if there is distance involved, the congregation will be advised to set up a support group for the pastor's family.
 - b. The pastor's family often endures unexpected stress while their husband/father is deployed. The circuit visitor on behalf of the district president may well encourage the ladies groups of the congregation to give mutual aid to the pastor's wife. Congregational leaders may be encouraged to provide for the care of the pastor's property during his absence.
 - Housing arrangements during deployment, especially if the pastor is living in a parsonage.
 - When a pastor is interested in becoming a National Guard/Reserve chaplain, he should seek permission of the congregation he is serving.
3. Upon return the pastor/chaplain ought to be encouraged to contact the LCMS office regarding Project Barnabas and even perhaps to seek appropriate counseling from a psychologist to help him re-acclimate to civilian life.

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST THE CIRCUIT VISITOR WHEN WORKING WITH PASTORS THAT ARE ILL.

The protracted illness of a pastor presents an especially delicate dilemma, especially if the pastor's illness is long term and debilitating.

1. Questions to be answered by the congregation with the help of the district president and his representative, the circuit visitor:
 - a. When is the appropriate time to ask the pastor to consider going on disability?
 - b. Will the congregation pick up the 30% of the pastor's salary that is not covered by Concordia Disability Insurance?
 - c. What if the pastor resists going on disability, even though there is clear evidence that he can no longer function in the way that fulfills his obligations to his divine call and the needs of the congregation?
 - d. If the illness is permanently debilitating, at which point does the congregation move forward with the call process?
 - e. What if the pastor resists going on temporary or permanent disability?
 - f. How will the congregation care for and assist the pastor and his family?
 - g. It is important that the worker understand the importance of staying on top of the paperwork required to continue disability. Monitoring the situation. Someone in the congregation can assist?
2. It is suggested that the visitor, with the knowledge of the pastor, meet with the Elders of the congregation to discuss how they might aide in caring for their pastor and his family during a time of illness, and/or a time of disability.
3. The pastor who is struggling with health issues which are interfering with his ministry to God's people should be encouraged to discuss with his physician as well as with Concordia Health Plans the possibility of going on a temporary disability
4. Should a pastor be placed on a temporary disability, the circuit visitor is advised to assist the elders of the congregation in securing temporary pastoral care for the congregation.
 - a. Of special concern will be a list of pastoral duties and compensation similar to that of a vacancy situation.
 - b. The visitor is well advised to keep in close contact with the elders to make sure the congregation is cared for spiritually.

CHECKLIST FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Introduction

There are various occasions in the ministry of an LCMS minister of religion (ordained or commissioned) when a leave of absence from the ministry is appropriate. The following is a partial but not exhaustive list of potential circumstances that could call for a leave of absence to be granted by an LCMS calling entity:

1. during a congregational and/or district president investigation of conduct that could potentially lead to expulsion from the Synod as described in Article XIII of the LCMS Constitution and further detailed in Bylaw sections 2.14 and 2.17;
2. during the legal proceedings involving marital separation or divorce;
3. during a prolonged time of physical or mental illness;
4. during a time of providing care for a family member who is suffering from illness;
5. during a sabbatical granted by the calling body.

Definition of a Leave of Absence

A leave of absence is an employer's permission for an employee to be absent from work duties. A leave of absence may be paid or unpaid.

Checklist:

1. ___ Consult legal counsel when considering a leave of absence.
2. ___ Is the leave of absence being requested by the called ordained or commissioned minister of religion?
3. ___ The request for the leave should be in writing with requested start date and conclusion date.
4. ___ Is the leave of absence being required by the calling entity?
5. ___ Will the leave of absence be paid? Unpaid?
6. ___ If it is a paid leave of absence, is it partial or full pay? What percentage ___?
7. ___ Concordia Plan Services should be contacted before the calling entity grants the leave of absence. Failure to do so could interrupt Concordia Plans coverage. Depending on the circumstances the Board of Managers may authorize the leave of absence.
8. ___ Report to Concordia Plan Services the amount of compensation and benefits paid during the leave of absence if the minister of religion applies for disability. Concordia Plan Services will provide a form for such reporting.
9. ___ A written leave of absence agreement should be signed by both the calling entity and the minister of religion.

10.____ Check the calling entities constitution and bylaws, personnel manual, or other documents for instructions provided regarding the granting of a leave of absence to called ministers of religion and precisely follow the instructions provided.

Approved by the COP
September 2017

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST THE CIRCUIT VISITOR TO ADDRESS INTERNET USAGE

The Internet provides a constant, ever-changing source of information and entertainment. Email, blogs, social networks and message boards allow for both public and anonymous communication to anyone and about anything.

1. Determining how much is too much, which is appropriate or inappropriate, is more difficult and requires careful thought; and often, careful and thorough investigation. In general, spending time on-line only becomes a problem when it absorbs too much time, causes neglect of relationships, interferes with work and other important aspects in life(sleep, eating, cleanliness). Inappropriate use of the internet also includes obvious sinful behaviors such as cybersex and pornography; cyber-relationships which take the place of spousal and family relationships; gaming, gambling, blogging, emailing, auctioning, stock trading, instant messaging, texting, etc. which steal time from normal work hours, normal everyday tasks, family time, and become addictive.
2. Some signs and symptoms of internet/computer addiction are:
 - a. Losing track of time on-line, or while on the computer
 - b. Having trouble completing tasks at work/home due to being on-line, or on the computer
 - c. Isolation from family and friends due to computer use
 - d. Feeling guilty or defensive about internet use when questioned about it
 - e. Feeling a sense of euphoria while involved in internet activities or computer use.
3. The Internet is easily accessible, offers a sense of anonymity, often seeks users out, provides endless entertainment, and therefore exposes us to all kinds of temptations which often lead to deeper progression into obvious inappropriate use. The medical field is becoming more aware of these concerns and beginning to talk about internet addiction, virtual addiction, compulsive computer interactors, and related concerns. The psychological toll is described as “conflicted feelings, self-doubt, and shame.” To this we might add for Christians “guilt.” In any case the addictive person is dependent upon this activity, compulsively obsessed with it, and it becomes the substance, or object of behavior. An addict will seek this activity out (computer use) to the detriment of interpersonal relationships, to the expense of other work and duties. It is constantly on his/her mind, and the person does not seem to have control as to when, how long, or how much. The person addicted will often deny it is a problem, though others will see it as a problem and be concerned about it. You may actually find a number of online Internet Addiction Tests (IAT) for determining if this addiction exists.
4. Usually the circuit visitor will become aware of this by personal observation or by questions and concerns raised by officers/members of the congregations. When these involve cybersex or pornography *immediately* consult with his district president for thorough guidelines for investigation and procedures for addressing this problem.

5. When it involves some of the other inappropriate uses of the internet (time consumption, hindering work, interfering with relationships in the family, marriage or congregation members, etc) a personal conversation with the pastor/worker is needed. It may be appropriate to ask them to describe their computer usage and even to take one of the IATs found online for a more objective evaluation.
 - a. It would be good to review with this pastor/worker the call documents (especially the Supplement to the Diploma) covering the various duties of ministry which the congregation “solemnly obligated” the worker to carry out, and which the worker signed his/her name in accepting the call. It would also be appropriate to remind the worker that usually the computer they are using is property of the employer/calling entity, that all information created, sent, stored, accessed, received, visited belongs to the employer/calling entity; that the computer is to be used primarily for business of the congregation/calling entity; not for personal use, political causes, football pools, online gambling, stock trades, illegal activities, chat rooms, discussion groups, or exercising “ecclesiastical supervision” over other congregations, districts, and synod; that anything on a computer owned by the congregation/calling entity may rightfully and completely be monitored, recorded, investigated, and confiscated by the employer/calling entity.
 - b. In the spirit of Gal. 6:1-2 the circuit visitor will seek to come alongside the fellow worker, gently confront when necessary, provide absolution when there is confession, and restore the fellow worker to his/her high calling as servant of Christ Jesus, and a steward of the mysteries of God, with a proper balance in life of using the computer and doing God’s work.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CIRCUIT VISITOR'S ROLE AT THE DEATH OF A CALLED WORKER

Many district constitutions state that it is the responsibility of the district president "to concern himself with the spiritual, professional, and personal well-being of the workers in his district" (Nebraska District Constitution). Dr. Roland Wiederaenders remarks, "The circuit visitor is to demonstrate a sympathetic interest in and concern for the family life of the workers in his circuit." Thus, in times of sickness and death, the circuit visitor truly is the pastor to his circuit, on behalf of the district president. It is especially during these times of loss that the circuit visitor will minister to the workers and their families by visiting them and making regular pastoral calls.

When there is sickness the circuit visitor needs to minister to the patient and family by visiting and praying with them, but especially at the time of a death of a worker or a member of his family, the circuit visitor needs to visit immediately and do all he can to bring the comfort and consolation of God to people. Thus it will be his duty to:

1. Call on the family immediately.
2. Serve as support in whatever way possible, such as, if desired or needed:
 - a. Help tell other members of the immediate family.
 - b. Help notify distant family by making necessary phone calls.
 - c. Help with funeral home and burial arrangements.
 - d. Give guidance in the setting up of the service and its particulars:
 - Preacher and Officiant
 - Pall bearers
 - Sundry other items
 - e. Some circuits provide a pastoral honor guard during visitation hours at the funeral home and/or at the church previous to the service. One or more pastors stand by the casket out of brotherly respect. This involvement is greatly appreciated by the family, congregation, and visitors.
 - f. Submit "family approved" obituary to the district office to be forwarded to the Synod's communications department.
3. Inform the district president as soon as possible.
4. Call fellow workers for prayer support.
5. Represent the circuit and, if requested by the district president, represent the district.

6. Do follow-up counseling, perhaps visiting:
 - a week later
 - a month later
 - a year later
7. Be there for the family and circuit. Use all the listening skills. Comfort and support them in any way possible. The circuit visitor needs to demonstrate the same love and compassion as our Lord Jesus did during His ministry for people who were hurting. He needs to bring all the promises of God to bear, assuring them of the hope that is in Jesus Christ. And certainly he needs to pray with them and for them.
8. Serve the professional church workers and their families in every way possible.

This might include helping with information about the Concordia Plans as well as hospital and doctor bills.

It may also include directing the surviving spouse to financial planning resources within the district.

It might include working with the congregation concerning possible living arrangements for the surviving spouse and family so that undue pressure is not applied and a hasty decision is not made at a most difficult time.

Or it might include housekeeping arrangements or baby-sitting arrangements so that the worker is free to return to work and serve the congregation.

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

GUIDELINES REGARDING SALARY CONCERNS FOR PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS

Because this is a difficult yet vital subject for church workers, the circuit visitor must to help congregations be sensitive to the needs of the workers and help them see the need for a godly spirit as they take care of their servants who are sent by God to minister in their midst.

Each district of the Synod has its own salary and compensation guidelines. It is the circuit visitor's task to do everything to encourage congregations to follow these guidelines. They are set for their own region and district according to the economic factors of that area.

Holy Scripture sets forth basic principles for a congregation's care of its workers to enable them to do ministry in their midst. Jesus, advising His disciples about their service said, "Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). Paul writes, "For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain' and 'the worker deserves his wages'" (1 Timothy 5:18).

God's Holy Word also sets forth principles for the workers' commitment to servanthood. St. Paul, writing to his young brother in the faith about the ministry and the subject of love of money, says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Finally, it is always the Gospel of peace with God through forgiveness in Christ (Romans 5:1) that motivates both congregation and worker to deal faithfully and responsibly with and toward each other. Blessed is a congregation that has the Gospel predominating in the lives of workers and members.

It would seem that it is in their own best interest for congregations to provide for their pastors or teachers because then the workers are free to preach and teach as they are called and directed to do, not having to take time working with personal budgets and worrying about making ends meet in their own households.

To show concern for the church workers, the circuit visitor needs to check with the workers in his circuit regarding salaries and compensation. He must be sensitive to the income of the members of the congregations and then encourage congregations by:

1. Speaking to the leaders at opportune times to suggest better salaries and compensations for the workers, perhaps even suggesting an ad hoc salary review committee to conduct annual reviews. This might consist of chairman of board of elders, treasurer, and two other lay leaders appointed by the president meeting early in the budget-setting process.
2. Writing a letter annually to the president of the congregations and/or the board of elders encouraging them to review salary guidelines and to encourage keeping up with the suggestions. Share this with the church workers. Meet with the president or board, if necessary. Be able to

explain the guidelines to the board also. This might include working out a step by step plan to lessen the gap between actual salary and guidelines.

3. Taking the burden off the professional workers. The workers should not need to defend their salaries. Perhaps it could be suggested that some criteria be established to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the workers, a job description or certain tool or goals that could be used. Don't let it come to the point that the worker has to ask for a raise. A WORKER SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO ASK FOR A RAISE! The circuit visitor needs to be of help in this area.
4. Reminding the congregations that it's just good stewardship, for it reflects their attitude toward ministry in their midst if they pay their church workers adequately.
5. Suggesting at the time of calling a worker that guidelines be adopted that build in an ANNUAL salary review process. Reminding congregations that moving expenses will ever increase can also be helpful.
6. Reminding congregations that recent graduates often have huge debts.
7. Occasionally inviting a district official to a circuit gathering in order to explain the reasoning behind the salary guidelines and to encourage congregational support for the workers.

Church workers on the average are not paid adequate salaries. For their time and education they could be doing much better in an alternative job market. But their desire is to serve the Lord. They should not be penalized for their dedication. They should be properly cared for, for this is pleasing to the Lord.

Resource:

District Salary Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER EVALUATIONS

When full-time church workers hear the term “evaluation” at use in their world, they may become a bit anxious. They may be unable to think of evaluation taking place in any other context than that of a test. The Church, however, does not consider full-time church work to be a job. Rather, it is a vocation, a calling from God. Evaluations taking place under the grace of God are not the same as those performed by the world.

If district presidents desire to be involved in the evaluation of church workers, or to encourage the congregations of their Districts to participate in evaluations, a different attitude, as well as a new matrix, based on the Word of God, must be employed.

It would be well to remember that the Scripture contains many references to the accountability of those who serve the Church. God, in His mercy, preserves His Church by calling for careful evaluations of doctrine, practice and behavior of those who occupy the Office.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity, keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

These words are not spoken in a vacuum. They are given in the context of the Church. Evaluations are carried out not for the sake of condemnation, but in love, for the sake of the pure proclamation of the Gospel.

I. The nature of evaluations.

A. Evaluations done to tear the worker down. (Destructive) All workers are fearful that evaluations are done for the purpose of tearing them down, of making them feel and/or become less valuable to their calling congregations. Evaluations in the Church should never take place within this context.

B. Evaluations done to build the worker up. (Constructive) District presidents will take care to frame the process of evaluation in terms of a desire to build the workers up so that they may be better enabled to proclaim the Gospel. We have plenty of general encouragements in the Scripture to build one another up. “*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*”¹⁰ 1 Thess. 5:11. “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” Gal. 6:2. This attitude

¹⁰ All Scripture Quotes from- *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

should hold sway all the more for those who are in the Office of the Word or one of the auxiliary offices. The LCMS should be committed to fielding the most qualified, and well-trained proclaimers possible. Evaluations can be used as means of attaining this objective.

The sainted Dr. Clarence Spiegel, who served for many years as a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois offered his students some beneficial advice as to how to handle criticism positively. Dr. Spiegel's advice when criticized is to do the following:

1. Ask yourself, "Is it true?" If not, thank God.
2. Ask yourself, "Is it true?" If it is, thank God that it has been brought to your attention so that you can do something constructive about it.
3. Do not respond in kind.

II. The history of evaluation.

A. Scripture. There are a number of texts that suggest that some sort of evaluation of the person filling the Pastoral Office should take place. Chief among them are I Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9. Both of these texts say that the Pastor should be "above reproach," and then list a number of criteria by which that quality might be judged. In both cases it seems that the evaluator would be the supervisor, Timothy or Titus. Titus is specifically told to appoint other elders and it would appear that Paul is giving him a tool to make that evaluation. Some might try to argue that the evaluation was for entering into the office. What is true for entering the office is also true for remaining in the office.

Another interesting series of texts begins with I Corinthians 4:1 where Paul says that the congregation should think of him as a servant and steward. He implies an evaluation when he concludes that stewards must be found faithful. If someone should argue that only God should evaluate the steward it would be helpful to look at II Cor. 4:5 where Paul says that he is a servant of the congregation. Likewise, both Eph. 3:2 and Col. 1:25 say that the stewardship was given to Paul by God, for the congregation. Since Lutherans are not enthusiasts we do not believe that God evaluates Pastors and Teachers immediately. The common injunction to Christians to watch out for false doctrine makes it clear that the people of God are a means that God uses to evaluate the Church worker on Biblical grounds.

B. Visitation articles. In his Preface to the "Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony" Luther begins by noting, "Both the Old and the New Testaments give sufficient evidence of what a divinely wholesome thing it would be if pastors and Christian congregations might be visited by understanding and competent persons."¹¹ (AE, 40:269) Thus he defends the practice of ecclesiastical supervision and the evaluations used in the process. In fact, he seems to lay blame for the decline of the Church upon the lack of such supervision.

In brief this is what befell so worthy an office and nothing remained of it except the burdening and banning of people because of money, debts, and temporal goods and the making of a divine order out of the bellowing of antiphons and versicles in churches. No attention is paid to how one teaches, believes, love, how one lives a Christian life, how to care for the poor, how one comforts the weak, or punishes the unruly, and whatever else belongs to such an office. (AE, 40: 270)

In the instructions proper, Melancthon writes, regarding the Office of Superintendent:

This pastor (Pfarrherr) shall be superintendent of all the other priests who have their parish or benefice in the region, whether they live in monasteries or foundations of nobles or of others. He shall make sure that in these parishes there is correct Christian teaching, that the Word of God and the holy gospel are truly and purely proclaimed, and that the holy sacraments according to the institution of Christ are provided to the blessing of the people. The preachers are to exemplify

¹¹ All Visitation Quotes from- Luther, Martin: Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan (Hrsg.); Oswald, Hilton C. (Hrsg.); Lehmann, Helmut T. (Hrsg.): *Luther's Works, Vol. 40: Church and Ministry II*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, c1958 (Luther's Works 40).

a good life so that the people take no offense but better their own lives. They are not to teach or preach anything that is contrary to the Word of God or that contributes to rebellion against the government.

If one or more of the pastors or preachers is guilty of error in this or that respect, the superintendent shall call to himself those concerned and have them abstain from it, but also carefully instruct them wherein they are guilty and have erred either in commission or omission, either in doctrine or in life. (AE, 40:313)

Please note that both doctrine and life are to be evaluated. In addition, Melancthon is at pains to make sure that the Pastor is treated fairly.

Martin Chemnitz, in his role as superintendent also insisted in a strict order of visitation which included a form of theological questioning. His questions can be found in the book, Ministry, Word and Sacraments- an Enchiridion.

C. Constitution of LCMS. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod officially continues the tradition of supervision and evaluation through the office of District President as noted in Article XII of the Constitution.

The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end, they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit counselors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president.

III. The purpose of evaluations.

Building upon a rich history of Scripture and tradition, as well as the requirements of the Constitution of the Synod it is incumbent upon district presidents to participate in the evaluation of church workers under their care. In addition, it would be wise to involve congregations to participate in the evaluation process because the members of the congregations are the closest observers of the workers. As district presidents take up this task they would do well to keep three purposes in mind.

A. For the sake of the Gospel Evaluations of church workers should take place for the sake of the Gospel. There are two aspects to consider here. First, the evaluation should look to see that the Good News of Jesus Christ is being spoken, and spoken clearly by the church worker. This would involve both the proper understanding of the Word as well as the manner in which it is preached and taught. Secondly, the evaluation should include whether the Gospel is being clearly heard. This would include any kind of reproach apparent in the worker's life that would act as an obstacle to the hearing of the Gospel.

B. For the sake of the Calling Body Evaluations of church workers should take place for the sake of the calling body. The calling body has outlined the parameters of the call in the call documents. The evaluation should look at whether the proper assurance is being given to the calling body that the requirements of the call are being fulfilled. That being said, evaluations for the sake of the calling body would also include whether the calling body takes the proclamation of the Gospel in its midst seriously, and whether it takes the support of the worker seriously.

C. For the sake of the Worker Evaluations of church workers should take place for the sake of the worker. Because we are sinners we all need to be reminded of our God-given responsibilities. Church workers may be reminded through evaluations that they are accountable to God. The Scripture gives very clear instructions as to the doctrinal and practical responsibilities of church workers. Evaluations can be performed so that the use of God-given gifts is examined in a positive way. A positive examination will maximize accountability to God.

Since we reject enthusiasm we remember that God issues His call to service by the means of a calling body. An honest assessment of this means, would suggest that the Worker is also accountable to the calling body. District presidents are often handicapped because it is difficult to know, from a distance, precisely what is being taught or how the Worker is living. The involvement in the evaluation, through various available methods, of the calling body is a good thing. It is also good for the Worker to be reminded that he does not work in a vacuum. He works among, with, and for his people, his sheep, as an under shepherd of the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), Jesus Christ.

Those workers who take their accountability to God and calling body seriously, will desire to use every means to improve their work. Evaluations are for the sake of the worker because they are means to help them improve. No sinner has grounds to defend the status quo. There is always room for improvement. District presidents should do everything possible to approach evaluations with this goal in mind.

IV. The authority of evaluations.

There are, of course, elements of danger in any evaluation process. The twin heads of subjectivity can combine to destroy any good that may come of it. On the one hand the evaluator may rely heavily on his own emotional responses to the worker. On the other hand he may use an entirely subjective authority as the standard of evaluation. This document is intended to combat both dangers.

A. The Scripture The Scripture must be the foundation for the evaluation of any church worker. It is the sole authority for both doctrine and life. Any evaluation that ignores the Word of God can be of no value to the Church.

B. Confessions The Confessions of the Lutheran Church are a true exposition of the Scripture and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As such they will support the Scripture in any evaluation process. It is essential that Lutheran church workers teach Lutheran doctrine.

C. The call documents No individual church worker can go into all the world to proclaim the Gospel. That is one reason God invented local Church bodies. The parameters of the universal call to proclaim the Gospel are narrowed to an attainable, measurable, and accountable goal by the call document. If that is true, the call documents should be used for the purposes of evaluating church workers. The call documents signify the agreement between the worker and the calling body as to what work is to be done.

It may be valuable to note here that “Word and Sacraments” are the means God gives to His Church by which He conveys His grace. “Word and Sacraments” are not a job description. They are tools God graciously allows church workers to use to proclaim the Gospel. Call documents set forth the parameters in which Word and Sacraments are to be used.

D. The goals established by the worker and the calling body Some calling bodies become even more detailed with respect to where and how they expect their workers to accomplish their task. Sometimes annual goals are even set. A word of caution is in order here. The further away from Scripture the evaluator gets the more likely he is to treat the worker unfairly. Care should be taken to see that such goals do not contradict the Word of God.

V. Encouraging Professional Church Workers to participate in evaluations.

A. District Presidents teach their Workers If evaluation is ever to be an effective tool district presidents must find a way to teach that evaluations are not the enemy of the Gospel. The natural fear of evaluations, coupled with the distrust of the office of the district president is a huge obstacle. It can be

overcome with patient teaching, and by eschewing worldly ways. If district presidents would like to use evaluations effectively they would do well to heed Paul's words in II Corinthians 4:2, "*But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's Word, but by open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*"

B. District presidents assist calling bodies From time to time calling bodies may ask the district president for assistance in evaluation of workers. This is a good opportunity for the district president to teach the calling body the proper context of evaluations. In this way he will strive to protect the worker from exposure to worldly attitudes that deny the divinity of the call. At no time should the district president initiate evaluations with calling bodies without the consent of the worker.

VI. District presidents conducting evaluations.

At this point the LCMS has three formal opportunities for the district president to be involved in the evaluation of workers under his care.

A. Triennial visitations Either the president or his representative is to visit with the congregations and workers once every three years. Formally or informally what is to take place during these visitations is evaluation. The district president is to listen to preaching and teaching both for form and content. Private discussions will provide opportunity to teach in areas that require attention.

B. Pastor's Information Form A more formal, and permanent recording method of evaluation is provided through the use of the PIF. Presidents should acknowledge this as a form of evaluation and be aware of the dangers it entails as well as the opportunity for good. If it is to be used properly the worker should be made aware of areas where the district president thinks he should do some extra work. The best practice in regard to these evaluations is to ask the elders of the congregation for input.

VII. Other Tools of Evaluation.

The district president will encourage the practice of evaluation for the church workers under his care. There are various methods for this practice that may not involve the district president directly but may strive for the same goal of improvement of the worker. Congregations participating evaluations of church workers should be encouraged to share the results with the district president.

A. Evaluators.

1. *Congregation at large.* Some pastors and congregations may agree to survey the entire congregation regarding the work of the pastor. This practice has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, a broader base of information may be developed. On the negative side, the extremes of those who like or dislike the Pastor will be included in the sample. Allowing open comments from every member can prove more hurtful than beneficial.

2. *Elders.* Elders are an excellent source of information. They are supposed to work most closely with the Pastor. They should also know the congregation well. The danger with this group is that the female opinion will be missed.

3. *Selected leaders.* The advantage here is that women can be included in the survey group. The opinions can be sought from a wider group of respondents.

4. *Circuit Visitor.* The district president may also call his circuit visitor into service for the purpose of evaluations. The visitor will be able to observe how the worker functions on the broader scale among his peers. However, the real possibility of jealousy and rivalry must be considered when asking the visitor to help with evaluations.

B. Methods

1. *Surveys.* Most people are familiar with the range of scale rating type of survey. This provides the least amount of room for confusion. Furthermore, the results are easy to compute and compare from year to year.

a. *Personal Opinion.* Surveys that ask evaluators for personal opinion ratings are most common. (For example, How do you rate your Pastor’s preaching on a scale of 1-5?) While these results are valuable, they tend to be based on emotions and are thus volatile.

b. *Observed Behaviors.* Surveys that ask evaluators to report observed behaviors may produce more reliable results. (For example, How often does the Gospel predominate in the pastor’s sermons, on a scale of Always-Never?)

2. *Open comments.* Allowing evaluators to comment on open questions creates more room for understanding the complexity of a pastor’s service. (For example, How effective is your pastor’s preaching?) However, this practice also allows room for very hurtful words, and it is difficult to compute general results. This method ought to be used with caution.

C. Examples of evaluation tools The district president may choose various evaluation tools found online, such as 360, the tools found at LCMS.org, or the models found on the COP Portal. The district president will want to do some teaching regarding the entire process of evaluation before he offers such tools to congregations.

I.

PASTOR'S "FAITHFULNESS" REPORT

"NOW IT IS REQUIRED THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN A TRUST MUST PROVE FAITHFUL." (I COR. 4:2)

("Faithful" means: trustworthy, reliable, sure, true to God's Word, unfailing, conscientious--Greek & English)

Note: Give a rating from 1 (not being done) to 10 (excellent in all respects).

Add your comments as desired (suggestions, praises, concerns, needed improvements).

(This "report" form is based on the call document for pastors drawn from Scripture)

1) Our pastor has faithfully administered to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity (according to the Old and New Testaments, and as set forth in the Book of Concord, our Lutheran Confessions); and faithfully administered the holy sacraments (Baptism & Lord's Supper) in accordance with their divine institution.

(I Tim. 4:13, 15-16; 5:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:14-26, 3:10-4:5)

Rating _____

Comments:

2) Our pastor faithfully performs the functions of a pastor in an evangelical (Scriptural, Gospel centered) manner; he aids, counsels, and guides members of all ages and social conditions; he visits the sick and dying; admonishes the indifferent and erring.

(Titus 1:9; I Tim. 5:1-6, 20; 6:17-19; 2 Tim. 4:5)

Rating _____

Comments:

3) Our Pastor faithfully guards and promotes the spiritual welfare of the members of the congregation (instructs the catechumens, both children and adult, in the Word of God to prepare them for communicant membership), and guides the congregation in application of church discipline according to God's Word.

(2 Tim. 1:1-3, 10; 2:14-26; Titus 1:9, 2:1-3:11)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

4) Our Pastor faithfully promotes and guides the mission activity of the congregation (locally, District and Synod) and trains workers, as well as providing guidance in evangelism activities, recruitment of members for mission support and work. He assists the congregation in adoption of policies and procedures which will enhance its mission work.

(Mt. 28:20, Acts 1:8, 2 Tim. 4:5)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

5) Our Pastor serves the congregation as an example of Christian life and conduct; fosters "brotherly" unity of the members with each other, with sister congregations, and with the District and Synod. By the grace of God, he edifies the congregation and builds up the church in Christ, both locally and generally.

(1 Tim. 3:2-7, 4:12; Titus 1:9)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

CONGREGATIONAL "FAITHFULNESS" REPORT

1) As members, we have faithfully received our pastor as a servant of Jesus Christ, accorded him the honor, love, and obedience which the Word of God prescribes. We have aided him by word and deed; have supported him with our diligent, faithful assistance and prayers.

(1 Thess.5:12-13; Heb.13:7, 9, 17-19)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

2) As members, we have faithfully and regularly made use of the means of grace (Word and Sacraments) so God's enabling power might strengthen faith, equip us for every good work, that God might be honored, glorified; that others might benefit from our deeds of faith.

(Mk. 16:15; Lk. 10:16, 11:28; Jn. 8:47; Acts 1:8, 2:42; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:25; 1 Peter 2:9, 3:15)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

3) As members, we provide for our Pastor's proper maintenance according to our ability, and review his salary, benefits, housing, and allowances periodically, making appropriate adjustments. We provide support for continuing education as a minister of the Gospel.

(1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6-7; 1 Tim. 5:17-18)

*Rating*_____

Comments:

CONCLUDING COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS: (Pastor and/or congregation--name best thing pastor and congregation are faithfully carrying out; one thing which needs improvement the most)

Thank you for taking the time to “prayerfully” fill out this report! May this serve to honor the Lord!

II.

COMMISSIONED WORKER'S "FAITHFULNESS" REPORT

“NOW IT IS REQUIRED THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN A TRUST MUST PROVE FAITHFUL.” (I Cor. 4:2)

[“faithful” means: trustworthy, reliable, sure, true to God’s Word, unfailing, conscientious---Greek and English]

Note: Give a numerical rating from 1=completely insufficient, to 10=extremely proficient.

Add any comments i.e. suggestions, praises, concerns, needed improvements.

(This “report” form is based on the call document for commissioned workers and Holy Scriptures)

- 1) Our commissioned worker has faithfully taught the Word of God in its truth and purity, and as set forth in the Lutheran Confessions. **Rating**_____

Comments:

- 2) Our commissioned worker faithfully exemplifies the Christian faith and life.

Rating_____

Comments:

- 3) Our commissioned worker faithfully functions in an atmosphere of Christian love and order, and leads others toward Christian maturity in doctrine and life. **Rating**_____

Comments:

- 4) Our commissioned worker faithfully shows due concern for all phases of mission and ministry and seeks the advancement of the kingdom of God at home and abroad.

Rating_____

Comments:

- 5) Our commissioned worker faithfully exemplifies Christian discipleship and witness.

Rating_____

Comments:

- 6) Our commissioned worker faithfully lives in Christian unity with the members of the congregation and coworkers. **Rating**_____

Comments:

- 7) Our commissioned worker faithfully carries out responsibilities to the office to which called, and faithfully performs all the duties of the office to which called according to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. *Rating*_____

Comments:

- 8) Our commissioned worker faithfully serves to the glory of God, the building of His Church, the temporal and eternal welfare of people. *Rating*_____

Comments:

CONGREGATIONAL “FAITHFULNESS” REPORT

[Also based on the call documents and Holy Scripture]

- 1) As a congregation and members, we have faithfully received our commissioned worker as a called servant of Jesus Christ, shown love and honor befitting the office, aiding and supporting our worker with assistance and prayers. *Rating*_____

Comments:

- 2) We have faithfully reviewed our commissioned worker’s skills of ministry in light of our needs and mutually affirmed, or redefined and rearticulated the responsibilities of the worker from time to time. *Rating*_____

Comments:

- 3) We have faithfully made appropriate arrangements for continuing education fitting for a professional person in the ministry of the Gospel. *Rating*_____

Comments:

- 4) We have faithfully provided proper support (word, deed, finances, etc) according to our ability. *Rating*_____

Comments:

- 5) We have faithfully reviewed the salary, housing arrangements, and all allowances periodically to provide for our commissioned worker. *Rating*_____

Comments:

Note: This is intended to be a loving way to review responsibilities and commitments to one another by “speaking the truth in love;” which implies that this report will be discussed with each other in some fashion; that Situations, Behaviors, Impacts (SBI) will be provided to clarify; that courses of correction might be planned together; and that “building up one another” might take place through means of this “report,” evaluation, and mutual conversation; all for the sake of the Gospel and to the glory of God.

III.

Pastoral Ministry Evaluation

This evaluation form is intended to be used by a Board of Elders to evaluate a pastor’s ministry. The goal of the evaluation should be to: 1) provide affirmation to the pastor in his ministry, and 2) discuss ways in which he might improve his ministry. Items which are of local concern can be added if they are not mentioned in the evaluation.

(Check the appropriate answer)

THE PASTOR AS PREACHER AND WORSHIP LEADER

I. PREACHING

Sermons are clear and understandable	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Gospel is explicit in sermons	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Sermons apply God’s Word to life of people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Sermons logically structured to present goal	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Goal clearly stated	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Use of illustrations	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Style of delivery	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Length of sermons _____			
Amount of time spent in sermon preparation _____			

II. LEADING THE WORSHIP

Personal preparation for the service (reading lessons in advance, etc.)	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Use of voice	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Familiar with and use of rubrics	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Intercessory prayers	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Training congregation in worship	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Advance planning of worship	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Selection of hymns at least several months in advance	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Notifying of organists regarding changes	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

PASTORAL CARE

I. MINISTRY TO THE SICK AND DYING

Regular visits to those who are ill	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Prayers for sick included in services	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Regular schedule of private communion and devotions for those who cannot attend because of illness or infirmity	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
More than one visit when hospital stay is prolonged	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Concern for families of the sick	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Visits to families after funerals	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

II. PASTORAL VISITATION

Plan a definite program of visitation – reports to elders	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Adequate number of calls each month	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Calls have purpose	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Knows how to listen to people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Demonstrates willingness to learn to know people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Knows members of congregation, names of children, etc.	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Sensitive to people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Perceptive to people's needs	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Calling when there are family crises	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

III. BAPTISMAL MINISTRY

Meet with parents and sponsors to teach baptismal blessings and responsibility	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Pastoral visits after baptisms – help parents in teaching child to pray etc.	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

IV. NEW MEMBERS

Call on visitors within a week	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Adequate records of prospects for transfer, pastor's class etc.	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Maintain adequate contact with prospective families	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Explain the congregation's ministry adequately to persons seeking membership	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

Visitation following reception into membership to encourage family prayer, etc.	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Assist new members with assimilation	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

ADMINISTRATION

I. OFFICE PROCEDURE AND USE OF TIME

Punctual	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Present enough in advance to prepare for meetings and services	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Sets right priorities in use of time	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Plans months, weekly, daily work in order to use time most effectively	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Observes office hours – notifies someone how to get in touch when absent	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Observes time schedules, begin on time, close on time	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Helps plan program of congregation, administers program	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is alert to matters that need attention of property board	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Knows who has what responsibility, helps people fulfill their responsibility	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Gives sufficient attention to detail, does not get caught up in minute technicalities	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Cooperates in working with leadership of congregation	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Maintains records	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Makes reports	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

II. CHURCH FINANCES

Understands budget	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Seeks authorization for purchase of material	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Concerned about economy	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

III. LEADERSHIP

Prepares creative suggestions for boards and committee meetings	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Seeks to persuade and convince rather than push his ideas	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Works with people to secure their cooperation	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

Explains adequately for people to understand	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Encourages and supports members of boards and committees	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is able to identify needs and set goals	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Helps to plan and enables people to follow through on plans	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is patient with people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Offers constructive criticism in a helpful and kindly way	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Helps people to look ahead rather than operate from day to day	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Enables boards and committees to see their part in the kingdom tasks of congregation	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Gives credit when due – does not flatter	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

PERSONAL LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

I. PERSONAL LIFE

Manages own life to set example for others	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Practices good financial stewardship	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Does not accumulate excessive debts	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Has a genuine concern for people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is willing to serve with personal recognition	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Accepts responsibility for personal acts	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Willing to admit mistakes	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Has personal integrity, does not pretend	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is understanding and sympathetic	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is concerned about his work as pastor	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Willing to spend himself for the sake of his people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is courteous and polite	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is self-disciplined, controls emotions and impulses	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is willing to learn	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is willing to put up with personal inconvenience	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is honest and frank in speaking to people	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Avoids flattery and needless criticism of others	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Sets an example of willingness to serve rather than to be served	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is serious minded, but capable of humor	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Doesn't take himself too seriously, but takes his office seriously	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is a generous person	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

Does not have an excessive concern for own salary	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is able to be firm when needed, but able to distinguish between what is necessary and what is only personal opinion and personal concern	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is careful about personal appearance	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

II. FAMILY

Is kind and gentle as a husband	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Gives honor to his wife	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Takes time for his family	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Demonstrates respect for his children	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Trains and forms his children with the word of God	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Leads his family in prayer and devotion and trains them	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Is helpful to his wife in caring for the children	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Knows how to lead his children to confess and absolves and forgives them	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
[poor]			
Is not harsh and domineering	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

III. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Indicates that he continues to grow in his knowledge of Christian teaching	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Thinks things through until he understands	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Devotes time to serious reading and study	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Growing in ability to explain clearly in order to persuade	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Actively participates in conferences	[good]	[fair]	[poor]
Involved in continuing education	[good]	[fair]	[poor]

IV.
Rostered Worker Evaluation Form

Position of Worker: _____

Date of Evaluation Meeting: _____

Period of ministry evaluated: _____

Evaluator(s): _____

Evaluation Terms: The following terms will be used in evaluating the worker in each area. If there are significant concerns or comments, these should be itemized for each category.

Exceptional	A level of performance far exceeding expectations.
Commendable	Above average performance
Proficient	Average or acceptable performance
Developing	Needs to work in this area. Inconsistent.
Marginal	Action Plan required. Follow up at next review. Could lead to dismissal.
Unacceptable	Must improve. Action plan required. Documented follow up on progress within 30-60 or 90 days. Could lead to dismissal.

Ministry Qualities

Philosophy compatible to church's mission -

Awareness of the community needs (outside of the church) -

Expression of faith with un-churched -

Expression of faith with members -

Expression of faith with other staff -

Other -

Leadership

Intentionally recruits leaders in their areas -

Intentionally trains leaders in missional area -

Seeks leadership training and accountability in personal ministry -

Other -

Responsibility and Follow through

Sets and accomplishes written goals in their ministry -

Organizational ability -

Completes tasks on time (i.e. turning in forms, meeting publication deadlines, etc.) -

Attention to financial procedures and policies (i.e. turning receipts in on time, monitoring appropriate accounts, tracking purchase orders) -

Other -

Professionalism

Punctuality and attendance -

Participation in staff meetings is helpful to missional goals of the church -

Dress and appearance -

Demonstrate willingness for professional growth (classes, workshops, read professional journals, participation in professional organizations) -

Publicly supports the policies and decisions of the church -

Other -

Spiritual Growth

Personal study time -

Prayer Habits -

Other -

Time management skills

Keeps accurate calendar -

Monitors weekly schedule regularly to fit goals of position -

Can monitor and identify planning, preparation V. actual program activity time in weekly calendar -

Schedules appropriate balance of professional V. personal and family time -

Schedule reflects minimal conflicts/double booking -

Demonstrates ability to balance multiple priorities -

Other -

Communication skills

Intentionally incorporates missional vocabulary and thinking -

With elected leaders -

With non-elected lay leaders -

Written -

Oral -

Other -

Staff Relations

Positive and encouraging -

Conflict Resolution -

Support of others outside of your specific area of ministry -

Other -

Overview

Strengths

Areas needing improvement

Action plan for improvement areas

Resources Needed

Final Summary Classification

Considering all of the areas, what word best describes the faithfulness and effectiveness of this worker? Circle the *one* word that best summarizes the categories above.

- Exceptional** A level of performance far exceeding expectations. Should be considered for additional salary stipend beyond cost of living.
- Commendable** Above average performance. Should be considered for additional salary stipend beyond cost of living.
- Proficient** Average or acceptable performance. Should be considered for cost of living increase.
- Developing** Needs to work in this area. Inconsistent. Should be considered for cost of living increase.
- Marginal** Action Plan required. Follow up at next annual review or sooner if needed. Could lead to dismissal. A freeze to cost of living should be considered.
- Unacceptable-** Must improve. Action plan required. Documented follow up on progress within 90 days. Could lead to dismissal. Pay reduction should be considered.

Final Comments

Worker's signature _____

Evaluator signature _____

Date _____

A copy of this form shall be placed in the worker's file. The staff member shall be provided a copy upon request

Worker Improvement Follow Up Report

Worker _____

Evaluator _____

Date of first evaluation/action plan _____

Date(s) of subsequent evaluations or follow ups _____

Improvement Area Action Plan Progress Amended Action Resources Needed

Worker's signature _____

Evaluator's signature _____

Date _____

A copy of this form shall be placed in the worker/ministers file. The staff member shall be provided a copy upon request

V.

Guide for Evaluating Pastoral Performance

Please use the following rating scale in completing this evaluation:

[1] = Weak [2] = Fair [3] = Good [4] = Very good [5] = Outstanding

A. Leadership in Congregational Functions

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Witness – Concerned with and involved in outreach and trains others to reach out with the Gospel | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Service – Concerned for and involved in helping others and trains others for this ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Nurture – Committed to and interested in equipping people so that education is important in the congregation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Worship – Helps make the means of grace real and joyful for worshipers as they participate in worship. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Fellowship – Values and encourages people to express their love in unity with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Stewardship – Provides leadership and example to express God’s ownership and management. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

B. Practical Skills in Ministry Activities

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Preaching (content) – is well prepared and preaches Bible based sermons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Preaching (Delivery) – delivery is interesting, winsome and energizing. Does not read sermons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Teaching (Ability) – leads people to grow in Word and knows learners and uses appropriate methods to teach them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Visitations – visits homes and work places of members and is approachable and friendly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. Counseling – people seek him for advice and help. He understands when to help and when to refer.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Communication – understands verbal and non-verbal communication and is a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Work with Youth – works well with young people.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Work with Elderly – works well with other adults.	1	2	3	4	5

[1] = Weak [2] = Fair [3] = Good [4] = Very good [5] = Outstanding

C. Other Areas of Leadership

1. Tact – sensitive and caring and speaks the truth in love at the right time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Patience – is kind to even those who are angry with him, takes the long view. Knows when to be silent.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Cooperation – positive and cheerful in relationships even when asked to do extra duties, dependable.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Initiative – ambitious, sees opportunities for service and does it without dragging his feet.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Administration – keeps accurate records, uses time well, well prepared, keeps leaders informed.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Leadership – respects lay people, listens, is a shepherd leader, guiding not driving, visionary.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Personal Grooming – dresses appropriate to the occasion clothes clean, haircut and combed, shoes polished.	1	2	3	4	5

VI.
SHARED MINISTRY EVALUATION

A. Purpose:

The purpose of the following evaluation forms are:

1. To analyze the pastor's and the congregation's expectations of ministry within the parish.
2. To reach a consensus on priorities for the parish's ministry, so that both the pastor and the congregation understand and agree what their shared ministries should be.
3. To acknowledge what the pastor is actually doing and where he excels. Obviously, weakness will also emerge.
4. To be more effective in our joint kingdom work with pastor and people working together.

B. General Directions

1. Read carefully the specific directions for each form which are found at the beginning of the form.
2. The Pastors should fill out one copy of each form.
3. The form, "The Pastor's Ministry," should be completed by the Board of Elders of the congregation.
4. The form, "Ministries of the Congregation," should be completed by the Church council or other key leaders of the congregation.
5. Once the pastor, the Elders, and the Church Council or other key leaders have completed the forms, the results should then be compared and discussed with the pastor.
6. Modify the forms as necessary to meet your needs.

THE PASTOR'S MINISTRY

A pastor does many things. But what are the most important things a pastor should be doing and how effective is he in his work? Give your opinion by writing appropriate numbers in the spaces.

Importance

Write a number (1 to 7) in the space indicating how important you think it is that your pastor performs these activities.

- 7 Most important
- 6 Very important
- 5 Quite important
- 4 Average importance
- 3 Somewhat important
- 2 Not very important
- 1 Not important

Effectiveness

Write a number below (0 to 7) which indicates how well your pastor is performing these activities.

- 7 Outstanding
- 6 Very effective
- 5 Above average
- 4 Average
- 3 Somewhat effective
- 2 Not very effective
- 1 Ineffective
- 0 Does not apply

Importance

Activities

Effectiveness

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | 1. Ministers to the sick, dying, and bereaved. | _____ |
| _____ | 2. Preaches sermons. | _____ |
| _____ | 3. Leads public worship. | _____ |
| _____ | 4. Administers Baptism and Communion, conducts weddings and sacred rites. | _____ |
| _____ | 5. Counsels with people facing major decisions of life such as marriage and vocation. | _____ |
| _____ | 6. Participates in community projects and organizations. | _____ |
| _____ | 7. Mixes socially to develop contacts for evangelism. | _____ |
| _____ | 8. Cooperates with social, legal, medical, and educational workers. | _____ |
| _____ | 9. Assists victims of social neglect or injustice. | _____ |
| _____ | 10. Participates in denominational activities. | _____ |
| _____ | 11. Fosters fellowship at church gatherings. | _____ |
| _____ | 12. Supplies ideas for new activities and projects. | _____ |
| _____ | 13. Recruits, trains, and assists lay leaders and teachers. | _____ |

Importance

- 7 Most important
- 6 Very important
- 5 Quite important
- 4 Average importance
- 3 Somewhat important
- 2 Not very important
- 1 Not important

Effectiveness

- 5 Outstanding
- 6 Very effective
- 5 Above average
- 2 Average
- 3 Somewhat effective
- 2 Not very effective
- 1 Ineffective
- 0 Does not apply

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | 14. Works with congregational boards and committees. | _____ |
| _____ | 15. Aids in mapping out objectives and plans the overall church strategy and program. | _____ |
| _____ | 16. Promotes and creates enthusiasm for church activities. | _____ |
| _____ | 17. Maintains harmony, handles conflict, averts or resolves problems. | _____ |

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | 18. Gives leadership in the area of biblical stewardship including financial stewardship. | _____ |
| _____ | 19. Manages the church office including records, correspondence, and information center. | _____ |
| _____ | 20. Visits new residents and recruits new members. | _____ |
| _____ | 21. Teaches and works directly with young people. | _____ |
| _____ | 22. Teaches and works directly with children. | _____ |
| _____ | 23. Visits regularly in the homes of the congregation. | _____ |
| _____ | 24. Talks with individuals about their spiritual development. | _____ |
| _____ | 25. Teaches and works directly with adults. | _____ |
| _____ | 26. Maintains a disciplined life of prayer and personal devotion. | _____ |
| _____ | 27. Follows a definite schedule of reading and study. | _____ |
| _____ | 28. Cultivates home and personal life. | _____ |
| _____ | 29. Counsels with people about their moral and personal problems. | _____ |

After you have rated each item according to importance, go through the list again indicating an effectiveness rating for each activity.

MINISTRIES OF THE CONGREGATION

Below is a list of thirty activities or ministries which congregations do or could be doing. Please give your opinions regarding how important each is, how well each is being done, and whose responsibility the activity is. Do the following steps:

First – Read through the entire list. Then select ten statements which you feel are most important for your congregation to be doing. Write the letter [M] in the left column headed Importance. Next select ten which you feel are least important and write an [L] in the Importance column. Leave the remaining ten spaces blank.

Second – Go over the list again and in the second column headed Effectiveness rate each statement regarding how effectively you feel your congregation is doing this ministry. Use the following values. Be sure to rate all thirty items.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| [7] Exceptionally well | [1] Very poorly |
| [6] Very good | |
| [5] Good | |
| [4] Fairly well | |
| [3] Not very well | |
| [2] Poorly | |

Third – Whose responsibility is each activity? Indicate your opinion by writing the appropriate number (1 to 7) in the Responsibility column.

- Primarily the responsibility of the pastor.
- Mostly the responsibility of the pastor.
- Tends to be more the responsibility of the pastor.
- Responsibility equally shared by pastor and congregation.
- Tends to be more the responsibility of the congregation.
- Mostly the responsibility of the congregation.

<u>Importance / Effectiveness</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
<u>WORSHIP</u>		
_____	_____	_____
	1. Help persons develop and maintain their personal devotional life.	
_____	_____	_____
	2. Provides appropriate forms of worship and help persons understand and appreciate the Lutheran heritage and practice of corporate worship.	
_____	_____	_____
	3. Make the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism integral parts of worship and help members participate meaningfully in them.	
_____	_____	_____
	4. Help youth identify and contribute to the worship life and work of the congregation.	
_____	_____	_____
	5. Help members of the congregation relate the experience of worship to their total Christian life.	

<u>Importance / Effectiveness</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
<u>LEARNING</u>		
_____	_____	_____
	6. Provide learning experiences (Bible study, adult forum, etc.) for adults as a way to help them become responsible members in the total life of the congregation.	
_____	_____	_____
	7. Provide leaning experiences for children through parishwide programs and children’s participation in congregational worship and life.	
_____	_____	_____
	8. Provide Bible study, confirmation and other learning experiences for youth.	
_____	_____	_____
	9. Help people deal with and learn from moral and personal problems they face.	
_____	_____	_____
	10. Find ways of maintaining and increasing enrollment and attendance in the congregation’s educational programs.	

WITNESS

- _____ _____ 11. Set up ongoing program of personal contact with less active and _____
inactive members so that they become more involved in the life and
work of the congregation.
- _____ _____ 12. Identify and visit the unchurched and recruit new members, integrating _____
them into the life and work of the congregation.
- _____ _____ 13. Develop an ongoing year-round program of evangelism. _____
- _____ _____ 14. Help members witness in daily life through the way they relate their _____
belief and actions.
- _____ _____ 15. Plan ways of helping visitors attending worship services feel welcome. _____
- _____ _____ 16. Help members of the congregation understand the meaning and _____
purpose of witnessing.

SERVICE

- _____ _____ 17. Coordinate the service and social action programs of the congregation _____
with that of community organizations and agencies.
- _____ _____ 18. Encourage and help members take an active part in community projects _____
and organizations.
- _____ _____ 19. Develop projects that support minority groups as they work to attain _____
justice and equal opportunities.
- _____ _____ 20. Help members serve others through involvement in the church's _____
service projects in the congregation, synod and church-at-large.
- _____ _____ 21. Provide counseling services for those facing major decisions of life _____
and those with special needs (single parents, handicapped, aging, etc.)
- _____ _____ 22. Set up ongoing programs to provide personal contact, fellowship, and _____
service for the sick, dying and bereaved.

Importance / Effectiveness

Activities

Responsibility

SUPPORT

- _____ _____ 23. Help members develop spiritually through the use and stewardship of _____
time, abilities, and resources.
- _____ _____ 24. Stimulate member's interest and support in goal setting and planning _____
in the congregation.
- _____ _____ 25. Help members deal more creatively with conflicts in the congregation. _____

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|---|-------|
| _____ | _____ | 26. Provide background and idea information for new activities and projects in the congregation. | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | 27. Develop an overall leadership program for the congregation which includes assessment of needs, recruiting, training, and supervision of leaders and teachers of various groups. | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | 28. Support the council and congregational committees with necessary guidance, information, and resources for doing their work. | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | 29. Develop interesting and well-planned activities which will encourage members to form closer relationships with one another. | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | 30. Administer in an efficient manner the financial and business affairs of the congregation. | _____ |

Go back over the list until you have completed all three steps and filled in each of the three columns.

CIRCUIT VISITOR'S ROLE IN ASSISTING A CONGREGATION INTERESTED IN AN INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR

1. When a congregation becomes vacant, one of the options that the congregation may wish to consider, and which the district president with the aid of the circuit visitor may wish to recommend is that of "Intentional Interim Pastor." This is especially true if the congregation is experiencing significant conflict. Additional issues that would give rise to consideration of an "Intentional Interim Pastor" include but are not necessarily limited to the following:
 - a. Following sexual misconduct by the former pastor, or another staff member
 - b. Following a long term pastorate
 - c. Following financial irregularities by the former pastor, or staff member
 - d. Following boundary violations by the former pastor; e.g. sexual, gambling, embezzlement, overbearing personality, etc.
 - e. Retirement of a senior pastor in a large congregation with a multiple staff
 - f. Alignment issues between church and school which often manifest themselves in conflicted relationships between the pastoral and teaching staff or a silo mentality where each exists independently of the other.
2. The district president should be notified when a congregation is considering an "Intentional Interim Pastor." The district president has a vested interest in making sure that the congregations under his supervision are healthy,, functional, and mission focused.
3. Purpose of an Intentional Interim Pastor: An Intentional Interim Pastor will guide the congregation through the following five developmental tasks:
 - a. Coming to terms with the congregation's history
 - b. Discovering a new congregational identity
 - c. Managing congregational leadership shifts
 - d. Renewing denominational linkage with the district and with the LCMS
 - e. Commitment to a new future
4. There are seven other developmental tasks that a congregation also can work on during the in-between times:
 - a. The necessity to rebuild the congregational infrastructure
 - b. Evaluation of and removal of staff members if necessary
 - c. Financial/Stewardship issues
 - d. Conflicts over issues or congregational agenda
 - e. Interpersonal or intergroup conflicts
 - f. Getting closure with the previous pastor
 - g. Communication improvement
5. The Intentional Interim Pastor works closely with the district president, the circuit visitor and the congregation to call a new pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor may work with the Call Committee. The Intentional Interim Pastor is usually not eligible for the Call. The Intentional Interim Pastor does not name the next pastor. The Intentional Interim Pastor does not attend Call Voters Meeting. The normal "non-tenured call" for an Intentional Interim is 18 months. Much like a vacancy pastor an Intentional Interim Pastor is not eligible for call consideration to the congregation where he has served as an Interim. Other consideration:
 - a. The former pastor should consider not remaining a member of the congregation.
 - b. The circuit visitor and the district president have a responsibility to walk with and support the Intentional Interim Pastor in every appropriate way.

OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC MINISTRY PASTOR PROGRAM

Although the Specific Ministry Program (SMP) was initiated by the LCMS in Convention (5-01b, 63rd Convention) the SMP programs at Concordia Fort Wayne and St. Louis were jointly presented to the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for accreditation as both a route to ordination (16 courses) and a route to an M.Div. degree (16 courses plus the balance of his seminary studies), students who elect to go the M.Div. route must elect to do so at the outset of their program.

As a circuit visitor, it is helpful to understand the admissions process and sequence, the course of studies and their expectations, the covenant agreement and finally ecclesiastical supervision.

1. Admissions Process and Sequence

a. Both seminaries have websites which advocate and describe their SMP programs in detail:

- Concordia Seminary in St. Louis
<http://www.csl.edu/admissions/academics/altrt/specific-ministry-pastor-smp-pastor/>
- Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Fort Wayne
<http://www.ctsfw.edu/Page.aspx?pid=538>

b. One central feature about the way the SMP process works is to recognize that it is process driven by the congregation! When selecting a pastor who has been raised up by a congregation, the details about the SMP program are raised on the congregational level as the student prepares to take the 7-8 courses outlined by their district as part of the pre-SMP learning. In the South Wisconsin District, for example, students explore with congregation and supervisory pastor the admissions criteria while taking the following classes:

1. Ecclesiastical Matters
2. Christian Doctrine
3. New Testament
4. Old Testament
5. 4 Page Sermon
6. Christian Care and Counsel
7. Lutheran Liturgy
8. The Gospel of Luke

For South Wisconsin, by example, these courses allow a congregation, the district and the student to examine the initial suitability of the man for the pastoral office.

c. Both seminaries have helpful checklists for entrance to the seminary (seminary application) and for calling a vicar. Once a student has the full support of his congregation, through the voter's assembly, their application is sent to the district office. At that time the district interview committee meets the applicant and the district president writes his final letter of recommendation for seminary entrance. Upon acceptance by the seminary each student must also fill out the vicarage application that is brought before the Council of Presidents (COP). These forms are in a repository on the www.holybytes.com Website or with your district president's office. Particularly helpful is the covenant agreement between the district, the congregation, the supervising pastor, the seminary and the student! The responsibility of each supportive link is clearly signed by all!

2. Course of Studies and Expectation

The LCMS is not the only denomination to be faced with SMP routes to ordination. Most seminaries across North America now have such routes to the ministry. Most graduate programs (all disciplines) in North America have gone through these transformations. For example, doctors

at the University of Madison now start clinic work in their first year of medicine. Some aspects of seminary education work ideally within the parish setting. For circuit visitors and all pastors it is important to recognize three things:

- a. The preferred route to seminary education is through our residential seminaries. Without the seminary there is no SMP program at all.
- b. Students who enter vicarage programs are not trained at first to handle the rigors of the vicar's position and grow into the role through good mentors and education support systems. No pastor is ever trained to be a pastor in front of a computer screen and each vicar needs the warm encouragement to meet with the members of his congregation face to face and members of the ministerium at district conferences and winkels.
- c. Work with Specific Ministries is often not as clean cut as the traditional routes into the ministry. Language and culture, work and vocation of worker/priests, family life and rootedness within the community, often lead district and circuit officials to be concerned about a candidate. Improvements are being proposed regularly to make sure that the SMP continues to be vital part of congregational support. SMP vicars and pastors are always learning to be stewards of Word and Sacrament.

3. Covenant Agreement

In the covenant agreement and in the SMP program generally, it is a certain fact that SMP vicars and pastors are always under the supervision of a general ministry pastor. District presidents will not recommend SMP vicars where the supervision is not equal to the task of forming a solid new pastor.

Supervision becomes critical in the event that the supervising pastor leaves the congregation for another call, or becomes ill or retires. SMP students, by their covenant agreement, must always be under another pastor and such a student promises to be in life-long learning. Only when an SMP pastor finishes his entire M.Div. will this supervision end. SMP pastors may only accept calls to congregations with ministries specific and equal to their own. It is particularly helpful if their specific ministries are articulated at the beginning of the ministry in a one-page format.

Examples include: Family Ministry, Evangelism and Outreach Ministry, Multi-Site Ministry, Education Ministries, A Ministry to a Non-calling Congregation, Mission and Ethnic Ministries, and the like. Congregations and circuit visitors are encouraged to study our Lutheran biblical teachings on the "call." At no times is the call process to consider succession planning, nor may the SMP candidate fill the position of the senior or supervising pastor, if the office is vacant. In vacancies the supervision may be assigned by the district president through the circuit visitor.

4. Vicarage Supervision

The SMP program, as it is describe by the seminaries in the covenant agreement, makes the district in which the vicar and pastor is placed, much more responsible and accountable for supervision. Conversations about certification by the seminary may now also include the regular vicar reports and supervisory reports handled by the district. Indeed, it is the obligation of the district president to remove an SMP vicar and/or pastor from his duties when the covenant agreement candidate is not followed or honored. The covenant agreement, therefore, supports work in God's kingdom, but the covenant agreement also calls district presidents to exercise supervision, correction and/ or removal from programs where a candidate lacks suitability for the office.

GUIDELINES REGARDING LAY MINISTRY/LICENSED LAY DEACON IN THE LCMS

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been working on a refinement of its lay ministry practices for many years. Definitive action in an attempt to describe acceptable lay-led ministry was developed at the Wichita convention [Resolution 3-05A] of the LCMS in 1989.

It seemed to the Synod to be a good thing to regularize the practice of training and certifying lay-led Word and Sacrament ministry through the establishment of Licensed Lay Deacons but the confessional concern that such would be performed by ordained men led to the action of establishing a Task Force and then the passing of Resolution 13-02A at the 2019 Synodical Convention

To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry *RESOLUTION 13-02A*

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that our Lord gave the keys of the kingdom to His whole church, the royal priesthood of believers (Matt. 16:15–19; Matt. 18:18–20; 1 Peter 2:9; Augsburg Confession [AC] Article XXVIII, paragraph 10; Smalcald Articles [SA], Section III, paragraph 7; Treatise [Tr] paragraph 11; see also Walther’s *Church and Ministry/Office*); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and Confessions also teach that Christ established an office that is distinct from the priesthood of believers (the Office of the Public Ministry) for teaching and nurturing His royal priests by means of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (1 Cor. 12:29; Rom. 10:15; James 3:1; AC XIV; see also Walther’s *Church and Ministry/Office*); and

WHEREAS, The royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry are to have a complementary and not a competitive or conflicted relationship; and

WHEREAS, In its history, the Lutheran Church has always maintained the divine requirement (*de jure divino*) of the Office of the Public Ministry, while it has in many and various ways prepared men for the Office of the Public Ministry, since the manner of preparation for the office is by human arrangement (*de jure humano*); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church has always ensured, on the basis of Scripture: (1) that men who are to serve in the Office of Public Ministry are examined as to their doctrine and life; (2) that the congregations they serve willingly call them into service; and (3) that the wider church (other churches in fellowship with the congregation) also affirms them as fellow ministers of the Word and Sacraments (see Acts 1:15–26; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5; see also Tr 24, 26, 67–70); and

WHEREAS, The rite of ordination, although not a divine institution (*Church and Ministry, Ministry Thesis VI*), is the apostolic custom by which Lutherans have designated and publicly acknowledged a man as a minister of Word and Sacrament, that is, as one who is in the Office of the Public Ministry and recognized by the wider fellowship as a fellow minister (Ap XIII 11–13); and

WHEREAS, In faithfulness to the Word of God and to its confession requiring a regular call for those who preach and administer the sacraments publicly in the church (AC XIV; Ap XIV), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has followed the practice of identifying those who

are eligible to be called into the Office of the Public Ministry by the certification of one of the seminary faculties or the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry; and

WHEREAS, In a human institution such as the LCMS, such human arrangements are necessary in order to foster harmony and prevent needless confusion and division; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has long recognized that challenging circumstances may make it difficult or impossible to provide a pastor for congregations and ministries, for example: (1) financial challenges (numerous congregations and missions are unable to support a pastor financially); (2) geographical challenges (small, isolated congregations in remote areas often face financial challenges and may have no pastors in geographic proximity to them); and (3) demographic challenges (urban, minority, non-English-speaking, and ethnically diverse congregations and missions may find no rostered candidates available to fill their pastoral needs); and

WHEREAS, The practice of licensing lay deacons for temporary service in certain difficult circumstances, like the aforementioned examples, was approved by the LCMS in 1989 Res. 3-05B as a means to address the need for regular preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments by utilizing trained and supervised laymen to serve “temporarily” in Word and Sacrament ministry when “no pastor [is] available” and “in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies” (1989 Res. 3-05B, Nomenclature 4, Guidelines 1 b); and

WHEREAS, There has been significant dissension in the LCMS over the Synod-approved practice of licensing laymen to preach and administer the Sacraments while under the supervision of an ordained pastor, but the Synod needs to move forward together with deep concern for fidelity to the word of Christ as we confess it together and for faithfulness in the mission that Christ has given to His Church; and

WHEREAS, 1989 Res. 3-05B repeatedly references temporary service for deacons when no pastor is available in emergencies and exceptional circumstances, but in some cases deacons have served for years regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, The presence of continuing dissension about licensed lay deacons is an aspect of further disagreement about elements of doctrine and practice, e.g., the understanding of the pastoral office, the relationship between the Office of the Public Ministry and the royal priesthood, the understanding of call and ordination, and faithful and effective ways to share the Gospel and plant churches in our post-Christian world; and

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program was established by the LCMS convention (2007 Res. 5-01B) in response to the need for effective theological education and practical training to prepare pastors to serve in particularly challenging settings and situations that prevent them from enrolling in residential theological education; and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes a need for flexibility in its approach to preparing men to serve in the Office of the Public Ministry while upholding the biblical requirement that they be men who are “above reproach” and “able to teach,” and so offers approved training programs to prepare pastors for urban and cross-cultural service, namely, the Center for Hispanic Studies, the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), all at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and the Spanish-speaking SMP track at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW); and

WHEREAS, There is a need within the LCMS to regularize the status of licensed lay deacons who are engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Synod directed the President to appoint a task force to address question 2 about the practice of licensing lay deacons, and the task force, as required, reported a recommended plan to address questions (see *Convention Workbook*, pp. 234–255), and the theological framework of the report has been affirmed by both seminary faculties and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has budgeted \$40,000 for the remainder of the current fiscal year and is committed to budgeting at least \$150,000 per year for the next two years to assist deacons entering the SMP and EIIT programs; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS recognize that “emergency knows no rule” and that no Synod action can or should prevent a congregation from taking reasonable and scripturally faithful steps necessary to provide for the Word to be proclaimed in time of emergency, while at the same time, every congregation of the Synod is required to address matters involving the Office of the Public Ministry in a way that is consistent with its subscription to Scripture and the Confessions, as well as its agreement to abide by the Synod’s Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS affirm and give thanks for the men who have recognized the needs of the church and its mission, serving as licensed lay deacons, preaching and administering the Sacraments in keeping with 1989 Res. 3-05B, often without remuneration and at personal cost, lest congregations be deprived of the Means of Grace; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS, while mindful of the need for continued conversation within the church, affirm the theological framework of the “2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report,” namely, that a right calling to the Office of Public Ministry requires that a man be properly prepared and examined regarding doctrine and life, be called by the congregation (or ministry) where he is to serve, and publicly appointed in a way so that the entire church fellowship recognizes the validity of his service (Acts 13:1–3; 14:21–23; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Titus 1:5); and be it further

Resolved, That the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry establish and implement an expanded regional colloquy program (with appropriate regional colloquy committees) to regularize the status of current licensed lay deacons (LLDs) who are 50 years of age or older and who have been preaching the Gospel and/or administering the Sacraments publicly on behalf of the church for the past two years (de facto pastors), so that these servants of Christ can be called and ordained according to the order of the LCMS and be rostered as pastors with SMP status; and be it further

Resolved, That exceptions to the SMP colloquy requirements with respect to age and years of service for LLDs may be granted by the appropriate regional colloquy committee with the approval of the respective district president and the plenary of the Council of Presidents; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in this resolution shall be construed as impeding the training, recognition, credentialing or service of deacons who do not publicly preach or administer the Sacraments, namely, those who serve in ministries of mercy, education, or visitation, and so forth, or in an outreach role, assisting in evangelism

and church planting (but not in public preaching and administration of the Sacraments); and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents may continue to recruit, train, and credential new deacons for general varieties of service in the church that do not include public preaching and administration of the Sacraments; and be it further

Resolved, That until Jan. 1, 2018, district presidents may train and annually license lay deacons to preach publicly and to administer the Sacraments. Beyond that date in exceptional cases, as defined in (1) and (2) below, the appropriate district president may annually grant licensure with the consent of the plenary of the Council of Presidents and the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry:

(1) The deacon serves under the direct supervision of an ordained pastor and is currently enrolled in or preparing for one of the LCMS training tracks for the Office of Public Ministry and participates in the public ministry as an aspect of his training, e.g., in preparation for SMP, EIIT, etc.); or

(2) The deacon serves in distinctive aspects of the Office of Public Ministry (that is, preaching or administration of the Sacraments) only during times of emergency or extraordinary need (when there is no ordained pastor available or able to serve), only on a temporary or occasional basis, and under the direct supervision of an ordained pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That those deacons currently licensed for and serving in Word and Sacrament Ministry (that is, publicly preaching and administering the Sacraments) shall have until July 1, 2018, to:

(1) apply to one of our seminaries for admission into an alternate route program;

(2) apply for entrance into an SMP program; or

(3) apply to the regional colloquy committee for admission to the SMP roster, unless granted a waiver by his district president, the plenary of the Council of Presidents, and the appropriate regional colloquy committee;

and be it further

Resolved, That the district president, the plenary of the Council of Presidents, and the regional colloquy committees, in making decisions related to the three resolves above, shall do so in a fashion that no congregation or current ministry will be forced to close or discontinue; and be it further

Resolved, That lay deacons licensed for Word and Sacrament Ministry who have applied for colloquy to the SMP roster prior to July 1, 2018, shall continue to serve under their current district licensure until the colloquy process is complete and certification is given by the Colloquy Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That upon the certification of the Colloquy Committee, the licensed lay deacons will be eligible to be called by the congregations where they have been serving, ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry, and placed on the roster of SMP pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That as recommended by the Res. 4-06A Task Force, the LCMS, in partnership with districts, congregations, and individuals, provide funding to ensure that financial constraints will not prevent any eligible licensed lay deacon from participating in an LCMS seminary ordination-track program; and be it further

Resolved, That the First Vice-President of the Synod and three members of the Council of Presidents appointed by the Council be directed to draft by June 1, 2017, necessary policies and procedures for the implementation of this resolution, such policies and procedures to be finalized and approved by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS thank and commend the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its work on the question of licensed lay deacons.

Action: Adopted (5)

(During discussion, a motion to end debate was introduced but failed, and discussion continued until the chair tested the will of the assembly to end debate. Debate was ended, and Res. 13-02A was adopted as presented [Yes: 809; No: 277].)

GUIDELINES FOR THE *WINKEL* CONFERENCE (Organization and Program)

A very essential ingredient in the building of our Synod, especially in regard to its cohesiveness, has been the *Winkel* conference ("Winkel" means "corner"....professional church workers meeting in their "corner" of the vineyard for the purpose of....).

From the earliest years of the Synod's history, the *Winkel* was simply a gathering of pastors who had a common faith and confession and who wanted to study the Scriptures and theology together, discuss cases of casuistry, and enjoy fellowship.

Some major benefits that have been enjoyed by Synod via the *Winkel* include:

1. A splendid fellowship and community spirit have been nurtured among the pastors in a circuit through regular circuit pastoral conferences.
2. A healthy self-discipline with respect to doctrine and practice has often developed among the pastors of a circuit.
3. The circuits have bolstered one another in a wholesome competitiveness.
4. Input at *Winkel* conferences normally having been from the members themselves, this type of do-it-yourself program, together with a worship service, has given everyone an opportunity to discuss, question, object, disagree, or support.
5. Decisions on the circuit level, whether formally adopted or simply accepted through informal agreement, have been made by those directly affected.

William Hulme, in his book, *Pastors in Ministry*, makes the following significant comment: "While clergy meet frequently as peers in local conferences and ministerial associations, many of these groupings are not structured for mutual support. Too often they include the competitive spirit of our culture so that being guarded rather than open is the safest route with one's colleagues" (p. 238). And to quote Hulme again: "The keys to the success of the group are regularity of and commitment to the meetings and a willingness of the participants to share the intimate aspects of their lives, including their weaknesses" (p. 139). It is vital that pastors have a safe place to share theological ideas, ministry challenges, personal concerns, and family trials. Too often, circuit conferences (*Winkels*) do not provide such a setting. Creating such an environment calls for intentional actions by the circuit visitors with the brother pastors in the circuit. There is a need for confidentiality in these settings for trust and care to develop.

For the *Winkel*, the words apply, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

I. The *Winkel's* Purpose and Goal

A. For Spiritual Development and Enrichment

It is essential for us who are to move into the task of God's mission with joy and thanksgiving and humility to recognize a continuing need for spiritual development and enrichment. The *Winkel* provides the opportunity to be nourished with the bread of life with one's brothers who are in the Office of the Cross.

The worship experience at a *Winkel* conference should be of the highest order, one that permits spiritual development and enrichment to take place in a worshipful setting. The *Winkel* conference ought to be a time for personal and pastoral renewal and for spiritual refreshment through the hearing of the word of Christ and in the experience of joining together at His table. Worship has the power to bind us together as nothing else does. As we pray together, as we serve together, as we move together in a commonality of purpose, we grow as one in the direction of why we are alive and what we are willing to do in our calling. The worship experience at the *Winkel* conference, then, is a vital element of brothers serving others in a meaningful way.

B. For Continuing Education Experiences

Specific continuing education elements (exegetical, homiletical, theological, practical, etc.) that will broaden the horizon of the pastors are to be considered basic elements of the *Winkel* conference. The demands for ministry today make continued professional growth essential. The circuit *Winkel* conference is a vehicle for continuing education growth experiences.

C. For the Conversation and Consolation of the Brother

When one considers the context of our day, the need for building relationships between pastors and between congregations becomes a matter of high importance. The *Winkel* conference gives the opportunity to spend time at building relationships, building trust, building the climate of inter-dependency, helping one another to see what they are contributing the life of the church, lifting the vision of one another, and helping pastors to feel okay about themselves. This does not automatically occur and will require commitment and effort by all in the under the circuit visitor's leadership. When such things take place, then the sharing of one's ministry and one's feelings and the sharing of expectations and hopes and strategies can take place in a proper setting. The *Winkel* provides the opportunity for pastors to involve themselves in such sharing with one another.

D. For the Sharing of Mission and Ministry

The *Winkel* conference calendar should include time for the sharing of information concerning the mission of the church (inclusive of district and Synod). Where there are circuit cabinet representatives, they should be given the opportunity to report on their particular areas of concern. On occasion, reports concerning the LWML, LLL, LYF, and the like may be brought to the conference. Special events in the life of the congregations within the circuit (anniversaries, installations, etc.) should be noted. On occasion, representatives from the district or Synod office may be present to share matters of importance with the brethren.

II. The *Winkel's* Structure

A. Leadership

The circuit visitor has a special responsibility for giving positive guidance and leadership in the *Winkel* conference. The visitor may be a kind person but he needs to be firm in regard to starting on time and keeping the agenda moving according to schedule. He truly exercises a servant/leader role.

Either by his own initiative or by the appointing of a program committee, the circuit visitor sees to it that the program is well-planned and one that stimulates. Early planning is required for the

development of such a program. The brethren respond with a higher sense of responsibility when a program is structured rather than casual.

Another key ingredient is the need for presenters to be given the opportunity and the instruction (encouragement) to be well prepared. Generally, the conference agenda will revolve around two basic elements:

1. Opportunity for worship, personal growth and sharing with the brothers in the faith; and
2. Specific continuing education elements that will broaden the horizon of the pastor.

Where circuit cabinets are in place (generally elected on a yearly basis), the cabinet provides a practical way for covering circuit ministries and coordinating the same with the district and the Synod.

B. Schedule

The day for the *Winkel* conference should be appropriately set for when all of the pastors have the best opportunity to be present. The day's schedule should begin promptly at 9:00 or 9:30 in the morning (whichever is set) and should continue through lunch until 3:00 or 3:30 p.m. When pastors are willing to invest this much time, good things happen. Once again, the schedule can include worship (with Holy Communion, if mutually agreed upon), Bible study, a topic, and a review of the circuit calendar for special events from the congregations. Circuit reports (which can include district and Synod concerns) as well as in-depth presentations on particular relevant subjects of concern can follow. With this format, lunch time can be used for casual fellowship and sharing.

C. Program

While the high percentage of program time is generally reserved to provide opportunity for pastors to present theological papers, do exegesis on a text, prepare sermon studies, and the like, there are occasions when it can be profitable to bring in a specific guest speaker. For example, this could be someone from the medical community, a social worker or case worker, or other people who are experienced in specific fields that relate to pastoral concerns or ministry. Book reviews on subjects of mutual interest provide another ingredient for a well-rounded program.

D. Program Book

A *Winkel* conference program book can be quite helpful. It could list all of the congregations, the staff persons and their addresses and telephone numbers, the dates and places of the *Winkels* and, if possible, the basic ingredients of the program, such as the topics and to whom they are assigned.

A *Winkel* conference agenda may also include an annual retreat. This may be an overnight experience and may be inclusive of the whole family or in particular the pastor and his spouse. When one considers the need for interaction and personal sharing, retreat experiences offer special opportunities for meditation, prayer, and fellowship and thus provide an important ingredient in a growing ministry.

The circuit visitor should be encouraged to take the leadership role in directing the planning of specific evening get-togethers for social interaction and fellowship to address the important

concern of building relationships, not just between the pastors but also the pastors' wives of the circuit. If such evening get-togethers for social interaction and fellowship were planned on a quarterly basis for example, on the fifth Friday of the month, such gatherings would be appropriate times to also offer warm and friendly welcomes to new pastors or church workers who come into the circuit and to bid farewell and Godspeed to those who are leaving.

Conclusion: The *Winkel* conference remains one of the best resources for building relationships among our pastors. The fact that it is a relatively small group, that it meets with frequency and regularity, and that it brings together not just like-minded men but allows for differences of opinion where the weak can be helped by the strong and the younger by the older—all makes the *Winkel* one of the best of all conferences.

Circuit visitors and pastors of the circuit are encouraged to join in doing all in their power and wisdom to develop conference events where the spirit and the mood would be of such a nature that when participants leave, they were glad to have been together—that they found the fellowship and mutual encouragement to be of the highest order, that through the meditation, the studies, the conversations they were led again and again to see with the eye of faith the risen Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and their Savior.

As one surveys the perspective of history, the *Winkel* conference comes off as that which is worth the time and the effort. It is the conference that could still be the essential glue that holds the Synod together. It could still be the place where pastors get to know each other, learn to trust each other, and help each other. For reasons of professional, spiritual, and relational growth, such time together is needed...time to talk to one another...time to hear both the joys and the difficulties of mutual ministries...time to share with brothers in the faith...time to hear the Word of God proclaimed instead of always being the teacher for others. The *Winkel* conference is important. The challenge is to give the kind of leadership and encouragement for the sort of program development that will make the *Winkel* conference an exciting and uplifting experience. Circuit visitors should diligently work at it. The *Winkel* conference—it is worth the time, the commitment, and the effort.

GUIDELINES FOR THE VISITATION CIRCUIT FORUM AND THE CIRCUIT CONVOCATION

I. The Circuit Forum

Section 5.3 of the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod explains the constitutionally mandated purpose and function of the visitation circuit forum. The comments below are offered as an attempt to explore the significance and implications of the forum for the individual congregations of the circuit as well as for the circuit as a whole.

The circuit forum is a structure which offers opportunity to highlight the interdependence and the relationship which exists between the several congregations of a circuit. While it is true that a congregation carries out the mission and ministry given by the risen Christ in its specific location, yet it is advantageous and in keeping with the unity which congregations have in the Body of Christ to carry out this ministry in a context of mutual encouragement from and the support of other congregations in the circuit. The circuit forum offers such an opportunity.

Perhaps because of the historic background of the Synod, it has been blessed with a closely knit sense of fellowship among the membership of its congregations. However in a fast moving and changing society it always runs the risk of losing this. The circuit forum offers an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of mutual concern among the members of the Synod's congregations. The forum is an arena in which they reach out to one another, an organization that enables them to put into practice mutual care and consolation for brothers and sisters who are fellow members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The visitation circuit forum also offers opportunity for planning together the missionary outreach of the church. Congregations gathered together in a forum setting are in a most advantageous position to advise the district as to the effective placement of preaching stations and new mission activity. Through the circuit forum, congregations are often able to join hands in material, financial, and spiritual support of these new churches.

It should be noted that this section pertains primarily to visitation circuit forums. As noted by bracketed words inserted into the quoted bylaws, Bylaw 5.3.3 below speaks to electoral circuit forums, and Bylaw 5.3.5 speaks to both visitation and electoral circuits.

LCMS Bylaw 5.3 regarding Circuit Forums states:

- 5.3.1 The circuit forum is the group which aids the process of keeping congregations, particularly the lay leaders, commissioned ministers, and pastors, supportive of one another in their common confession and mutually active in developing programs for the good of member congregations, in considering and recommending new work, and in suggesting improvements for services and programming at the national and district levels, and is encouraged to meet at least twice a year.
- (a) The circuit visitor shall endeavor to provide resources, opportunities, and assistance so God's people can grow in their faith.
 - (b) Among the functions which the circuit forum may perform are the following:
 - (1) To study the Scriptures and the Confessions in order to promote an evangelical spirit in our walking together.
 - (2) To develop and adopt within existing policies of the respective district complementary and sometimes joint plans for mission outreach in the circuit area.
 - (3) To devise and develop programs and services relevant to the needs of circuit congregations, lay leaders, teachers, and pastors.

(4) To receive and respond as appropriate to advice, guidance, resolutions, and programs in other sections of the Synod as such may be addressed to it from other circuits, the respective district, and the general Synod.

(5) To serve as a setting to review and evaluate programs, plans, and long-range directions of the district and the Synod and thus participate in the triennial process of suggesting, developing, and attaining the Synod's priorities and goals.

5.3.2 The circuit forum consists of a pastor of each congregation and one [lay] member of each congregation designated by the congregation.

(a) Depending on each circuit's adopted objectives, the circuit may provide for additional representation from each congregation.

(b) The circuit visitor and any other officers shall have the primary responsibility of preparing the agenda for the circuit forum.

(c) The circuit visitor shall ordinarily serve as chairman of the circuit forum.

5.3.3 The circuit forum will meet at least once triennially to elect a circuit visitor (Bylaw 5.2.2)

5.3.4 The [visitation] circuit forum may also participate in the triennial process of suggesting, developing, and attaining the Synod's priorities and goals.

5.3.5 The circuit forum shall be qualified to submit overtures to national and district conventions.

A. Purpose

The circuit forum, thus, exists for the purpose of encouraging and assisting congregations of the circuit to support, strengthen, and serve one another in their mission and ministry.

Mutual support is encouraged by helping the congregations of a circuit recognize and express their interdependence upon each other for a united and effective Christian witness in the area which they serve as they share their successes and failures, their past and present, and their vision for the future.

Mutual strengthening is encouraged by sharing the respective insights and strengths of each congregation and honoring the differences that may exist among them for the purpose of growing together in a fuller and richer experience of total ministry together in the Body of Christ.

Mutual service is encouraged by providing opportunities for the congregations of a circuit to achieve their goals and meet their needs through the planning and arranging for programs of training and enrichment whereby the congregations individually and collectively may be better equipped to serve their respective and total communities.

Thus we can see that the circuit forum assumes a servant role "To devise and develop programs and services relevant to the needs of circuit congregations, lay leaders, teachers, and pastors." Bylaw 5.3.1

(a) (5)

The forum serves as a vehicle by which the family of churches in a given area can celebrate its common identity as the Body of Christ in that place.

B. Objectives

In the light of the above we offer the following as more specifically stated objectives of the circuit forum. These objectives are patterned after the objectives of the Synod as presented in the Constitution of the Synod, Article III.

A circuit is a designated grouping of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod working together in the mission and ministry of the church. As congregations together in a given area sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with each other they will:

1. strive to strengthen congregations in extending the Gospel witness to their communities and to all the world, and, in cooperation with the district mission program, to actively assist in the planning for and the planting of new mission opportunities in the region of the circuit;
2. aid congregations in developing effective programs of Christian education and nurture;
3. aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their confessional witness;
4. encourage congregations to develop an appreciation for a variety of responsible congregational practices and customs that are in harmony with our common profession of faith;
5. provide opportunities through which our congregations may express their Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs;
6. share concern and care for one another, especially for the professional church workers but also for the lay leadership of the congregations within the circuit;
7. establish a proper atmosphere for the recruitment of professional church workers and provide opportunity to church workers for continuing growth for their ministries;
8. work together in an awareness of interdependence with each other and with the other circuits of the region toward the objectives of the district and the Synod.

Ordinarily, the circuit visitor serves as the chairman of the forum (Bylaw 5.3.2 [c]). It is his privilege to see that the congregations of the circuit organize themselves into an effective forum unit.

C. The Election of Circuit Visitor.

With the governance revisions of the 2010 Convention one of the primary responsibilities of the Circuit Forum is now the election of the circuit visitor. The process for the formulation of the ballot and the election of the circuit visitor is detailed in Bylaw 5.2.2 which reads:

- 5.2.2 The circuit visitor shall hold his position by virtue of his selection by the circuit forum and ratification by the district convention.
- (a) Circuit forums shall meet at the call of their circuit visitors to select their circuit visitors no later than the time established by the district. When in-person meetings are burdensome (e.g., geographically large circuits), a circuit may select another manner of meeting (e.g., e-meeting technologies) that is suitable and made available to all participants, taking into consideration the need to provide for an open and fair exchange of ideas and secure, private,

and confidential voting.

(b) Prior to the day of the circuit forum, nominations for candidates for the office of circuit visitor may be submitted by a voting congregation of the circuit and suggested by the district president, in consultation with the praesidium of the district.

(c) Each circuit may adopt procedures and methods that will insure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes. The privilege of voting shall be exercised by the representatives from each member congregation of the circuit, who shall have been selected in the manner prescribed by the congregation (Bylaw 5.3.2).

(d) All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors whose names were nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws.

(1) Following presentations of pertinent information regarding each pastor as listed in Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (c) and circuit visitor responsibilities as provided hereafter in this bylaw, each voter shall submit the names of two pastors on the initial ballot.

(2) The three pastors (or more in case of a tie vote) who receive the highest number of votes in this preliminary ballot shall be placed on the next ballot. Each voter shall vote for only one candidate.

(3) Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, who shall be declared the nominee.

(e) Immediately following the circuit forum, the circuit visitor shall report in writing the results of the selection process to the secretary of the district in preparation for ratification by the district convention.

(f) In the event that a circuit visitor has not been selected by a circuit forum or has been selected but is no longer available to serve, thus resulting in no circuit visitor selection being included on the convention slate of circuit visitors for a circuit, the district president shall make the selection, which selection shall then be included on the convention slate of circuit visitors.

(g) The convention shall have the right to alter the slate by amendment.

(h) The convention shall then ratify the slate of circuit visitors, which ratification shall constitute election.

II. The Circuit Convocation

The purpose of the Circuit Convocation is spelled out by the Bylaws of the Synod in Bylaw section 5.4 which reads:

5.4.1 The circuit convocation is a larger gathering of members from circuit congregations during a year in which there is no national or district convention.

5.4.2 The purpose of a circuit convocation is to provide a setting in which congregational members may know of and celebrate the ministry pursued by each congregation, may review and discuss the work of the circuit forum, may discuss and evaluate mission potential within the circuit, and may receive information on various phases of the work pursued through districts and the Synod.

(a) Its emphasis should be on inspiration, education, and motivation, and mission and theological discourse both within and beyond the circuit. The convocation should also be a place for in-depth discussion among all circuit congregation members of the theological and missiological issues before the Synod.

(b) The circuit visitor shall serve as chairman of the circuit convocation and other circuit gatherings.

(c) The circuit visitor and any other officers shall have the primary responsibility of preparing the agenda for the circuit convocation.

These bylaws indicate that the purpose of the triennial convocation is for inspiration, education, and motivation. Since the convocation meets only once in three years, there is ample time to plan for a first-rate, exciting, and celebrative gathering for of the congregations of the circuit.

The convocation can be planned in such a way that opportunity is provided to carry out some of the objectives of the circuit forum, especially perhaps in the area of educational workshops. A larger number of participants will provide greater resources for planning a task force. Those that plan the convocation are encouraged to include in their programming speakers and participants who are recognized as leaders in the national church. This will enhance the importance of the convocation for the potential participants.

The convocation with its larger number of participants provides opportunity for a celebrative worship service that indicates the true nature of the unity which exists among all the congregations of the circuit. The host congregation is encouraged to conduct a service of Holy Communion as the highlight of this gathering of God's people. The participation by all in the Body and Blood of the risen Lord is a concrete expression of the unity that the congregations of the circuit enjoy.

While the circuit visitor need not be in charge of the convocation planning and execution, it is his responsibility to see that it is done.

GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIAL VISITS AND EVALUATIONS OF CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

I. History

The 2001 convention of the Synod restored the primary responsibility for visitation of congregations to the District President (Bylaw 4.4.4). He may, however, “call upon circuit visitor to assist him” (Bylaw 4.4.5 [b]).

A little history with regard to these official visits may be helpful, as found in the “Circuit Counselors Manual” prepared by Dr. Roland Wiederaenders in 1970 and revised in 1979. On page 11, the following rationale for official visits is given:

When the Synod was organized in 1847, there were neither districts nor circuits. The President of the Synod, responsible for the doctrinal life of the members of the Synod, was charged with the responsibility of visiting all the congregations at least once every three years and to report his finding to the convention.

It was impossible for the President of the Synod to visit all the congregations every three years, hence in 1854 the Synod decided to divide itself into several districts. The Central District was organized in 1856. Soon thereafter the Northern and the Western and the Eastern Districts were organized. In each of these districts, the district presidents were given the responsibility of visiting each congregation at least once in a triennium. However, it soon became evident that the district presidents could not do justice to their assignment even with the help of their vice-presidents.

The problem of visitation was again brought up in the synod convention of 1866. It was at that time that the districts were divided into circuits and the office of circuit visitor was established. A year later in 1867 the Northern District of the Synod elected Pastor F. Lochner as circuit visitor for the State of Wisconsin and Pastor C. Strasen as circuit visitor for the State of Minnesota. The Eastern District was divided into three circuits and the other districts followed suit in a similar manner.

At present, the districts of the Synod in the United States are divided into more than 600 circuits.

The district president has been given the responsibility of visiting the congregations in all circuits of his district. If he is to carry out the official visits as required in the *Handbook* of the Synod, there will be a definite need for planning. As the chief administrator in his district, he is responsible for the supervision of the doctrine, the life, and the official administration of the pastors and teachers. He is to be acquainted with the prevailing religious conditions of a congregation and assist congregations in calling pastors and teachers. In addition to this, he is to communicate the resolutions of the Synod to the members of his district and is to see to it these are carried out.

This assignment is too great for one man. For this reason, as pointed out above, the Synod established the office of circuit visitor. Each circuit visitor, by virtue of his office, is to assist the district president within the circuit. Because the circuit visitor are to assist the district president, the district president will regularly meet with the circuit visitors and will regularly receive reports from the circuit visitor on their activities.

There are a number of contacts that circuit visitor have in the normal functions of their duties, including: (1) circuit pastoral conferences; (2) circuit forums; (3) personal visits with pastors and teachers, perhaps together with their wives; and (4) circuit convocations.

Since teachers are frequently visited by the education executive of the district, the education executive assumes much of that responsibility unless there are specific problems among the teaching staff requiring the involvement of the circuit visitor. The following therefore primarily pertains to personal visits with pastors with the knowledge of and/or upon request of the district president.

II. Circuit Visitor Visits

It would seem most logical that one of the personal visits which a circuit visitor would make would take place when a new pastor comes into the circuit. Within a very short period of time, perhaps a week or two after the man has begun his work in the parish, the circuit visitor should make it a point to visit this new brother and his wife to introduce himself as a friend and supporting brother in ministry and also to be of whatever assistance he can in helping the couple to become acquainted with the community and various needs such as doctors and dentists.

It might also be very helpful in this situation, since it is more of a friendly visit, that the circuit visitor's wife would accompany him to also become acquainted with the new pastor and his wife. At that time, the circuit visitor could certainly provide information about the district, various meetings, various circuit functions, etc., so the new pastor can become familiar with what might be expected of him in his new circuit and district.

In other personal calls that the circuit visitor may wish to set up with the pastors in the circuit, the following guidelines should probably be kept in mind: The setting of the call should be informal; the circuit visitor should be more ready to listen than to speak; he should be sensitive to the physical, psychological, mental, and spiritual needs of the family; he should look at the pastor's library; he should encourage the pastor to take advantage of continuing education opportunities; he should commend him for the work he is doing well and, in all gentleness and kindness, help him to overcome weaknesses which may be evident in his ministry.

With regard to the circuit visitor's official visit to the congregations of his circuit (upon request of the district president), the visitor should seek the approval of the pastor for the visit. The circuit visitor should also have a specific objective that he wishes to be achieved and should carefully prepare for the achievement of this objective.

How this visit is accomplished can vary depending upon the purpose of the visit and the needs of the congregations. To speak to the congregation on a Sunday morning certainly has the advantage of being able to speak to the greatest number of people. However, it is difficult for the circuit visitor to leave his own parish to go to visit other parishes on a Sunday morning. A better approach for the circuit visitor might be to set up his visit in a way that will accomplish his objective most effectively. He may desire to ask for a special meeting of a congregation to which he makes his presentation, or he may choose to speak to a specific group in the congregation. For example, if stewardship of money is the topic of the visitation, he might speak to the stewardship board of the congregation together with the congregation president and selected lay leaders who will understand what he is talking about and who can follow through in the congregation. If Christian education is the topic, the visitor may wish to talk to the Board of Parish Education and Sunday School staff, augmented by the Board of Elders and selected lay leaders competent in the field of education. These are examples of a variety of approaches that the circuit visitor could follow in his official visits.

In every congregational visit, the circuit visitor should press toward action. His presentation should be simple, clear, and convincing, and he should seek an express commitment from the group he is addressing that they will put forth an honest and earnest effort to do what he is recommending to them.

The circuit visitor should also then evaluate his visit, whether a personal visit to the pastor or a visit to the congregation, and he should share that evaluation with the district president. Perhaps the district president and the circuit visitor could also sit down together and discuss the particular needs of that circuit and how together they might meet some of those needs.

Even though the responsibilities of the circuit visitor may seem to require a great amount of time and effort, if the circuit visitor carefully plans out his activities in the circuit over a three-year period, he will find it much easier to fulfill his function of visiting

The following description of visits by a district president can be helpful also for visits by circuit visitors: Whenever a new pastor would come to a congregation, I would wait until that pastor had been there approximately three to six months so he had sufficient opportunity to get his ministry established and begin to assess the situation in his congregation. Then I would write a letter asking him to assist me in carrying out my presidential visit. I would ask the pastor to meet with me from approximately 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

If the congregation had a school, I would begin earlier, about 2:00 p.m., and make arrangements to meet with the teachers for an hour at the close of the school day. The meeting with the teachers was primarily to get a little better acquainted and to let them know the district president was also available should they have any needs or concerns.

If there was more than one pastor in the congregation, the chances are I had visited with him before. However, I would always spend some time with him also, often over lunch, before meeting with the new pastor.

With the new pastor, I would get better acquainted with him by asking him to share with me some of his own personal background and his personal experiences in ministry and the various congregations he had served. I would always ask him about his preaching and his approach to sermon preparation. As we talked about other specific areas such as stewardship, evangelism, visiting members and prospects, etc., if I suspected that there was a weakness or if I felt there were areas where I could offer advice, I would do so. I would make it a point to look at his library to see the types of books he was using as resources and also to get an idea of the areas of ministry in which he seemed to have a stronger interest. I also would give him the opportunity to share with me any special concerns he was already finding in the congregation and offer my assistance should that be needed in helping him to meet those particular concerns.

I then invited myself to supper with his family so I could get better acquainted with his wife and family. Primarily this was again personal information in which I would find out her background, how the two of them met, what her views on ministry were, and how she was responding to being a pastor's wife. This would be from about 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. which would include the meal and then the opportunity to talk because I would ask the wife to let the dishes sit for a while so we would have the opportunity to visit.

I would have asked the pastor to schedule a meeting that evening at 7:00 p.m. with his church council and with other officers in the congregation that he might wish to invite to that meeting, such as ladies groups and officers. At that time, the discussion would center on issues that they wished to talk about it and I would also work some of the concerns the pastor had brought up in the afternoon into the discussion. Sometimes these issues would center around Synod or district concerns. Most frequently they would center around how the congregation could be more effective in carrying out their ministry in various areas such as evangelism and witnessing and stewardship. This would give me the opportunity to discuss with the officers of the congregation how they might proceed in certain areas.

These visits proved to be very well received and very helpful.

III. Evaluations of Congregations and Pastors

As indicated in the material under official visits, the circuit visitor should make an evaluation concerning his visits to the pastors and to the congregations. This evaluation could assume different forms; however, some type of written form would certainly be preferable. This evaluation should be shared with the district president, and, in addition to the written evaluation being shared, it would be beneficial if the district president and the circuit visitor could sit down and discuss the evaluation together. In that way, they would also be able to develop any further approach that might be needed to assist the pastors and congregations in their ministry.

The following forms may be helpful either in preparation for a visit or as a tool to provide a report to the district president.

CIRCUIT VISITOR'S VISITATION OF THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE _____ CIRCUIT

REASON

for visit: The structure of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a system of districts and circuits for an efficient functioning of ministry, developing cohesiveness, and offering strength to the church as the army of God sent to do His mission. The *Handbook* of the Synod (Bylaw 4.4.4) offers guidelines for the district president's visitation of the congregations of the district. The circuit visitor, when asked by the district president, may officially visit the congregations, pastors, and teachers of his circuit once in three years and at any time when the district president deems it necessary. He should meet with the entire congregation, if possible, rather than with only the voting members, Board of Elders, or Church Council, unless he has a specific topic he wishes to discuss with a specific group in the congregation.

RATIONALE

for visit: The Church is a fellowship of believers, a family, sons and daughters of God our Father. Family life is one of love, concern, care, and discipline. The Church is not a dismembered body, hands apart from feet, etc. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). It is the body of Christ gathered together in congregations, districts, and the Synod. We are a part of that body of Christ, and visitations of the congregation by the district president or circuit visitor are intended to enhance the ministry, develop cohesiveness, and strengthen that body as a mighty army for the Lord.

OBJECTIVE

for visit: The same as God's first and continued objective—to enable people to live in a relationship of love with God and their fellow man. Continued growth in discipleship, in knowledge, and wisdom on the part of all members and encouragement to a greater commitment to the Great Commission and John 3:16 — this is the purpose of the Circuit visitor's visit to congregations, pastors, and teachers.

METHOD

used in visit: An instrument in evaluation, determining the present ministry, establishing goals, and broaden our vision for the Church and its mission is attached. It is to be completed by congregational members or leaders.

SCOPE

of visit: All areas of congregational activities and attitudes of pastors, teachers, and lay members are within the scope of the visit.

**CIRCUIT VISITOR'S VISITATION
OF THE
CONGREGATIONS OF THE _____ CIRCUIT**

Complying with the *Handbook* of Synod, Bylaw 4.4.4, "The district president shall, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, in his ministry of ecclesiastical supervision visit the congregations of the district," and because "he may call upon circuit visitor to assist him" (Bylaw 4.4.5 [b]), this report is intended to facilitate such visits by providing opportunity to share information regarding the congregation and its church workers.

CONGREGATION _____ PLACE _____

(Note: Circle your rating of each general subject from 1-5; 1-outstanding, 2-good, 3-average, 4-weak, 5-poor. Please rate each individual item by writing in a number. Write any additional comments in the open space next to the general subject.)

1. Public Relation 1 2 3 4 5

- Building & grounds
- Community involvement
- Use of media
- Public image
- Sunday bulletin
- Newsletter

2. Congregation Administration 1 2 3 4 5

- Permanent records
- Secretary
- Programming
- Treasurer's records
- Treasurer's reports
- Congregational reports

3. Christian Education 1 2 3 4 5

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Day School | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekday Instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> V.B.S. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation Class instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Bible classes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Bible classes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training Bible class leaders | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board for Christian Education | |

4. Evangelism 1 2 3 4 5

- Formal program
- Training program
- Member involvement

5. Missions 1 2 3 4 5

- District
- Synod
- Education
- Attitude & interest

6. Stewardship Life of People 1 2 3 4 5

- Lay participation in leadership
- Lay involvement in activities
- Volunteers

7. Stewardship of Money 1 2 3 4 5

- Level of giving
- Financial condition of congregation
- Salaries of pastor & staff
- Stewardship committee

8. Concern for Purity of Doctrine 1 2 3 4 5

- Membership
- Board of Elders
- Teachers
- Pastor

9. Ministry to Youth 1 2 3 4 5

- Congregational concern
- Lay leaders
- Youth involvement

10. Ministry to Elderly 1 2 3 4 5

- Congregational concern
- Lay leaders
- Board of Elders
- Special opportunities for elderly

11. Worship Life 1 2 3 4 5

- Worship attendance
- Communion attendance
- Special services
- Board of Elders

12. Spiritual Life of Congregation 1 2 3 4 5

- Youth
- Young adults
- Middle-aged
- Elderly

13. Pastoral Concern 1 2 3 4 5

- Sick visits
- Shut-in visits

Regular visits

Delinquents

14. Pastor Strengths 1 2 3 4 5

Preaching

Sermon content

Teaching

Sunday School

Professional image

Youth ministry

Elderly

Young adults

Auxiliaries

Public image

Evangelism

Stewardship

Jr. Confirmation instruction

Adult Confirmation instruction

Adult Bible class leader

Wife and family

PLEASE ADD ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

GUIDELINES FOR CIRCUIT VISITORS ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS WITH CLOSURE

Introduction

Circuit visitors will sometimes be called upon to assist a congregation determining if the time to consider closure has come. This may further develop into assisting the congregation and its pastor through the spiritual, emotional, legal and practical aspects of closure. If a congregation and its pastor initiate conversation with a circuit visitor about potential closure, it is **vital** that the district president be immediately contacted as this is an important aspect of his Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Bylaw assigned ecclesiastical supervision duties. District offices also have resources to provide to congregations when closure is being considered and/or implemented.

Theology to Consider

Christians of the LCMS clearly, believe, teach and confess that the holy Christian church is both invisible (Luke 17:20-21) and visible (1 Corinthians 1:2). The church of all true believers is only visible to God. Thus, it is invisible to human eyes. The holy Christian church is found where “the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (Augsburg Confession VII). The visible church is the whole number of those who use the Word of God and profession the Christian faith, but among whom, beside true Christians, there are also unbelievers. While God describes the “marks of the church” to be the Gospel and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, there are various manifestations of how a congregation organizes and where it chooses to meet to receive God’s gifts. Thus, the viability of a particular congregation’s organization and its property may come to a time when it becomes necessary to consider closure. However, this in no way communicates the lack of God’s care for His church or the failure of His people.

How to Decide Which Church To Close

The closure of a congregation needs to receive careful consideration without haste. Congregations can discuss the following questions.

- Is our congregation’s worship attendance in severe decline?
- Is the average age of our congregation increasing?
- Is there a complete absence of infants and small children?
- Is there is absence of baptisms of children and adults?
- Is there an absence of youth confirmations?
- Is there is absence of adult confirmations?
- Is there an absence of an organized effort to engage the community and include new people into the life of the congregation?
- Is the number of people available to fill roles of leadership less than the number of needs roles to be filled?
- Is there a significant loss of financial giving?
- Are there important property issues failing to receive needed attention in our congregation due to lack of funding and/or interest
- Has the local community changed and our congregation is unable or unwilling to engage the changes with needed ministry?
- Is our congregation more focused on surviving as an organization or institution than it is on growing in faith and knowledge in Christ and finding ways to engage people in the community with Christ?
- Will sharing a pastor with neighboring congregation truly engage our congregation in mission and ministry or is it only a way to share costs and postpone closure?

- Will being served by a part-time pastor truly engage our congregation in mission and ministry or is it only a way to share costs and postpone closure?

Consideration of these questions and others like them can generate conversation that must occur if closure is to be pondered. It can be prudent at this discussion stage to make use of demographic studies that are available from the district office and /or Lutheran Church Extension Fund to understand those who live in the church's current mission field. It may also be well to involve some outside objective help. The decision to look toward a closure should be based on what is best for the Kingdom, not just on emotions over the loss of an institution. However, the recognition of such emotions and spiritually addressing them must occur.

Emotions

The potential closure of a church is a matter which fosters a great deal of emotion and sadness. In the midst of these emotions, it should be stressed that the closure is being undertaken with a spirit of thanksgiving to God for His blessings to and through the congregation during its years of life and service. The members should be encouraged to recognize that although organizations change, His grace does not, and the ministry of Word and Sacrament can be provided for them through other congregations nearby.

Ministry of Closure

While grief becomes the primary emotional need of a congregation of Christian people who in the process of closing the church, it calls for a spiritual response. Just as a pastor carefully listens and directs people to specific portions of God's Word when he ministers to them in times of loss due to death or financial crisis, so he will need to do the same. The circuit visitor will do well to provide care for the pastor. Pastors who oversee the closure of a church often experience guilt, anxiety, a sense of failure, depression and loneliness. They are sometimes so busy caring for their grieving members that they don't take time to receive care from the Lord's Word. The circuit visitor can be very helpful to such a pastor.

Planning for Closure

Again, the circuit visitor will want to work closely with the district president. He will help the congregation consider some very practical issues and may ask the circuit visitor to assist him in doing so.

- Careful planning needs to be engaged for the pastor serving in the Divine Call at the closing church in regard to properly releasing him from this call, planning for his transition to another call, or a time on the inactive roster of the LCMS. This will require detailed efforts with the district president's direct involvement.
- Keeping the congregation in tact until closure is important so that voters' decisions can be made is vital.
- Helping members to make intentional plans for church membership after the closure of the church will need careful attention.
- The congregation will need to seek the advice of a competent attorney who is familiar with the state laws governing the dissolution religious corporations.
- The congregation will need to pay close attention to its constitution and bylaws regarding the calling of any meetings with close attention to any quorums which are needed, and the necessary majority which is needed for all votes.
- The church's constitution and bylaws will need to be carefully consulted for the disposition of property.
- It will be important to establish a timeline of all events/actions associated with the closure.
- A plan for the retention of church records and historical information will need to be developed.
- A closing service will need to be planned and implemented.

Closing Service

The district president will have resources (suggested bible readings, hymnody, rites, etc.) that can be utilized for a closing service. *The Lutheran Service Book Agenda* provides a rite for the “Closing of a Congregation” as well as a rite for “Disposition of a Church Building.” The circuit visitor will work closely with the congregation’s pastor and district president to prepare the closing service. The district president or his appointed representative will take an active role in the closing service. The circuit visitor will also want to insure that circuit LCMS churches and their pastors are invited to this special closing service. In many ways, it is the funeral service for one of the churches of the circuit and should be treated with the same level of respect.

The closing service of a congregation is an occasion which is often accompanied by grief, trauma, and nostalgia. It is also an occasion to proclaim new opportunities for life and mission. The service should be planned to encompass all these possibilities. An oral historical review of the congregation's life may be desired as part of the worship service. The removal of worship furnishings and sacramental vessels during the service symbolizes the end of the particular ministry in this place. Representatives of the congregation may carry out the furnishings and vessels. The cornerstone or its contents may even be removed.

Note: There is a legal aspect to the closure of a congregation. It is important that the congregation, its leaders and voters, along with the pastor and circuit visitor consult the congregation’s constitution and bylaws. There may be a paragraph in the bylaws that governs the closure of a congregation and/or the suspension of operations. The congregation should also consult with their district president who will know both the requirements of the LCMS Constitution and state law.

GUIDELINES AND ETHICS FOR RETIRING PASTORS IN THE LCMS

Introduction:

As we currently face a record number of pastors arriving at the age and opportunity for retirement, a need for some basic guidelines seems necessary as many of the customs and habits understood and practiced by previous generations are often ignored. Understanding that realities like the economy, good health, longevity of life, etc., also play a role, these guidelines are offered to help maintain the “*unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.*” (Eph. 4:3)

Retirement is normally a well-earned time of transitioning into new forms of ministry that can be just as rewarding and fulfilling as earlier ones. While “forced” retirement does indeed happen from time to time, this is often the exception and should be dealt with through ecclesiastical supervision. However, no matter what, clear boundaries need to be understood, both from the pastor retiring and the congregation from which he is retiring.

Announcement and Transition

When a pastor determines that he will retire he should help prepare the congregation, spiritually, mentally, and physically, for the transition and inform them of what to expect once the transition has been made. Normally, the pastor should wait to formally announce his retirement until 6 months before, although he may indicate to the leadership sooner. If announced too early there is a danger of a “lame duck” mentality that could form, preventing meaningful ministry from occurring. To wait too long and announce a month or weeks prior leaves a congregation ill prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

The circuit visitor or district president or his representative should be invited to share with the church's leadership, and then with the entire congregation, what to expect with the retirement of their former pastor and what the appropriate parameters will be of any continuing relationship with the retiring pastor. At this point the district president or circuit visitor would also outline the future process for calling a new pastor, proper timing, interim ministry, etc. This should never come from the retiring pastor. It is best that he instruct his people to not do anything until they have spoken with the circuit visitor or district president.

When people have not been informed, or their concerns heard, they often put demands on the former pastor without knowing or understanding the ethical boundaries for the well-being of the total congregation. They also may make poor decisions regarding the future of the parish. Good knowledge can assist everyone in maintaining friendship ties while carefully severing pastoral ones and planning for the future. It also allows for mourning the loss while celebrating what has been meaningful in the past, and looking to the future.

Congregations must be taught the appropriate boundaries so as not to place a retired pastor in an awkward position. Any effort to involve a former pastor, retired pastor, or other Minister of Word and Sacrament in any issues between members and the current pastor will only confuse the situation and make matters worse. It will also put the former pastor, retired pastor, or other Minister of Word and Sacrament in an untenable ethical situation. While members of congregations are encouraged to avoid putting a pastor in such a position, it remains the responsibility of the pastor to maintain the appropriate boundaries.

Retirement does involve change, and that can be as exciting and freeing as the choices available. However, it does mean letting go of the former, to trust God into the future. His Word in Jeremiah 29:11 also applies to the pastor: “For I know that plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you

and not to harm you, plans with hope and a future.” What is yet in store can be a rich time of ministry and personal adjustment to a lessened schedule. Each cycle of ministry brings its own rewards. Trusting God to lead you forward without holding onto the past is important.

Roster Status

A retired pastor is on the roster of the District in which last under call or in which the pastor resides. The retired pastor remains accountable to the district president where rostered. It is understood that a retired pastor must be a member in good standing of an LCMS congregation in order to remain on the roster of ordained ministers and remains subject to the same standards for ordained ministers of the church.

Guidelines

With more retiring pastors owning homes within the community of their last pastorate careful attention must be given to the church's well-being and that of the new pastor called to serve that church. With this concern in mind, the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod sets forth the following as ethical guidelines for retiring pastors.

1. It is recommended, upon retirement, that a pastor sever all pastoral ties with those previously served in the local parish. This includes weddings, funerals, pastoral calls and visits, and especially giving advice and counsel, and in any way continuing the previous pastoral relationships. This also involves attending church functions and services until an agreement can be made with the new pastor. The retired pastor should have little to no contact with the ministry, nor should he serve it in any capacity, either professionally or as a volunteer because of the sphere of influence he still has. Continuing ties of friendship is one thing, pastoral ties is another. He is no longer the pastor of this parish.
2. It is prudent for a retired pastor that he consider not remaining a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one's membership to another congregation is very helpful to aid the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor's retired role. One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim (pastoral vacancy) ministry (or, with training, Intentional Interim Ministry). Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. This is a way to honor our Lord and continue serving His Church.
3. If remaining within the community last served, the retiring pastor ought not attend the church previously served for a period of at least six months to one year following the retirement. Visits following that period will be at the invitation of the Interim Minister or the new pastor. Participation in baptisms, weddings and funerals should be by invitation of the Interim Minister or new pastor. Persons not associated with the church should be encouraged to form a relationship with the church and its Interim Minister or new pastor.
4. Once the new pastor is in place, the relationship between the new pastor and the former pastor with the church he formerly served can be worked out. If a satisfactory and workable mutual agreement cannot be reached between them, they may wish to consult with the circuit visitor or district president.
5. It is imperative that members avoid discussing issues concerning the congregation, the current pastor, the staff, the Circuit, or any other aspect of congregational life with a former pastor or other ordained minister, or even members worshipping within the congregation. Such discussions are likely to be perceived as soliciting advice or counsel on church matters. It is in his best interest and for the health and welfare of the church, as well as the Kingdom, that a former pastor

distance himself from the congregation and that other ministers not usurp the relationship between the current pastoral leadership and the congregation.

6. When a former pastor is named Pastor Emeritus, it needs to be understood by the former pastor and the congregation that this is an honorary title and does not imply or include any pastoral duties or responsibilities. The retiring pastor should always support and guard well the role of the new pastor.
7. It is disruptive for a pastor to succeed himself as Interim Minister of the church immediately served. Upon retirement, the pastor will sever **all** pastoral ties with the former congregation. This allows for the church to call an Interim Minister to serve as a bridge between the former pastor and the calling of a new one, and to assist the congregation in its grieving process. A violation of this is a breach of ministerial ethics and may potentially interfere in some one's divine call.
8. Whenever a pastor is to remain within the community of a church just served, their relationship to that church, its Interim Minister, and its newly called pastor shall be evaluated with the wellbeing of that church in mind. What evolves as a working relationship must give first priority to the needs of the church. Individuals' needs are important but must not take priority. The relationship of former pastor, Interim Minister and new pastor must reflect the needs of the church.

A MINISTRY COVENANT WITH FORMER PASTORS

Any Pastor ending his service to a congregation for any reason should be strongly encouraged not to retain membership, or to continue to attend at that congregation.

If a Pastor ending his service to a congregation for any reason desires to retain his membership there or to continue to attend, and the congregational leadership is amenable, the following guidelines are encouraged.

I. Introducing the Ministry Covenant

The goal of this document is to assist the former pastor, representatives of the congregation and the new pastor to form a covenant agreement describing how they will support one another. While the needs of the former pastor and spouse are important, the well-being of the congregation and the relationship with their new pastor is the priority. A healthy relationship with a former pastor can be a wonderful asset to the congregation and future ministry if all parties are able to work together in trust and love.

If a covenant agreement is set in place prior to the arrival of the new Pastor it is to be reviewed within two months of the arrival of the new Pastor. Thereafter having an annual conversation and renewal of the covenant will give opportunity for the body of Christ to be edified.

II. Components of A Ministry Covenant

1. Thanksgiving

A statement giving thanks for the ministry of the former pastor and spouse.

2. Our Intentions for the immediate future

- A. A statement from the pastor and spouse that describes their plans for church involvement until the new pastor arrives.
- B. A statement from the congregation leaders and (when he arrives) the new pastor, identifying specific ways they will support the former pastor and his wife spiritually and relationally

3. How We Live Out Our Agreement Given Certain Situations

- A. A statement clearly stating that all parties recognize that the former Pastor is no longer Pastor to the congregation.
- B. A statement describing how all parties to the covenant will handle requests for pastoral service from the former pastor
- C. A statement about attendance at weddings, funerals, baptisms when the former pastor and spouse are specifically invited during the initial transition time
- D. A statement about the role of the spouse of the former Pastor within the congregation
- E. A statement about the pastor and spouse's relationship with personal friends within the congregation
- F. A statement about emergency situations causing the covenant agreement to be set aside for a time

4. Covenant Renewal

- A. A statement describing involvement of former pastor and spouse within the congregation based on their interest, and needs of the congregation
- B. A statement of how all parties to the covenant handle requests being made by congregation members to the former pastor
- C. A statement describing the former pastor's involvement in congregation decisions especially if he disagrees with the direction
- D. Identify how the covenant will be evaluated, by whom, and when

5. Ecclesiastical Supervision.

- A. A copy of the Ministry Covenant shall be forwarded to the office of the District President for his signature.

Signature of Former Pastor and Spouse: _____

Signature of Vacancy/Interim/Settled Pastor: _____

Representative of Congregation: _____

District President: _____

Date: _____ Proposed Renewal Date (within 12 months): _____

III. Notes on the Covenant

Parties to the Covenant – The working principle behind a covenant is this: a covenant manages agreement. The decision to put a covenant agreement in place is a proactive decision to honor the relationship between all parties. The key parties include:

- The new pastor of the congregation
- The members of the congregation (represented by the leaders)
- The former pastor and spouse

While representatives of the congregation represent the congregation in putting the covenant in place and administering the details of the covenant, the congregation needs to be informed about the rationale behind the covenant (whatever is appropriate for the larger congregation to know).

Key Aspects of the Covenant Relationship – If the pastor and spouse are remaining in the congregation, it is important that all parties agree to participate and honor the covenant relationship. That would include:

- Agreement to use the covenant to define the relationship
- Periodic evaluation and renewal of the covenant relationship
- Appropriate changes made to the covenant on the basis of changing circumstances (such as the calling of a new pastor)
- Use of spiritual tools (prayer, confession and absolution, God's Word, etc.) in shaping the relationship, especially during challenging times
- Celebration of the covenant relationship at time of successful completion of the covenant with the pastors, spouses, and leaders of the congregation.

F. COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS' POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

What follows is a series of Policies and Guidelines from the Council of Presidents' Manual which circuit visitors need to be aware of as they carry out their duties on behalf of the Synod. The Policies and Guidelines that follow are shared, not so that the circuit visitor enforce them but rather, so that the circuit visitor and pastors in the circuit might be made aware of the policies and guidelines which are in place having been adopted by the Council of Presidents.

DEFINITION OF POLICY: A “policy” prescribes a definite course of action from which there ought be no deviation. For instance, the “COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS’ POLICY REGARDING PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS WHO ARE GUILTY OF NON-SPOUSAL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE” is a binding “policy” on all District Presidents, from which there is to be no deviation.

DEFINITION OF GUIDELINE: A “guideline” is proposed or suggested course of action adopted to provide an evangelical and consistent approach to the question; which provides some flexibility in addressing the issues at hand.

GUIDELINES FOR CALLS VS. CONTRACTS FOR MINISTERS OF RELIGION - ORDAINED

Sources Consulted

- 1) Article XIV, Augsburg Confession
- 2) Article VI, Conditions of Membership, 2019 *Handbook* of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, p. 15
- 3) Bylaw section 2.11, Continued Eligibility of Individual Members, 2019 *Handbook* of the LCMS
- 4) Res. 6-14, 1981 Convention
- 5) Res. 5-09A, 1983 Convention
- 6) “Rubrics Governing Call and Placement Procedures for Ministers of Religion—Commissioned Ministers”
- 7) Chapter 1, 2019 LCMS Treasurer’s Manual
- 8) CCM Opinions (1980–2005)
 - a) Ag. 1976 (January 29, 1994)
 - b) Ag. 2041 (August 28, 1996)
 - c) 00-2193 (December 11–12, 2000)
 - d) 00-2217 (December 11–12, 2000)
 - e) 05-2428 (June 30, 2005)
- 9) COP Manual, Chapter 7.5.5, “Questions about Emeritus Pastors Working Part Time” – Letter
- 10) COP Manual, Chapter 7.5.6, “Guidelines for Retired Pastors Returning to the Pastoral Ministry”
- 11) Guidelines for the Training and Credentialing of Intentional Interim pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Council of Presidents, Adopted April 2001.

Article VI – Conditions of Membership

Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod states, “Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following: ...3. Regular call of pastors ...”

The reference to the “regular” call of pastors directs our attention to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession.

The Augsburg Confession

Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states, “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 says simply that one should not exercise the office of the public ministry without being “rite vocatus,” i.e., without being called to such service according to the “rites” of the church. The rites of the church have changed from time to time as they apply to the calling and appointing of ministers in the church. At the Reformation, being “rite vocatus” meant that the nobleman or layman who had the right to select the curate or pastor exercised his authority to do so, the bishop concurred and issued the call or appointment, and the laity at the installation of the curate or pastor concurred in the selection and appointment of the candidate by saying “Yes” at the appropriate moment in the rite of installation or induction. When it was no longer possible to involve bishops in the calling and appointment, other rites were developed, and they involved the neighboring clergy, the laity, and the nobleman or layman who had the authority to select the new minister. When Walther¹² and the Saxons came to St. Louis, they tried to use an episcopal system (as they understood it), but when that proved disastrous because of the alleged flaws in the character of the bishop, new rites were developed, and those rites focused heavily on the rights and privileges of the calling congregation. That basic system still flourishes among us today. Thus, after the famous Altenburg Debate of 1841, Walther could conclude that he and his colleagues in Perry County and in St. Louis had been “rite vocatus” to serve as pastors of the churches that had appointed and called them.¹³

A “regular” call, then, is one which has met the established criteria for a legitimate and valid call. In other words, it is issued according to the rules and regulations which have been established by the church.

Understanding of the Synod

Res. 6-14 of the 1981 convention of the Synod states, “A solemn call is an official request, offer, or agreement extended by an eligible calling body in the name of the triune God to a person eligible to receive such a call into an educational ministry of the LCMS. Offers extended to such eligible persons but erroneously referred to as ‘appointments’ or ‘contracts’ are also to be considered calls.” For the purposes of Synod’s roster, such appointments or contracts should be regarded as calls.

While the above resolution refers only to educational ministry, the definition of a solemn call contained therein also applies to those in pastoral ministry. Therefore, offers extended to pastors which are erroneously referred to as “appointments” or “contracts” are also to be considered calls. For the purposes of Synod’s roster, such appointments or contracts should be regarded as calls.

Definitions

¹² C. F. W. Walther’s call to the parish he served in Saxony before leaving for America involved appointment by the individual who had the right to make the selection of the minister, and that appointment was then endorsed by the consistory and accepted by the congregation where he would serve. He was “rite vocatus.”

¹³Unpublished article by Rev. Dr. James Pragman, August 24, 2004.

Active Members (Bylaw 2.11.1)

2.11.1 To remain on the roster of the Synod as an active member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member of a congregation which is a member of the Synod (except as provided in paragraph [c] below) and be regularly performing the duties of one of the following:

- (a) An ordained minister serving a congregation of the Synod.
- (b) A commissioned minister serving a congregation of the Synod.
- (c) A minister of religion, ordained or commissioned, serving a congregation which is not a member of the Synod, provided that such is approved (on the basis of policies adopted by the Council of Presidents) by the president of the district in which the congregation is located.
- (d) An elected officer of the Synod, including a district or other agency of the Synod.
- (e) An executive or professional staff member serving the Synod, including a district or other agency of the Synod.
- (f) An executive or professional staff member serving a national inter-Lutheran entity of which the Synod is a member.
- (g) A missionary serving under a call by the Synod, including a call by a district.
- (h) A person serving on the faculty or professional staff of an educational institution of the Synod.
- (i) A military or institutional chaplain or other specialized ministry endorsed by the Synod, including endorsement by one of its districts.
- (j) An executive or professional staff member called or appointed by a national inter-Lutheran agency referred to in Bylaw 1.3.8.
- (k) An executive or professional staff member called or appointed by an auxiliary (Bylaw section 6.1) or other recognized service organization (Bylaw section 6.2), or a person serving an educational institution solely governed by congregations of the Synod and recognized by a district of the Synod.

Inactive Members (Bylaw 2.11.2)

2.11.2 Inactive members are advisory members of the Synod.

- (a) As such, they have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of advisory membership in the Synod as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.
- (b) To remain on the roster of the Synod as an inactive member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member in good standing of a congregation which is a member of the Synod and must qualify and make application for one of the following categories.

Emeritus (Bylaw 2.11.2.1)

2.11.2.1 An “emeritus” member is one whose membership is held for retention on the roster upon retirement after reaching the age of 55 or for reasons of total and permanent disability. Any unusual case shall be decided by the Council of Presidents if the appropriate district president so requests.

- (a) The emeritus member or a representative identified by his district president shall, by January 31, make an annual report to the member's district president.
- (b) This report shall include current contact information and address the criteria for remaining an inactive member of the Synod.

Candidate (Bylaw 2.11.2.2)

2.11.2.2 A "candidate" member is one who is eligible to perform the duties of any of the offices of ministry specified in Bylaw section 2.11 but who is not currently an active member or an emeritus member....

Calling Congregation (i.e., "Vacancy," "Pastoral Vacancy")

A congregation which is in the process of calling a pastor following the departure of its previous pastor or which has definite plans to call a pastor in the near future.

Temporary Non-Calling Congregation

A congregation which intends to fill the pastoral vacancy which has been created by the departure of its former pastor, but which has suspended that process for a period of time.

Application

Because of the variety of circumstances which occur and the impact which they can have on a worker's eligibility to receive benefits from Concordia Plan Services, the worker is encouraged to contact Concordia Plan Services to discuss the effect that the following arrangements might have on his/her membership and benefits prior to accepting a position of service covered by these guidelines.

The following paragraphs are meant to serve as a guideline for district presidents in accurately maintaining their official roster of members. As such, they may not cover every situation which arises within a district. In those instances, the district president will need to consult with the appropriate entity (i.e., Secretary of the Synod, Dept. of Rosters and Statistics, etc.) to determine how to handle a particular situation which is not clearly covered by these guidelines.

1. Emeritus Pastors

- a. An emeritus pastor who is asked to serve a congregation as a full-time or part-time pastor on a regular, ongoing basis should be extended a call, not a contract, to that ministry.
- b. He shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., "rightly called") to that ministry.
- c. He should be properly installed into that ministry. The pastor's installation is to be authorized by the district president and reported to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics on the appropriate rostering form.
- d. Accepting such a call will mean, in terms of the LCMS clergy roster, that the pastor is no longer emeritus. He shall have active roster status.

- e. If called as the sole pastor or as an associate pastor (i.e., not as an assistant pastor), the pastor will once again enjoy all of the rights and privileges pertaining to the pastoral office, including, but not limited to, the right to vote at circuit forums and conventions of the district and Synod.
- f. When such an individual's call ends, the district president will inform the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics of this action on the appropriate rostering form and the pastor must reapply for Emeritus Status.

2. Part-time or Bi-vocational Pastors (Pastors who are not on emeritus status)

- a. A pastor who is asked to serve a congregation on a regular, ongoing, part-time basis should be extended a call, not a contract, to that ministry.
- b. He shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., “rightly called”) to that ministry.
- c. He should be properly installed into that ministry. The pastor's installation is to be authorized by the district president and reported to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics on the appropriate rostering form.
- d. He shall have active roster status.
- e. The pastor will enjoy all of the rights and privileges pertaining to the pastoral office, including, but not limited to, the right to vote at circuit forums and conventions of the district and Synod.

3. Temporary Service to Congregations

a. Intentional Interim Pastors

- 1) Intentional interim pastors are ordained pastors who have received specialized training and have demonstrated a willingness to serve congregations wishing to address transitional issues. Normally, an intentional interim pastor serves a congregation under a limited-tenure call.
- 2) Credentialing to serve as an intentional interim pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is granted by the Interim Ministry Credentialing Committee, which is composed of appointed members of the LCMS Interim Ministry Conference and the Council of Presidents.
- 3) If a pastor on emeritus status is asked by a congregation to serve as an intentional interim pastor, see section B (Vacancy Pastors) below.
- 4) If an LCMS-credentialed intentional interim pastor is called by a district:
 - a) He shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., “rightly called”) to that ministry.

- b) He shall have active roster status under Bylaw 2.11.1 (e).
 - c) He should be properly installed into a congregational ministry. The pastor's installation is to be authorized by the district president.
 - d) On the Synod's roster, the pastor will be listed as a staff member of the district and the pastoral office of the congregation will be considered vacant.
 - e) Since the pastor, as a member of the district staff, is an advisory member of the Synod, he is not eligible to represent the congregation as a voting delegate at circuit forums and district or Synod conventions.
- 5) If an LCMS-credentialed intentional interim pastor is called by a congregation:
- a) He shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., "rightly called") to that ministry.
 - b) He shall have active roster status under Bylaw 2.11.1 (a).
 - c) He should be properly installed into that ministry. The pastor's installation is to be authorized by the district president and reported to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics on the appropriate rostering form.
 - d) On the congregational roster of the Synod, the pastor will be listed as serving the particular parish, but with an IIP (Intentional Interim Pastor) designation after his name.
 - e) The pastor will enjoy all of the rights and privileges pertaining to the pastoral office, including, but not limited to, the right to vote at circuit forums and conventions of the district and Synod.
- 6) If a pastor who has had intentional interim ministry training, but who is not LCMS-credentialed, is called by a congregation to serve as the interim pastor of the congregation:
- a) He shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., "rightly called") to that ministry.
 - b) He shall have active roster status under Bylaw 2.11.1 (a).
 - c) He should be properly installed into that ministry. The pastor's installation is to be authorized by the district president and reported to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics on the appropriate rostering form.
 - d) The pastor will enjoy all of the rights and privileges pertaining to the pastoral office, including, but not limited to, the right to vote at circuit forums and conventions of the district and Synod.

b. Vacancy Pastors

- 1) A vacancy pastor is an ordained minister on the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who is asked to provide temporary service to a congregation because the pastoral office in that congregation is vacant.

- 2) The arrangements for such service are supervised by the district president or the circuit visitor serving as the president's representative.
 - 3) The congregation, supervised by the district president or his representative, after studying its pastoral needs during the vacancy, formally asks a properly qualified pastor to meet its pastoral needs by serving as its vacancy pastor. In doing so, the pastor shall be considered to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., "rightly called") to that ministry.¹⁴
 - 4) Call documents do not need to be completed for vacancy pastors and no rostering forms need to be submitted to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics.
 - 5) The conditions of the pastor's service to the congregation (i.e., job description, hours to be worked, salary, mileage, etc.) should be included in a document signed by the involved parties.
 - 6) The pastoral office will be considered to be vacant during the duration of the vacancy pastor's service.
 - 7) A vacancy pastor may be installed in a public worship service by the district president or his representative as determined by the congregation.
 - 8) The vacancy pastor will not have the privilege of representing the congregation at circuit forums and conventions of the district and the Synod.
 - 9) Under normal circumstances the vacancy pastor, although eligible, should not to be considered as a candidate for the office of pastor of the vacant congregation.
- c. Seasonal Pastors

- 1) A seasonal pastor is an ordained minister on the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who is asked to assist in the ministry of a congregation located in a place where people relocate to spend a portion of the year (e.g., a congregation in one of the southern states experiencing an influx of visitors from colder climates during the winter months).
- 2) The arrangements for engaging the services of a seasonal pastor are supervised by the district president and/or the *pastor loci* of the congregation.
- 3) The arrangements for the service of a seasonal pastor are negotiated between the seasonal pastor and the congregation he will be serving. The conditions of the pastor's service to the congregation (i.e., job description, hours to be worked, salary, mileage, etc.) should be included in a document signed by the involved parties.
- 4) A seasonal pastor shall be said to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., "rightly called") to that ministry.¹⁵

¹⁴ Anyone who is invited to occupy the pulpit and/or conduct a worship service as a guest or supply pastor must understand that he has a call to perform that service on that occasion. If it is not understood that such a pastor has such a call, that pastor has no right to be doing what he is doing.

¹⁵ Ibid.

- 5) Call documents do not need to be completed for seasonal pastors, and no rostering forms need to be submitted to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics.
- 6) A seasonal pastor may be installed in a public worship service by the district president, his representative, or the *pastor loci*, as determined by the congregation.
- 7) A seasonal pastor will not have the privilege of representing the congregation at circuit forums and conventions of the district and the Synod.

d. Guest or Supply Pastors

- 1) A guest or supply pastor is an ordained minister on the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who is invited to preach and/or conduct worship services for a limited time (e.g., a weekend, several weeks while the *pastor loci* is on vacation, etc.).
- 2) The arrangements, including any honorarium, for such service are supervised and managed by the *pastor loci*, the local congregation's board of elders, and/or other appropriate congregational officers.
- 3) A guest or supply preacher is said to be *rite vocatus* (i.e., “rightly called”) to perform the service and duty for which he has been invited.¹⁶ The *pastor loci* or the board of elders is, in effect, the one who delegates to the guest or supply pastor the responsibility for preaching and/or conducting the worship service on specific occasions.
- 4) Call documents do not need to be completed for guest or supply pastors and no rostering forms need to be submitted to the Dept. of Rosters and Statistics.
- 5) A guest or supply pastor will not have the privilege of representing the congregation at circuit forums and conventions of the district and the Synod.

4. Service in Partner Churches

- a. The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC).

Special operating agreements have been developed to govern the service provided to congregations by ordained and commissioned ministers of the partner church. See Operating Agreement II for further information.

Adopted February 2009
 Revised September 2011
 Reviewed September 2014
 Revised February 2015
 Reviewed April 2015
 Reviewed and updated April 2017
 Under CCM review in 2018

¹⁶ Ibid.

**COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS POLICY
REGARDING PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS
WHO ARE GUILTY OF NON-SPOUSAL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

It is the policy of the Council of Presidents that all ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned who are found guilty of sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse shall be removed from the rosters of the Synod, i.e., the ministers of religion—ordained and the ministers of religion—commissioned rosters.

This policy recognizes that “sexual intercourse” can describe different forms of sexual contact. Therefore, each district president shall at his discretion determine in any given case whether the kind of sexual contact is sexual intercourse within the spirit and purpose of this policy, provided that sexual intercourse shall in all cases include oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse.

The policy applies to all incidents when they initially become known to the district president, regardless of the date when they took place except it does not apply to incidents that occurred prior to the individual being initially placed on the roster and/or becoming ordained or commissioned. For example, an incident that took place twenty years ago, when it becomes known to the district president, shall be dealt with according to the terms and conditions of this policy with one caveat: if a past incident was known to a district president prior to the inception of this policy (November 1998) and dealt with at that time, such incident will not be subject to this policy.

RATIONALE

Sexual intercourse on the part of a professional church worker with someone other than his/her spouse is a matter of grave concern to the church because the sixth commandment states, “You shall not commit adultery.” In addition, the qualifications for the public ministry state that the professional church worker should “be above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2), “self-controlled” (1 Timothy 3:2), and “blameless” (Titus 1:6). Furthermore, it is expected that one who serves the Lord in the public ministry will “have a good reputation with outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7) and be an “example to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7). In the Rites of Ordination and Installation, the

ordinand/pastor-elect is asked, “Finally, will you adorn the office of the public ministry with a holy life.” He responds by saying, “I will, the Lord helping me through the power and grace of His Holy Spirit.” The commissioned minister likewise pledges to “adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a holy life.”

The Council of Presidents has previously stated that “If the pastor is guilty of fornication, adultery or malicious desertion, which results in separation or divorce, the district president after consulting with the leadership of the congregation shall ask him to resign from his pastorate and the clergy roster, or he shall suspend and remove him” (“Guidelines For Dealing With Marital Crisis Involving Separation and Divorce of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Clergy,” April 29, 1987, p. 6).

The Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations has also stated that “sexual intercourse engaged in outside of the marriage relationship is forbidden by the Scriptures and must be condemned by the church (“Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective,” A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS, 1981, pp. 10, 12).

In September, 1991 the Commission on Theology and Church Relations responded to the question raised by the Commission on Appeals, “Is adultery which has become publicly known biblical grounds for removal from office?” In doing so, it stated:

Yes. As the CTCR says in its report *Divorce and Remarriage*:

The Christian pastor is summoned by the Scriptures to a pattern of life that is exemplary of the Gospel at work, and worthy of emulation (1 Peter 5:3). This is not because the pastoral office has some special “character” within the priesthood of all believers, but because the pastor stands under the special apostolic injunction that the office which he holds requires one who is “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2). Moral failure in the life of the pastor, therefore, is never merely a matter of private offense which can be treated in isolation from the public office which he holds and the accountability which it requires.

Fidelity to one’s spouse is of particular importance in the life and conduct of the Christian pastor. This is clear from the fact that foremost in the list of requirements (dei - I Timothy 3:2) for what it means to be “above reproach” is that he be “the husband of one wife” (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6) (*Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study*, CTCR, November 1987, pp. 42-43).

The sin of adultery is certainly “biblical grounds for the removal of a man from the office of the public ministry” (1992 *Convention Workbook*, pg. 69).

Therefore, the act of sexual intercourse on the part of a professional church worker with anyone other than his/her spouse:

- 1) is a sin against God and others;
- 2) is inconsistent with the life to which we are called as a child of God;
- 3) is inconsistent with the qualifications of the office of the public ministry found in the scriptures;
- 4) is a breach of the worker’s ordination/commissioning and installation vows;
- 5) is an offense to the church and the world;
- 6) has a negative impact on the church’s witness in the world.

Adopted November 1998

**GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CREDIT AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES
INVOLVING MINISTERS OF RELIGION—ORDAINED IN THE LUTHERAN
CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD**

Preamble

Christian individuals and families can lose control of their finances through poor management. Ministers of religion—ordained in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) can experience these same problems, leading to a failure in this important area of their Christian stewardship responsibility. Yet the Lord expects them to be examples to the flocks they serve. To enable this to happen according to His standards, He has specified the qualifications which they should possess and how they should conduct themselves. This involves their households, which certainly includes the management of their finances.

In 1 Timothy 3:5, St. Paul states: “If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?” This is a necessary quality and characteristic demanded by the Lord. The ordained minister serves in the “Office of Public Ministry”—“the divinely established office referred to in Scripture as ‘shepherd,’ ‘elder,’ or ‘overseer.’ This term is equivalent to ‘the pastoral office.’ Within this of [sic] office are contained all the functions of the ministry of Word and sacrament in the church” (*The Ministry: Offices, Procedures and Nomenclature*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, September 1981). In this role as “shepherd,” the ordained minister must be aware of his obligations as manager and steward.

In 1 Peter 5:2–3, the apostle Peter instructs those who serve in ministry that as they serve they should do so “...as God wants you to be; not greedy for money but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” The minister of religion—ordained is a steward of God’s gifts to him. As such, the pastor has an obligation to be an example for those whom he serves in all aspects of stewardship, including personal financial stewardship.

Pastors and their families may experience financial reverses and difficulties for a number of reasons.

1. They fail to budget or budget properly. Their style and manner of living is not supported by their income.
2. Some families live from month to month on the basis of credit extended to them by banks and credit card companies. Perhaps an ordained minister and his family have decided to finance their monthly

living expenses by using a credit card for the purchase of groceries, gasoline, maintenance items around the house, and other incidental expenses. Without attentive monitoring of those purchases, the balance accumulated within a month can be larger than the monthly income. The easy alternative when the bill becomes due is simply to pay part of the bill and roll the remainder over to the next month's statement. When the limit on the account set by the credit card company has been reached, the minister of religion—ordained and his family often seek a “painless” way of dealing with the situation by opening another account with another credit card company or bank. The family's financial situation then spirals out of control.

3. More than a few pastors upon graduation from college arrive at their first calls with large debts. The situation is compounded if the parish provides the new graduate with only a modest cash salary because part of his compensation may be the “free” use of a church-owned house. The costs of settling into that first call while repaying educational and other loans can strain the pastor's finances beyond what he is capable of handling.
4. Other financial developments can also wreak havoc for the ordained minister and his family. Perhaps the pastor, his wife, or one of the children is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness and the medical treatments are very expensive. While health insurance offsets some of the costs, not all of them are covered. These new expenses coupled with a modest salary, other debts, and educational debts—all requiring repayment—can force the pastor to seek help in order to eliminate the stigma of being a bad credit risk. These and many other similar situations will sometimes cause a pastor and his family to face credit difficulties which may, in some cases, rise to the level of a declaration of bankruptcy.

Increasingly, society and the law recognize that credit problems can entail a spectrum of issues, and the traditional approach (generally known as “straight bankruptcy”) is no longer viewed as the primary means of addressing the same.

Following amendments to the Bankruptcy Code in 2005 there is a greater emphasis on seeking credit counseling and education, on developing debt management plans that do not necessarily entail liquidation, and on maintaining the debtor's ability to remain a productive wage-earning member of society while still working to repay his or her obligations.

In accordance with this spirit, districts in the LCMS should identify qualified individuals within the district who can provide pastors with competent financial planning advice, so that even before problems develop they have opportunity to learn to manage their assets and their households well. If possible, districts should make this service available to the pastors experiencing financial difficulties without cost to them. Where beneficial, district officials should refer pastors and their families to those experts who can provide financial planning information and guidance.

If credit difficulties start to arise, districts should encourage their pastors to seek help as early as possible. Credit counseling is now mandatory prior to any filing for bankruptcy. The earlier that such counseling can begin, the more likely it will be that credit difficulties can be addressed without resorting to bankruptcy.

The United States Department of Justice is required to develop and maintain a list of approved credit counseling agencies which have agreed to provide counseling to debtors in accordance with federal guidelines. Among said guidelines is a requirement to charge for services on a sliding scale in accordance with ability to pay. By virtue of the obligation to adhere to federal requirements, such approved counseling agencies can be distinguished from disreputable advisors who often “overpromise” their ability to address credit difficulties.

District officials should familiarize themselves with the list of approved counselors in their districts, which is available at the following website:

http://www.justice.gov/ust/eo/bapcpa/ccde/cc_approved.htm

Guidelines for Credit & Financial Difficulties

The following “Guidelines for Credit & Financial Difficulties” have been developed to help pastors, their families, their congregational leaders, district presidents, and other church officials deal with credit problems. Such problems can undermine the pastor’s effectiveness in his place of service and may ultimately lead to disqualification from ministry. These guidelines seek to provide an evangelical and consistent response to the question, “What do we do when a pastor’s financial situation begins to spiral beyond his or her ability to address credit difficulties without assistance in developing a plan for repayment or, in the extreme case, bankruptcy?”

1. First and foremost, the pastor needs to accept personal responsibility for his financial situation. The seriousness of the situation is made clear from the words of Psalm 37:21, “The wicked borrow and do not repay.”
2. Pastors and their wives are expected to contact their district presidents in a timely manner to receive their counsel and assistance in using district resources as they deal with their financial situation. It is the responsibility of the worker who is experiencing financial stress to contact his district president as soon as possible for consultation to do everything possible to avoid bankruptcy. Failure to cooperate with the district president may result in discipline, inclusive of suspension from LCMS membership
3. District presidents are ecclesiastical supervisors. Therefore they work evangelically to help pastors respond to and deal with problems affecting their work as ministers of religion—ordained, including the burden of debt and insolvency. They strive to do so in such a way that enables pastors to address financial problems in a God-pleasing manner and thus remain qualified to undertake the work to which they have been called by congregations of God’s people. But the ultimate question which the district president must address is whether or not the pastor’s management of his financial situation has disqualified him from continuing to serve as a minister of religion—ordained in the LCMS.
4. When a pastor is faced with increasing financial difficulty, he should seek competent advice and assistance to address the problems causing the difficulty. With the help of the advisors to whom the district can direct the pastor, he should speak with the financial institutions that have extended the credit and explain his current situation to them. Seeking such help and counsel is a mature and responsible act on the pastor’s part. To ignore the problem or to avoid those who are competent to provide counsel and guidance will only compound the problem and complicate later efforts to resolve the situation. If the pastor allows this financial situation to reach a crisis level, he is creating a crisis for the family, congregation, and creditors.
5. Before the pastor makes a decision to seek relief from creditors by filing for bankruptcy, he, his wife, and his district president should consult with appropriate congregational leadership (including the senior pastor if the pastor is not the senior pastor), providing them with a true and accurate picture of the financial condition so that the congregation’s leadership is fully aware of the situation and the alternatives available as their pastor seeks to restructure these financial affairs. This should be done before the situation becomes public knowledge and creates an obstacle to the acceptance of his ministry in the congregation and community.

6. In Luke 10:7 and 1 Timothy 5:18 we are told that “the worker deserves his wages.” The pastor’s financial problems should not be allowed to dominate his life and thus impinge on his ability to serve effectively. If the pastor’s main concern is whether or not he and his family can make ends meet, that will demoralize the pastor and his family and undermine the joy of ministry that God intends for pastors and the congregations they serve. Therefore in an effort to assist the pastor in addressing the situation, the congregation should carefully evaluate whether it is paying the pastor an adequate salary. As a minimum, the congregation is to be encouraged to offer the pastor a compensation package which is in keeping with the district’s recommended guidelines for compensation and benefits.
7. In spite of everyone’s best efforts, some pastors may discover that their current income and assets will not allow them to eliminate or alleviate the burden of debt they are carrying. The pastor may view bankruptcy as the only remaining option. Bankruptcy is permitted under the law of the land because that is the lesser of two evils. If a debtor cannot be given an opportunity to restructure the debt voluntarily and productively, the debtor may pursue less than honorable extremes (e.g., theft, embezzlement, etc.). Thus the declaration of bankruptcy provides a way of avoiding those questionable, if not obviously immoral, extremes. Society has recognized that it is better to allow an orderly means for the restructuring and repayment (or, in more extreme cases, liquidation and forgiveness of debts) than to have a debtor resort to illegal and/or desperate acts.

There are two basic types of bankruptcy for individual debtors: (a) liquidation or (b) wage earner reorganization. The following is a brief description of the options available and should not be construed as legal advice.

- Chapter 7 bankruptcy has historically been known as “straight bankruptcy.” A married couple may file a joint Chapter 7 case. In a Chapter 7 bankruptcy the debtor (*i.e.*, the minister of religion—ordained) must turn over all “nonexempt” property he owns to the court-appointed trustee. Property that qualifies as “exempt” property will vary according to state law, but generally entails the debtor’s personal effects (most ordinary clothing and household items), qualified retirement accounts, and sometimes his automobile and/or residence. The trustee sells the “nonexempt” property, and the proceeds of the sale are used to pay the trustee’s administrative costs and then the creditors to the extent possible. Most (but not all) debts are “discharged” in a Chapter 7 case, *i.e.*, the debtor will no longer be legally obligated to repay the debts. In order to file for Chapter 7, the debtors have to satisfy a complicated formula that compares their income and expenses with the median numbers in their states. In some cases, ministers of religion—ordained may not have the option of filing for Chapter 7.
- Chapter 13 bankruptcy is available only to individuals or married couples with a regular income. This chapter allows the minister of religion—ordained with a regular income to keep his assets but provides for the graduated payment of all debts. This may be the only chapter available for some ministers of religion—ordained.

Under Chapter 13, the minister of religion—ordained will, under the supervision of the Bankruptcy Court and its trustee, develop a plan for repayment of debts over a three-to-five-year period (“Plan”). Unlike a “straight bankruptcy,” assets are not liquidated. Debts, however, are not automatically discharged and must be repaid in accordance with the Plan. As already noted, it is a precondition to a Chapter 13 filing that the minister of religion—ordained undergo credit counseling with an approved provider. In addition, the debtor will need to undertake a credit education program as part of the debt restructuring plan. The debtor, however, must make regular payments to the trustee either directly or through payroll deduction, and make the necessary household and lifestyle adjustments to ensure the success of the Plan over the entire period.

The filing of either a Chapter 7 or a Chapter 13 bankruptcy places a “stay” (or temporary hold) on the efforts of creditors to legally foreclose upon (or take possession of in satisfaction of the debt) the assets of the minister of religion—ordained.

If a pastor, together with the applicable officials of the district and the advisors to whom he was referred in accordance with these guidelines, concludes there is no other option for addressing severe credit difficulties other than bankruptcy, then consultation with competent legal advisors is appropriate. These issues are complicated and competent legal representation should be obtained by anyone considering filing a petition of bankruptcy. It is also prudent for the district president to place the pastor on “Restricted Status” while a plan for bankruptcy is being developed and filed.

8. In any declaration of bankruptcy on the part of a pastor, it is expected that the restructuring plan will entail repayment to all creditors including present or former congregations. For the sake of accountability, it is also expected that the pastor will submit the restructuring plan to his district president. This in no way suggests that the district president is qualified or is expected to give financial advice. Failure to carry out this plan of accountability may result in suspension from the LCMS roster of Ministers of Religion—Ordained.
9. If the bankruptcy is being declared because circumstances beyond the ordained minister’s control have created his financial problems, ecclesiastical, moral, and ethical dimensions must be taken into consideration. Even in such a situation, the ordained minister will want to consult and work with his district president as he analyzes and determines his responsibilities in a declaration of bankruptcy.
10. Pastors who are intent on resolving their financial difficulties and who have concluded that a declaration of bankruptcy will allow them to do so must also give serious attention to the moral and ethical implications of their decision. Bankruptcy should not be sought as a means to escape one’s responsibility for managing one’s household well and to seek the welfare of one’s neighbor. This would be a clear violation of the Seventh Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” and could force the situation into the realm of disqualification from the roster of ministers of religion—ordained.

Conclusion

A declaration of bankruptcy is never proper, ethical, or moral if it is undertaken in an effort to avoid personal responsibility for just debts. A declaration of bankruptcy must take place in such a way that the ordained minister does not violate God’s commandments, particularly the seventh, the ninth, and the tenth. District presidents and their representatives will work with ordained ministers in financial difficulty to help them respond to their problems in a responsible and positive way. They will help those ordained ministers apply both Law and Gospel to themselves and their situation so that the resolution of their financial problems takes place according to the principles enunciated in both the Old and New Testaments.

Adopted April 2014
Reviewed April 2015
Reviewed April 2017

**GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH MARITAL CRISIS
INVOLVING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE
OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD CLERGY**

PREAMBLE

“The saying is sure, if anyone aspires to the office of bishop he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:1–2). Those words to a brother pastor set before us the high requirements of the office of the public ministry. In public, in private and in personal life, the one who aspires to the office of pastor is called to a most high standard. By focusing here on the marital relationship, we do not intend to diminish the other requirements of the office of the public ministry. The reality of continuing concerns in situations of clergy separation and divorce have prompted us to study carefully the issues and offer appropriate guidelines.

One of the continuing dilemmas for the human family is the difficulty so many encounter in sustaining marital and family relationships. God's intention for marriage is clear. While not everyone is expected to marry, those who do must understand “that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘for thus reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” (Matt. 19:4–6). “Let marriage be held in honor among all” (Heb. 13:4) is the clear and consistent matrimonial principle of Scripture. The gap between God's gracious will and human sinfulness is glaringly evident when people who want and need enduring family ties are unable to maintain and enrich them, and instead experience and even cause pain, alienation, offense, loneliness and loss.

Professional church workers are not immune to this dilemma. One of the realities facing the church of today is the tragedy of marriage breakup, not only among the laity, but among the clergy as well. For Christians it is a tremendous challenge to deal with that reality in both a caring and consistent way. Some church bodies and congregations have handled cases of clergy divorce in a cut and dried legalistic fashion. They contend that divorce, for whatever reason, disqualifies a man from further public ministry. Others seem to have gone to the opposite extreme and simply allow divorced clergy to remain in public ministry no matter what the reason(s) may have been that precipitated the divorce. What we are seeking to do here is to find a consistent approach that avoids both of these extremes. We want what is faithful to the

Scriptures and best for the church, its servants, and its people. Our approach needs to be both explicit and pastoral.

First of all, we joyously affirm the efficacy of God's grace to cover the multitude of all of our sins and to restore fallen people to the joy of their salvation. God's Spirit is surely able to restore a clean heart, not only in a repentant King David, but to hosts of others who have sinned and come short of the glory of God. At the same time, we take seriously the high calling of what it means to be a member of God's flock, and especially a pastor of the flock.

What God says about all marriages and his will for marriage is stated in simple straightforward language. His expectation is high (Matt. 19:5–6). The relationship of marriage is to be regarded as holy and should be given the highest priority in one's personal and professional life. Special expectations are placed on the man who has been called to be a pastor in the flock of God. The Lord himself warns his disciples about the dangers of causing little ones who believe in him to sin (Matt. 18:5–7). By virtue of the call into the office of the public ministry, the pastor becomes an example to all believers. Thus it is required that a pastor and his wife be so conscious of the interweaving of sin and grace in their lives that personal activities do not become a cause for scandal. Consequently when a pastor's marriage is broken, the problem is compounded not only because it is a clear and public violation of the will of God, but also because of the inconsistent witness it gives to the world. The Apostle Paul says, “We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry” (2 Cor. 6:3). In the New Testament epistles, in a rather specific way, God emphasizes the witness which a pastor is to give by his own excellent example in marriage and family life (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9, 1 Pet. 5:3).

The following guidelines are proposed to provide an evangelical and consistent approach to the question: “What do we do when a pastor is involved in marital stress which could end in divorce?” When a pastor's marriage is broken it becomes a serious problem for that person, his wife and family, for the congregation or employing agency, for the district president and for the whole church. It is our prayer that God will use these guidelines as an effective instrument for dealing with divorce and separation within the clergy.

[NOTE: Many of the basic principles that are set forth concerning the pastoral office also have application to other called professional church workers.]

I. Guidelines for dealing with marital crisis within the clergy:

- A. Divorce is definitely not God's way of resolving marriage problems. His standards do not change from one generation to another. When a pastor's marriage becomes more a burden than a continuation of mutual love, intimacy and growth, he is obligated to seek ways of marital renewal. One way is to seek competent Christian counseling assistance. At the same time the worker is encouraged to consult with the circuit visitor or another brother pastor in the matter. If the pastor has earnestly sought to renew the marital bond but the marriage continues to deteriorate, then the guidance of the district president should be sought and competent Christian counseling assistance becomes mandatory. Refusal to seek and utilize on a continuing basis this outside counseling resource in a time of serious marital deterioration must be construed as an unwillingness to use every opportunity to allow God's grace to renew the marriage. The one who has tasted of God's forgiving grace will want to extend that grace to the partner. We can always be sure that true reconciliation of marriage partners is God's will.
- B. When such efforts result in genuine renewal of the marital relationship, we rejoice in the graciousness of God and the new life for pastor and wife. If, despite such efforts at renewal, a marriage is approaching separation or divorce, the pastor and/or wife certainly should inform the

circuit visitor and the district president so that they can relate to this situation and fulfill their respective responsibilities here.

Failure to enter into such pastoral consultation with the district president prior to a separation or filing for divorce, can only be perceived as a disregard of the district president's responsibility, an unwillingness to take seriously the church's endorsement of the pastor's roster status, and an insensitivity to the impact of such action on the people of God and on the community. Such an attitude may finally become cause for ecclesiastical discipline.

- C. The district president's pastoral concern must encompass the pastor, his wife, their children, and the congregation or employing agency. In all of these encounters, he will seek to relate both God's will for marriage and God's love and concern for those who are experiencing broken relationships. An attitude of understanding and compassion must characterize the church. God is in the business of helping people where they hurt. The first concern must be pastoral, seeking to bring all the resources of both Law and Gospel to bear on the troubled situation. Among other things, the district president will review previous or present attempts at counseling with the pastor and his wife. If possible, he will seek out new initiatives for renewal and leave no possibility untapped that could work toward reconciliation.
- D. When such efforts on the part of the district president, other counselors, and the pastor/spouse result in renewal of the marriage, the church rejoices in God's healing power. But if in spite of these efforts the marriage continues to head toward separation or divorce, the district president, the pastor, and wife shall agree when and how the official board of the pastor's congregation, agency, or institution shall be informed before the actual separation or filing of legal action for dissolution of marriage. The possibility exists that the district president and pastor will want to do this personally and together. The district president will counsel with all parties involved regarding the potential consequences both personal and professional.

II. Guidelines for administration and assessing professional consequences:

- A. "Each district president, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, shall supervise the doctrine, life, and the official administration on the part of the pastors and the teachers of his district" (Bylaw 4.4.5). Divorce among pastors is a tragic fact, always forgivable, sometimes recoverable, but never without its consequences. Because separation or divorce introduces a particularly disruptive element in the life of the undershepherd and his relationship to the flock, these procedures shall be followed by the district president in the best interest of all concerned.
 - 1. If the pastor is guilty of fornication, adultery, or malicious desertion, which results in separation or divorce, the district president, after consulting with the leadership of the congregation, shall ask him to resign from his pastorate and the clergy roster, or he shall suspend and remove him (Constitution Art. XII 7-8; Bylaw 2.14.6). The congregation may also find it necessary to apply church disciplinary procedures to the pastor and/or his wife according to the principles of Matthew 18.
 - 2. If the situation needs clarification, the district president shall ask the pastor to take a leave of absence for not more than three months. He will also recommend to the congregation the payment of two-thirds base salary while the circumstances of the impending divorce are being clarified to the satisfaction of the district president. During this period of time the pastor is not eligible for another call and should not perform pastoral functions. Meanwhile, the congregation has a unique opportunity to demonstrate Christian support and concern for the pastor and his family.

3. After consultation with the parties involved, including the congregation, and depending on the circumstances, the district president shall determine whether the pastor shall
 - a. Remain at the congregation he is presently serving;
 - b. Resign his present pastorate, be placed on candidate status, and be declared eligible for a call to another parish preferably in a different geographic area substantially removed from his present ministry;
 - c. Resign his pastorate and be placed on candidate status-restricted until the matter can be clarified and the final status is determined;
 - d. Be asked to resign from his pastorate and the clergy roster, or be suspended and removed from the roster (Constitution Art. XII 7–8; Bylaw 2.14.6).
 4. The district president and circuit visitor should remain sensitive to the ongoing stress that the former pastor, his wife, family, and congregation will continue to experience during the post-divorce stage.
- B. Assuming evidence of repentance, the acceptance of forgiveness, and a willingness to cooperate, criteria to be considered by the district president include:
1. The scriptural reason given for divorce (Matt. 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12; 1 Cor. 7:10–15; Heb. 13:4).
 2. The role of pastor as an example to the flock (1 Tim. 3:2, 7; 4:12; Titus 1:7; 2:7–8; 1 Pet. 5:3).
 3. The broader scope of Scriptural qualifications for holding the pastoral office especially as these impact on the congregation and community (1 Tim. 3:1–7; 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 4:2–5; Titus 1:6–9).
 4. The long term causes for the breakdown of the marriage.
 5. The degree to which the pastor has acted or is acting responsibly toward his wife, family, congregation or calling group, and the district president.
 6. Whether the pastor has remained faithful to his wife.
 7. Whether adequate emotional and economic support is being given to his wife and the children of the marriage.
 8. Whether there is evidence of personal growth and maturing.
 9. The views of a professional counselor, offered with the permission of the pastor and/or wife.
- C. It must be clear that the final decision about clergy roster status rests with the district president, subject to the proper routes of appeal outlined in the Bylaws of the Synod. In the event a pastor resigns from the clergy roster or is removed due to a broken marriage, the opportunity for

reinstatement may exist (Bylaw section 2.18). However, there are some circumstances which make reinstatement impossible. Criteria for reinstatement shall include those items listed above under II B; evidence of a change in the person or situation, if possible; consultation with the district president who held office at the time of resignation or removal; and assurance that adequate professional counseling was received following the divorce. Care should be exercised not to confuse forgiveness with possession of the scriptural qualifications for holding the office of the public ministry. The simple fact of remarriage to a new partner by itself shall not be construed as persuasive evidence for reinstatement. Pertinent information and evaluative materials shall be presented to the Council of Presidents to support any request for return to pastoral ministry.

Adopted April 1987
Revised September 2011
Bylaws Updated February 2012
Reviewed April 2015
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ADDENDUM
TO THE GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH MARITAL CRISIS
INVOLVING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE OF
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED WORKERS

While each situation of marital crisis in the families of ordained and the commissioned workers is unique and ought to be dealt with on that basis, various principles ought to be remembered as a district president deals with a church worker family in crisis.

A. What is to be regarded as malicious desertion?

Malicious desertion can be defined in various ways. St. Paul writes, “But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). The word that St. Paul uses to describe desertion is “χωρίζεται.” It means to “separate, isolate one from another, divorce, leave, remove, cause to be at a distance.” This means that malicious desertion is not limited to physical abandonment.

1. Potential scenarios that require thorough investigation include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - a. one party in the marriage actually moves to another location
 - b. physical or emotional abuse, persistent and long-term refusal to be sexually intimate (1 Cor. 7:2–5)
 - c. addiction to alcohol, gambling, internet gaming, or pornography
 - d. obsessive devotion to other responsibilities while neglecting family responsibilities and needs
2. The potential danger here is multi-faceted: one spouse may make unfounded accusations to punish the other spouse, or one spouse may live as the silent victim inside a lonely marriage to protect the abuser.

3. Depending on the circumstances of the situation, the district president may be well advised to recommend that such pastors/church workers speak with their “father confessor,” or another spiritual counselor who is able to care for them on the basis of God’s Word. If they do not have such a person, they may be encouraged to recruit such a person with whom they can speak confidentially.
- B. What if the district president learns of a legal separation and/or the divorce of an ordained or commissioned minister of religion after it has been completed?
1. **When a district president learns of divorce involving a rostered worker after the fact, the district president shall contact the rostered worker directly, generally following the procedures laid out in “4.3 GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH MARITAL CRISIS INVOLVING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD CLERGY,” specifically in Part II, “Guidelines for Administration and Assessing Professional Consequences.”**
 2. Failing to inform the district president of a divorce calls into question the integrity and honesty of the church worker. As one holding a divine call, the worker has a responsibility to his/her local congregation and to the church at large. In his book *Church and Ministry*, C.F.W. Walther quotes John Gerhard: “There are in general seven functions or duties of the ministers of the church to which others may easily be related: (1) preaching the divine Word; (2) administration of the sacraments; (3) intercession for the flock entrusted to them; (4) an honorable, moral way of life; (5) administration of church discipline; (6) preservation of ceremonies in the church; (7) care of the poor and visiting the sick.”¹⁷
 3. In such cases the district president is advised to place the church worker in question on restricted status until the matter is resolved.
 4. **The district president may wish to appoint an investigative team, to look into the matter and bring a report back with recommendations for the district president to consider.**
 5. In such a case where the church worker fails to notify the district president of a divorce, the district president will admonish the worker for the failure of the church worker to inform the district president of an incident in his/her life that is vital to his family life and the life of the congregation. In addition, this failure to inform the district president should be noted in the church worker’s file by means of a letter and communicated with other district presidents when necessary.
 6. Generally speaking, regardless of the cause for the divorce of the church worker, it may be in the best interest of the congregation that the church worker be encouraged to resign their call.
 7. Deliberate deception is cause for removal from the LCMS roster.
- C. The called worker and spouse will be encouraged to see a marriage counselor and sign a waiver or release form so that the district president can talk with the marriage counselor. Below are several questions that might be considered for the counselor.
1. Please list the dates of all counseling sessions.

¹⁷Walther, C.F.W.: *Church and Ministry: Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*. electronic ed. St. Louis : Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1987, S. 216

2. Please indicate the length of each session.
 3. Please indicate who was in attendance at each of the sessions.
 4. Please identify the issues which were discussed in each of the sessions.
 5. Please identify the suggestions which were made to each participant to improve their marriage.
 6. Please indicate the level of cooperation the client(s) exhibited
 - a. toward you as a counselor;
 - b. toward the other participants in the session.
 7. Please identify all unresolved issues.
 8. Was marital separation recommended/considered by you? Why? Why not?
 9. Was divorce recommended/considered by you? Why? Why not?
 10. Were any accusations of abuse (e.g., verbal, physical, substance, etc.) made? By whom? Against whom?
 11. If there were accusations of abuse, please describe in detail the nature of the abuse.
 12. Were the accusations substantiated? Admitted by the other party?
 13. Were any accusations of marital unfaithfulness made? By whom? Against whom?
 14. Were the accusations of marital unfaithfulness substantiated? Admitted to by the other party?
 15. Please provide me with any additional information not covered by the above questions which you consider to be important to me as a result of your counseling sessions.
- D. What avenues of response can a district president consider if the worker or couple will not sign a waiver/release form so that the district president can talk with the marital counselor?
1. There are various reasons why a church worker may want to withhold information which he/she has shared with the marital counselor. However, Holy Scripture requires that a church worker be “above reproach.”
 2. The district president has a responsibility to the church worker as well as to the congregation, and to the church at large to ensure the integrity of the ministerium of the LCMS.
 3. Allowing the district president access to information from their counselor is an essential aspect of a church worker maintaining his/her roster status. It is an expectation of roster membership. The district president shall inform the rostered worker that he/she has taken an oath to be “above reproach.”

4. Refusal to cooperate will be seen as refusal to submit to ecclesiastical supervision of the district president and may be considered grounds for removal from the roster of the Synod.
- E. What if the district president suspects that the spouse is taking responsibility for the marital breakup in order for the worker to remain on the roster and have compensation and benefits to provide support?
1. Bringing the power of Holy Scripture to bear in such a situation may indeed prove helpful. It is written in Holy Scripture: “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will perish” (Prov. 19:5). St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4:25).
 2. However, while the district president may suspect that either the church worker or the spouse is not telling the truth, there is little that a district president can do without cooperation or supporting evidence.
 3. The district president may appoint an investigative team to help sort out the issues.
 4. It is recommended that the district president address his concern in a face-to-face meeting with the called worker and the spouse. It is recommended that the district president also have a witness present, viz. a circuit visitor or a vice president.
 5. Deliberate deception is cause for removal from the LCMS roster.
 6. Even where the responsibility for the marital break-up belongs to the non-rostered spouse, this does not guarantee that the rostered worker will be able to continue in his/her current location. It may be that sufficient damage has been done to the called worker’s reputation and integrity that, for the sake of the ministry, resignation from his/her current call, and possibly from the LCMS roster, is the only option.
- F. What if the spouse of the worker will not talk with the district president about the circumstances of the marital discord and breakup?
1. The district president has no ecclesial authority over the spouse of a church worker (either ordained or commissioned). Because of this, the district president has little recourse if the spouse of a rostered worker will not talk with him regarding the circumstances of a marital crisis or divorce.
 2. The district president is advised to remind the rostered worker and his/her spouse of the high calling that they hold. Honesty and integrity are not merely essential values of a church worker; they part of our common calling as the forgiven people of God.
 3. The district president will attempt to ascertain the reasons why the spouse will not cooperate. Three passages from the Book of Proverbs can be used:
 - Prov. 12:17 – “A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies.”
 - Prov. 14:25 – “A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful.”
 - Prov. 19:9 – “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will perish.”
 4. The district president is advised to share with the spouse that his/her silence/refusal to cooperate reflects poorly on the church worker.

5. The district president is advised to have the church worker see a counselor and also to sign a waiver for the district president to talk with the counselor. Full disclosure is an expectation for the called worker.

G. What if the church worker's spouse refuses to participate in the life of the congregation?

1. A church worker's family is a critical aspect of a worker remaining emotionally healthy as well as providing a positive witness to God's people. St. Paul writes to Timothy that one holding the office "must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" (1 Tim. 3:4-5).
2. Sadly a spouse refusing to participate in the life of a congregation affects not only the church worker's family; it negatively affects the whole congregation, especially when the spouse absents himself/herself from worship.
3. In such a situation, the district president has three primary concerns: the well-being of the congregation, the church worker, and the church worker's family.
4. In such a situation, while the district president has no ecclesial authority over the spouse, he would be well advised to sit down with both the church worker and his/her spouse in an attempt to express concern for their family, their marriage, and the congregation. Doing so, the district president may well learn that there is something deeper at work than merely non-participation in the life of the church. Surely the spouse is aware that his/her support and participation in the ministry will benefit the church.
5. A competent counselor should be suggested, with the understanding that the church worker will provide updates on the progress of counseling. Should the called worker and his/her spouse agree to see a marriage counselor, a waiver or release form should be signed and implemented so that the district president can talk with the marriage counselor (see "C" above).
6. The district president will also be advised to encourage the congregational leaders to make a conscious and deliberate effort to include the church worker's spouse in the life of the congregation.
7. A core question or two here:
 - a. What is the root cause of a spouse's non-participation in the life of the congregation?
 - b. How does the spouse's non-participation in the life of the congregation affect the called worker's ministry?
8. Depending on the circumstances of the spouse's non-participation and its effect on the ministry, it may be best for the church worker to consider resigning his/her call for the good of the congregation.

H. What if the church worker's spouse leaves The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to affiliate with another denomination or completely rejects church membership?

1. As with the situation above ("G" above) several basic questions need to be answered:

- a. What is the root cause of a spouse's non-participation in the life of the congregation?
 - b. Does a spouse's non-participation in the life of the church disqualify the worker from his/her call?
2. One of the concerns confronting a district president in this situation is that of cause and effect: What role has the church worker played in this, if any?
 3. As with other aspects mentioned above, the district president will be concerned about the health of the congregation as well as the well-being of the church worker and his family.
 4. Depending upon circumstances, it may be best for the church worker to consider requesting a leave of absence from his/her ministry or even resigning his/her call for the good of the congregation, especially when the situation is detrimental to the life of the congregation.
- I. What if the district president suspects that mental illness is involved as a cause for tension in the marriage of a rostered worker?
1. If the district president suspects that the rostered worker may be suffering from mental illness, he may request an evaluation by a certified professional, invoking LCMS Bylaw 2.13.2.1. Paragraph (b) reads: "(b) is incapable of performing the duties of the office or position because of physical, mental, or emotional disability..."
 2. If the district president suspects that the spouse of the rostered worker may be suffering from an undiagnosed form of mental illness that may be causing the marriage difficulties, the district president may well encourage the rostered worker to seek certified professional evaluation of his/her spouse.

Conclusion

In all of the above-mentioned situations, the district president has a difficult task at hand: balancing what is best for the people of God in the local congregation with what is best for the called worker and his/her family. Oftentimes the district president finds himself in the unenviable position of having to make a difficult decision that affects the lives of God's people and their called workers. In every situation the district president is well advised to begin at the foot of the cross, looking up to see the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. It is a sacrifice freely offered up by our Lord and Savior for each of those whom we serve: for the members of the local congregation and for the called worker and his/her family, as well as the community at large in which the called worker finds himself/herself. This is the reason that St. Paul says to his young friend Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16).

Approved September 2011
 Reviewed April 2015
 Reviewed April 2017

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST CONGREGATIONS WITH REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

When the pastor, or any member of the church or school board, is informed that a registered sex offender is participating in a ministry of the congregation, there are steps that can be recommended for the congregation to manage risk. Such recommendations may include the following:

- 1) Always seek legal counsel in formulating a congregation's response.
- 2) Examine the congregation's insurance policy in reference to registered sex offenders as members of the church and sex offender visitors participating in the church, including consultation with the congregation's insurance agent. Insurer's typically have resources available to assist churches in this area of risk management.
- 3) Obtain a record of the registered sex offender's prior criminal convictions by conducting a national criminal records check. The congregation must be fully informed regarding the registered sex offender's criminal background. Legal counsel can assist the congregation in accessing such information.
- 4) Determine whether or not specific state laws related to registered sex offenders preclude the individual from being present or attending activities at the church. For example, some states prohibit registered sex offenders from being present in any school building or property or within a particular distance from the school property.
- 5) Advise that the background checks that are obtained be permanently retained in the congregation's records.
- 6) Condition the registered sex offender's right to attend church services and activities on his or her signing a "conditional attendance agreement" that imposes the following conditions:

- The registered sex offender will not work with minors in any capacity in the church.
 - The registered sex offender will not transport minors to or from church, or any church activity.
 - The registered sex offender will not attend any youth or children's functions while on church property, except for those involving his or her own child or children, and only if in the presence of a chaperone (see below).
 - The registered sex offender will always be in the presence of a congregationally designated adult chaperone while on church property. This includes religious services, educational classes, activities, and restroom breaks. The chaperone will meet the sex offender at the entrance of the church, and accompany the sex offender on church premises until returned to his or her vehicle.
 - A single violation of these conditions will result in an immediate termination of the registered sex offender's privilege to attend the church.
 - The conditional attendance agreement option will not be available unless the church's insurer is informed and confirms that coverage will not be affected.
- 7) If the registered sex offender is on probation, identify his or her probation officer and ascertain the conditions that have been imposed. In some cases, registered sex offenders are not even allowed to attend church. If the probation officer says that the offender is free to attend church, ask the officer if he or she would recommend that the offender be allowed to attend church, and if so, under what conditions. Obtain this information in writing, or, if that is not possible, make a detailed written account of the officer's response.
- 8) In some cases, exclusion of the offender from church is the only viable option. This option is advisable if (a) for any reason the conditional attendance option is not feasible or enforceable; (b) if the offender's crimes are so frequent or heinous that exclusion is the only appropriate option; (c) the particular laws in the state preclude the offender from attending if there is a school or children present; or (d) one or more of the offender's victims attends the church. This will be a judgment call made by the pastor and board.
- 9) It is often desirable to draft a short policy addressing the church's response to registered sex offenders attending the church, and have it adopted by the congregation during an annual or special business meeting. This would allow the membership to discuss this issue in a rational manner. Many insurance companies who insure churches have sample policies that congregations can adopt.

NOTE: Since state and municipal laws vary from location to location, it is vital that the congregation have legal counsel ascertain the laws that apply to registered sex offenders in that locale.

Adopted February 2019
Reviewed April 2017

GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CHURCH WORKERS WITH LGBT FAMILY MEMBERS

Introduction

The culture and legal system of the United States have become tolerant of homosexual and transgender orientation and behaviors. Sometimes LCMS ministers of religion (ordained and commissioned) have a family member who has become public about these orientations and/or behaviors.

Since the biblical convictions of the LCMS (Lev. 18:22, 24, 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-20 and 1 Tim. 1:10) clearly describe homosexual behavior as being contrary to God's creative plan for human beings and thus sinful, this creates various family and ministry issues for ministers of religion.

Guidelines

When a minister of religion has a child who has become public about his or her homosexual orientation or behaviors, announces plans to engage in same-sex marriage, or is a participant in same-sex marriage, the district president should provide assistance in the following areas:

- 1) Access to both pastoral and therapeutic care since the marriage of the parents can experience significant stress over potentially different responses by each parent.
- 2) Resources to converse biblically and compassionately with their child about their behavior that is sinfully outside of God's plan for human sexual relationships.

- 3) Access to pastoral and therapeutic care for their child if he or she is amenable to such care.
- 4) Advice on how to speak with the appropriate congregational board about the public nature of the child's behaviors or same-sex marriage.
- 5) If the child is not of legal age and is publicly declaring homosexual orientation or homosexual behaviors, access to both pastoral and therapeutic care, as well as consultation with legal counsel, to understand their parental rights.
- 6) Advice on how to inform the congregation of the situation without revealing private details. Consulting with legal counsel is advised before the minister of religion offers any public statements.
- 7) Advice on how to speak of the situation in a healthy, spiritual manner with colleagues in the circuit and district without revealing private details.
- 8) Caution the worker not to utilize the congregation, school or calling entity publicly to address the issues occurring on a personal or family level.
- 9) Advice on how to include the publicly homosexual child appropriately in family events and at the church for family weddings, baptisms, confirmations, funerals, etc.

Resources

“A Plan for Ministry for Homosexuals and Their Families,” LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1999. This document may be down loaded from <http://www.lcms.org/president/minhomfam.html>

“Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective,” LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1981.

Also see the Life Library — Sexuality at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=866>

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GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CALLED WORKERS AND CONGREGATIONS WITH THE RESIGNATION FROM A DIVINE CALL

Preamble

From time to time the district president is placed in circumstances where he is asked to assist a called worker who is considering resigning his/her call, a congregation that is considering asking a called worker for his/her resignation, or both. This is a reality of living in a sinful world. It is a dire circumstance and must be handled with great care. The following guidelines may be of some assistance.

I. Resignation from a Call

A. A Biblical Basis for Resignation

We believe, teach and confess that a called worker serves under a divine call. Resigning a call from God is no small thing. There are a limited number of legitimate reasons for which a call may be resigned. In fact, there have been and still are some who suggest that there are no legitimate reasons for which a call may be resigned. This argument holds that if there are grounds for a “resignation” then the worker should be removed from the call and the roster. This position does not seem to take into consideration the mediacy of the call. God issued the call through the congregation. Therefore the congregation has jurisdiction to ensure that the call is being filled according to the Word of God. With this in mind we may conceive of some circumstances where resignation is appropriate, as opposed to removal.

The grounds for which a congregation may seek the resignation of a called worker should be limited to those found in Scripture:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled,

respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness (2 Tim. 2:22-25).

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:5-9).

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-5).

Whereas the constitutions of many congregations may summarize the reasons for requesting a resignation under the general categories of false doctrine, immoral life, and inability or unwillingness to perform the duties of the office, the district president will do well to make a connection between these "institutionalized" reasons and those given in Scripture. If a biblical case cannot be made for resignation, then no case should be made.

B. Evaluating the Appropriateness of Resignation

Thus the first duty of the district president will be to evaluate the appropriateness for the request for resignation. There is danger in viewing resignation as the easy way out: "If we can just get the worker to resign, we won't have to go through the hard work of confession/absolution and/or removal." Likewise, there is danger in suggesting that there are no biblical grounds for removal but that this just isn't a "good fit." Such language suggests that God made a mistake in calling the worker to that position.

1. Advocating for the Congregation

There may be room for a request for resignation if the mediacy of the call through the congregation is taken seriously. God issued the call through the congregation. He may also bring the call to an end through the congregation. If the congregation finds biblical basis for concluding that the worker has taught or acted in such a way that his credibility is irreparably harmed (thus harming the reputation of the congregation and, more significantly, of the Gospel), the congregation or the district president may legitimately ask for a resignation. In this case the fault must be judged to be local (that is not widely known in the district) and temporary (that is, the worker may overcome the fault by addressing theological, practical, and personal issues as directed by the district president). In such case the fault has not risen

to the degree which would require removal from the clergy roster of the Synod (see “Guidelines for Removal...”).

2. Advocating for the Pastor

On the other hand, the district president must take care that the congregation is not seeking to punish a worker for holding fast the confession of faith. If the congregation does not appreciate orthodox teaching or practice and seeks a resignation as a remedy, the district president is bound to defend the worker. The Word of God must prevail. If the additional economic burden of not having enough money to pay the pastor is added, the pressure to advocate a resignation arises in direct relationship. Such pressure from the congregation or even the district president may call into question the legitimacy of a resignation. There is no excuse for bullying a worker into disobeying the call of God. While there is no easy answer to these circumstances, it is clear that compromise of the Word of God is not an answer.

From time to time a worker may determine that God is calling him to another vocation or to retirement. Again, there are some who argue that neither is a legitimate reason for a resignation. However, in view of the fact that the worker did play a role in determining God’s will with respect to accepting the call, there may be room for him to consider resignation. In this case the district president’s role will be to assist the worker in honestly assessing his reasons for resignation. The goal would be to preclude a “Jonah” type of evasion of God’s will and the subsequent guilt that may result.

C. Resignation Due to Disability

The district president will want to take special care in the case of a worker who needs to resign due to disability. If this is a possibility, the district president should be proactive so that the worker does not lose benefits due to a premature resignation. An early call to Concordia Plan Services is in order to make sure that the rules have not changed. In general there are three critical details to remember: (1) A worker is only eligible for disability while he continues to serve under his call; (2) he/she must be on leave from work due to disability for 14 days; and (3) the worker must apply for disability.

D. Providing Spiritual Care during the Resignation Process

The district president is responsible for the care of the worker during this most difficult time. He or his representative should be in regular face-to-face contact. The goal will be to assure that the Word of God, Law and Gospel, is applied to the life of the worker to support and nurture his faith. The worker is likely to feel alone and lost, afraid and defeated. If legitimate reasons for a request of resignation have been found, opportunity for confession and absolution must be generously offered by the district president.

The calling body will also be in need of spiritual care and direction. The district president will need to apply the Word of God in such a way as to make sense of the events for the life of the congregation. Such events inevitably divide the congregation. The district president must act in such a way as to assure that his behavior does not exacerbate this division. Care must be taken through open, honest application of the Word of God (Law and Gospel) to minimize this result. In most cases confession and absolution will also be required for members of the congregation.

E. Negotiating Transitional Care

In the event that the reason for resignation has been upheld as legitimate and a resignation is imminent, the district president will want to act as an advocate for the physical well-being of the worker and his family. Circumstances will vary so widely that it is impossible to give specific guidelines. In general, the district president will ask the congregation to take into consideration the years of service of the worker and to be as generous as it can. In these cases it is most likely that the worker will be without employment for an extended period of time. The district president will remind the congregation of the need for salary and benefit considerations. He may have to be prepared to answer technical questions or to make referrals to experts in order to implement transitional care.

F. Communicating the Act of Resignation

Once a resignation is inevitable, the district president will assume responsibility to ensure that proper communication of the resignation takes place. The worker may be expected to require considerable direction at such a traumatic occasion. A letter of resignation should be written to the congregation and copied to the circuit visitor and the district president. The district president or his representative will want to make certain that the letter is appropriate prior to its delivery to the congregation. It should not include accusations or excuses. It should note the effective date of the resignation. A copy of this letter should also be sent to Concordia Plans Services and any other insurers involved. Upon receipt of the resignation letter, the district president will see to it that the proper forms are filed to track the status of the worker. All records of the resignation are to be kept in the worker's file.

G. Closure

Another consideration might be some sort of meeting between the congregation and the district president for the purposes of closure. These cases always create pain and confusion in the congregation. Whatever the district president can do to provide answers, guidance, and comfort in the Gospel will be of great value to the congregation whose pastor has recently resigned for any reason.

H. Restoration of the Worker

The time following a resignation is extremely difficult for the worker. Not only does he have the embarrassment of the resignation, but now he has nothing to do to fill his time. There may be very few options for him to receive the Word and Sacraments. There is danger of emotional, spiritual, and even physical disaster. The district president will be active in supporting the welfare of the worker and, if deemed appropriate, restoring the worker by facilitating his/her receipt of another call. This will require a lot of work. Care should be taken to address the specific fault upon which the resignation was based. (See "Guidelines for the Restoration of a Fallen Church Worker.")

II. Resignation from the Roster of the Synod

A. A Biblical Basis for Resignation

If the fault in the worker has been found to be a transgression of the biblical qualifications for the office, and if it does not only affect the local community (that is, it has become common knowledge), and/or if the fault is ongoing (that is, he is unwilling to work on correcting the fault), then the grounds have been reached for removal of the church worker. However, in some cases

that will not be necessary, as when either the integrity of the worker or his desire to avoid creating a public spectacle drive him to submit his resignation. This type of resignation will call for extensive files to be kept detailing its circumstances should the worker apply for reinstatement in the future. As in the previous case, the district president will want to be as much a part of that decision as possible. He will want to ensure that the worker has every opportunity to repent. However, if the worker is not willing to resign, the district president will then be forced to begin proceedings for removal of the worker. (See “Guidelines for Removal...”)

B. Communicating the Resignation

In such case where the worker submits a resignation from the roster of Synod, the district president will ask for a letter of resignation to be written to the congregation and copied to the circuit visitor and the district president. In addition, the district president will see to it that the worker is supplied with the form for resignation from the Synod roster (page 7-47 in the COP Manual).

C. Restoration of the Worker

When a worker resigns from the Synod roster, the district president will take up the same care for restoration as noted above (see “Guidelines for the Restoration of a Fallen Church Worker”). In addition, the district president will want to remind the worker of his right to seek reinstatement and may want to send an official acknowledgement of the resignation together with a copy of those bylaws of the Synod that detail the process for reinstatement.

Conclusion

As with so many of the activities of the district president this duty calls for great wisdom. The district president will not want to embark on any work, including the possibility of a church worker’s resignation, without a great deal of prayer and of seeking wisdom in the Word of God. He will approach all of his dealings with both congregation and worker with the attitude of a loving servant, with compassion and with an immense capacity to forgive.

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**GUIDELINES FOR DISTRICT PRESIDENTS' ASSISTING CONGREGATIONS IN BIBLICAL
DUE PROCESS OF THE REMOVAL OF A PASTOR FROM A DIVINE CALL.**

By

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Introduction:

The pastoral office is an essential aspect of life in the local congregation. C.F.W. Walther writes in THESIS III regarding the Pastoral Office, "The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time." [Kirche und Amt, page 22] Yet the office is filled by sinful men whose weakness and failure can alienate God's people from their pastor, to the point that the pastor himself becomes hindrance or an obstacle to Gospel ministry.

Whenever that happens, God's people may find themselves forced to make the extremely difficult decision of possibly rescinding the divine call that they have extended to their pastor, "*due process*" is to be an expectation both for the Bride of Christ, viz. the local congregation, as well as for our Lord's called workers. In accord with "due process" the district president is advised that, as part of his office, it is his responsibility to protect the rights and the privileges of both the pastor and the congregation.

Measured by love for our Lord and His Bride, the Church, the dismissal or removal of a pastor from his call ought to be done with respect for the Office of the Ministry, concern for the pastor and his family, as well as concern for the spiritual well-being of the congregation; all in accord with what we believe, teach and confess concerning the church and office.

The Constitution of the LCMS states:

The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—

1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy;
2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world...
8. Provide evangelical supervision, counsel, and care for pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers of the Synod in the performance of their official duties;
9. Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights;
10. Aid in providing for the welfare of pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and their families in the event of illness, disability, retirement, special need, or death. [Article III, Objectives, pages 12-13]

What follows is an examination of what our Lord tells us in Holy Scripture regarding the responsibilities of the called worker and the congregation toward the Office, pertinent paragraphs from our Lutheran Confessions, as well as statements for our Lutheran church fathers regarding the dismissal or removal of a called worker.

Theses:

1. **Christ has entrusted the Office of the Keys to the church originally and immediately. The pastor receives the divine call mediately through the congregation.**
2. **Christ instituted the pastoral office for the benefit of the church, which is His Bride.**
3. **The pastor serves in the stead of the congregation and on behalf of the congregation proclaiming God's Word and administering the Sacraments, both in the church and to the world.**
4. **The pastor ministers in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus, both in the church and to the world; the congregation respecting the pastoral office as divinely instituted.**
5. **The pastor is accountable both to God and to the church for both his life and doctrine; the pastor's life modeling [τύποι] the doctrine he proclaims; or sadly perhaps not.**
6. **When, after diligent due process and futile admonition, a pastor consistently demonstrates that he is unwilling or unable to perform the duties of the office, the church may come to the regrettable conclusion that it must dismiss its pastor from his call.**

Testimony of Holy Scripture:

Ephesians 4:11-14 And éhe gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers [τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους], to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- **τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους:** If in Eph. 4:11 the common article makes it plain that the διδάσκαλοι are identical with the ποιμένες, this lies in the nature of the case; for the ποιμὴν is the one who is responsible for the life of the community, and therefore διδάσκειν in the widest sense is part of his office. This is in agreement with Did., 15, 1, where the congregation is summoned to appoint ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἀξίους τοῦ κυρίου that these

may discharge the λειτουργία τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων; the function of the διδάσκαλος is here, too, a function of divine service. It is self-evident, therefore, that in the first instance the διδάσκαλος does what he teaches [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.]

- **οἰκοδομή, ἦς f:** the construction of something, with focus on the event of building up or on the result of such an event—‘to build up, to construct, construction.’ εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ‘in order to build up the body of Christ’ Eph 4:12; θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε ‘you are God’s construction’ 1 Cor 3:9. In 1 Cor 3:9 the phrase θεοῦ οἰκοδομή has been interpreted by many as ‘a dwelling place for God’ (see 7.1), but it is more likely that the Christian is regarded as the result of God’s activity, that is to say, the believer is ‘God’s construction’ or ‘that which God has made.’ οἰκοδομή in 2 Cor 5:1 (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν ‘we have a construction from God’) may be regarded as having essentially the same meaning as in 1 Cor 3:9, though the reference here is to the glorified body. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.]

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (**ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ καὶ οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων Θεοῦ**). Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

- **ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ.** A person who renders service—‘servant.’ Helper. “The special feature of ὑπηρέτης, however, is that he willingly learns his task and goal from another who is over him in an organic order but without prejudice to his personal dignity and worth.” (Kittel, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 8:533)
- **οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων Θεοῦ.** Manager. One who has the authority and responsibility for something—‘one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager.’

2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (**δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς**) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

- **διακονία,** service, ministry, role or position of service, waiting upon, serve food and drink to those eating. (cf also Acts 6:1-7)
- **τῆς καταλλαγῆς,** to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken (the componential features of this series of meanings involve (1) disruption of friendly relations because of (2) presumed or real provocation, (3) overt behavior designed to remove hostility, and (4) restoration of original friendly relations)—‘to reconcile, to make things right with one another, reconciliation. [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.]

1 Timothy 3:1-7 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach (**ἀνεπίλημpton**), the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought [**μαρτυρίαν καλήν**] of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- **ἀνεπίληπτος, on:** means “inviolable,” “unassailable,” “blameless” (of the mind, e.g., Philo Spec. Leg., III, 135) etc. It does not occur in the LXX. In the NT it occurs only in 1 Tm. 3:2; 5:7: one who cannot be attacked (even by non-Christians) because of his moral conduct (I, 356); in the context of 3:2 the **ἀνεπίληπτος** is further developed in what follows. In 6:14 Timothy, “unassailed” or free from arbitrary interference, is to keep to the ethical proclamation which lays claim to him as ἐντολή. (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed. electronic ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.)

Titus 1:6-9 If anyone is above reproach [ἀνέγκλητος], the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach [ἀνέγκλητον]. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- **ἀνέγκλητος, on:** pertaining to one who cannot be accused of anything wrong—‘without accusation.’ παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμόμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ‘to bring you holy, pure, and without accusations into his presence’ Col 1:22. In a number of languages the phrase ‘without accusations’ must be rendered by a clause, for example, ‘in such a way that no one can accuse you of doing wrong’ or ‘without the possibility of anyone accusing you.’ [Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.]

1 Timothy 4:16 Keep (ἔπεχε) a close watch on yourself (σεαυτῷ) and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- ἔπεχε, in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately
- σεαυτῷ, a reflexive reference to a receptor noted in the immediate context—yourself. That is to say, the pastor has both a personal and a corporate responsibility in his pastoral vocation.

1 Timothy 5:17-20 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

1 Peter 5:1-4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering (κατακυριεύοντες) over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

- **κατακυριεύοντες** Domineering: 1 Peter 5:4 κατακυριεύω, overpower, gain dominion over, subdue. “In the 6th cent. A.D. it came to mean “to have title to something.” (TDNT) Editorial comment: These days we sometimes define the abuse of power or authority in term of “boundary violations.”
- **τύποι:** a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided—model, pattern.
- **ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου** “but becoming models or visible patterns for the flock to imitate.”

Mark 10:42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it (**κατακυριεύουσιν**) over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slaveξ of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Ezekiel 34:2-10 Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep.

3 John 9-11 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς.** So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης** to like or love to be first in rank or position—‘to desire to be first, to desire to order others.’
- **οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς.** to listen or pay attention to a person, with resulting conformity to what is advised or commanded—‘to pay attention to and obey.’
- **ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς** ‘but Diotrephes, who always wants to order others, will not pay any attention to us’

1 Corinthians 8:9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

- **πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν**, that which provides an opportunity or occasion for causing someone to sin—‘that which causes someone to sin’ or ‘that which provides an occasion for someone to sin. In other words this action or lifestyle gets in the way of the Gospel, handicapping the pastor’s ministry, preventing people from hearing the Gospel.

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [**ἐπισκόπους**], to care for [**ποιμαίνειν**] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Supporting Statements from the Lutheran Confessions:

Augsburg Confession: Article V: Of the Ministry.

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel [German: Predigtamt. Latin: ministerium] and administering the Sacraments was instituted.* For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, **2]** the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear **3]** the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those

who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. 4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. [Concordia Triglotta]

Augsburg Confession: Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order.

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. [Concordia Triglotta]

- **Rite vocatus** means called in a regular manner by a proper public authority. This is not a matter of "ritual." [Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Footnote 81.]

Smalcald Articles: 5]All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. 6] Just as also our enthusiasts [at the present day] condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings, as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but [first] through their writings and words he must come...9] In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. 10] Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. 11] It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. [Concordia Triglotta; Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article 8, paragraphs 5-11 selected]

Treatise on the Power and Primacy, In 1 Cor. 3, 6, Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers. [emphasis added] Hence superiority or lordship over the Church or the rest of the ministers is not ascribed to Peter [in preference to other apostles]. For he says thus: *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, i.e.,* let neither the other ministers nor Peter assume for themselves lordship or superiority over the Church; let them not burden the Church with traditions; let not the authority of any avail more than the Word [of God]; let not the authority of Cephas be opposed to the authority of the other apostles, as they reasoned at that time: "Cephas, who is an apostle of higher rank, observes this; therefore, both Paul and the rest ought to observe this." Paul removes this pretext from Peter, and denies [Not so, says Paul, and makes Peter doff his little hat, namely, the claim] that his authority is to be preferred to the rest or to the Church. [Triglotta, paragraph 11]

- **Triglotta**, Latin text: 1 Cor. 3,6. Paulus exaequat ministros et docet ecclesiam esse supra ministros
- **Triglotta**, German text: 1 Cor. 3 Macht Paulus alle kirchendiener gleich und lehrt, dass die kirche mehr sei den die Diener.
- **Kolb, Wengert, Editor's Introduction to the Treatise:**
4. In 1 Corinthians 3[:4–8*, 21–22*] Paul regards all ministers as equals and teaches that the church is superior to its ministers. Thus he grants neither preeminence nor lordship over the church or the other ministers to Peter. For he says, "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas" [1 Cor. 3:21–22*], which is to say, neither Peter nor the other ministers may assume lordship or preeminence over the church or burden the church with traditions or allow the authority of any person to count for more than the Word. [Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (331). Minneapolis: Fortress Press]

Treatise on the Power and Primacy: 24] In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. [Triglotta, Treatise, paragraph 24, page 511]

Supporting Statements from the Church Fathers:

Luther: Before God, however there is no distinction and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed. (Luther's Works, Vol. 30, pg. 55)

Luther: The keys are given to him who stands on this rock by faith, to whomever the Father has given it. Now you cannot tell whether any person remains on the rock, for one falls today and the other tomorrow just as Peter fell. Therefore, no one is certain to possess the keys except the church, that is, those who stand on this rock. Only the Christian church has the keys; otherwise no one, not even a pope or bishop, may use them as having been entrusted with them by the congregation. A pastor performs the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs all other functions [*Aemter*] by which he serves the congregation not in his own name but in the place of the congregation. [Walther: *Church and Ministry*, page 276]

Luther: For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism does not belong to us but to Christ, that the gospel does not belong to us but to Christ, that the office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper] does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, do not belong to us but to Christ. In summary, the offices and sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for he has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and he does not lie or deceive us. Therefore, we cannot make anything else out of it but must act according to his command and hold to it. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 38 : Word and Sacrament IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (200). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Luther: Paul's frequent use of the word "stewardship" or "household," "ministry," "minister," "servant," "one serving the gospel," etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers.

In this view of the ministry, the so-called "indelible character" vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be fictitious. A minister may be deposed if he proves unfaithful. On the other hand he is to be permitted in the ministry as long as he is competent and has the favor of the church as a whole; just as in civil matters any administrator is treated as an equal among his brethren. In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions. Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. [LW, volume 40, page 35]

Luther: This church has the power to engage pastors. The church selects such as are able and competent, not for their own sakes but for the welfare of the church. And in an emergency everyone must take care of his own needs. Yet not all are authorized to preach, but only one is to preach to the

entire congregation. Thus the ministry is not mine; it belongs to all the others; it is a public office and confession. [Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 22 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Jn 3:34). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Martin Chemnitz: It is the work of God to remove a person from the ministry. Therefore as long as God endures His minister, who is teaching correctly and living blamelessly in his ministry, the Church does not have the authority to remove this servant. But when he no longer edifies the Church with his doctrine or his life but is destroying it, then God Himself will remove him... There are two reasons for God's removing ministers from their office: 1. because of their doctrine when they teach error; 2. because of their life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed... For just as God calls, so also He removes through means. [Chemnitz, *The Locus on The Church, Loci Theologici*, Translated by Dr. J. A. O. Preus (CPH) – 1989 Volume II, page 698ff]

Quenstedt: The right to call qualified ministers and to remove wicked ministers belongs to the whole Church. [The Holy Ministry, 1696 edition translated by Poellot, 1979]

Gerhard: Augustine writes: 'These keys He has given to His church in order that what they loose on earth might be loosed in heaven, and what they might bind on earth might be bound in heaven.' This verdict of Augustine is confirmed by all the passages of Scripture in which the church is called Christ's bride and mistress of the house (Ps. 45:10; John 3:29; Ps. 68:13 [cf. Luther's translation of these passages—Tr.]). Now as the keys are given by the master of the house to the mistress, so Christ, the Lord of the house of God, which is the church (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15), has given them to the church as to His bride. The ministers of the Word use them merely as stewards (1 Cor. 4:1) and servants in the name of the church (*Loci theologici*, "De min. eccl.," par. 87). [Church and the Ministry. Page 284]

Walther: Hence, the power of the public ministry rests in the church and is conferred by the church according to Christ's express direction on certain persons specifically called to the ministry of the Word. This power the church does not have mediately by the incumbents of the office entrusted with it for the benefit of the church, but the church possesses it immediately, while on the contrary the incumbents of the office have it mediately, for they received it from the church, to which it originally belongs. [Church and Ministry, page 271]

Walther: Sermon on the Office of the Ministry, 1862: The preacher is therefore distinguished from other Christians not that he were something more than a member of the body and a brother. He is rather such a member who has the obligation to serve the whole. The office is not a higher estate in Christianity. It is nothing other than a greater service. Those who hold the office serve among those who are all priests with them. Christ is the Lord of the house. The church is his bride, the matron of the house [*Hausherrin*]. The preacher is the householder. He does not exercise a power, which only he, the preacher has. The power he has is rather the power of the church. He has been entrusted with this power by the church according to God's own order, to be exercised publicly in the name of the church. He does not dole out goods, which only he, the preacher, possesses. He doles out the goods of the church, which are conferred [*uebertragen*] to him by the church only for faithful administration in its stead. Therefore the holy apostle wrote to the Corinthians: "*Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? – They are ministers, through which you have become believers; and this to each as the Lord has given. We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, that He is the Lord, and we are your servants for Jesus sake.*" (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:5). [Harrison, *At Home in the House of Our Fathers*, pages 150-151]

Walther: 1879 Convention Essay "The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod"

So when [our theses] says: The Synod should protect the congregations, one should not think this means that a congregation may not do it—that, for example, a congregation cannot judge anything at all [and] that the Synod must judge whether the pastor is teaching true or false [doctrine]. [Nor should we think] that the congregation cannot depose anyone because of godless living and that it cannot get rid of one who oversteps his authority and proves to be domineering, that only the Synod could free them. No; the congregation has full power to depose as well as to install and to judge regarding its pastor's doctrine....

Finally, according to Thesis II, a synod that is faithful to the Confessions should...

c. protect the congregations against pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle and are domineering in their office. [page 35"]

Walther: 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”

But, of course, the congregation must proceed properly. The Synod cannot sit idly by if the congregation proceeds improperly. Then the Synod also has the right to say: “If you do so and so with a pastor, then you can no longer be in the Synod.” For example, *if a pastor is dismissed by a congregation because he proclaims the truth to it, the congregation would be admonished by the synod: and if that would do no good, one would have to say: “you can no longer belong to us.”* But no more. That would be all. [page 35]

Walther: Therefore, when a pastor uses God's Word in his congregation, whether by teaching, admonishing, reproving, or comforting, either publicly or privately, then the congregation hears Jesus Christ Himself out of his mouth. In that case it owes him unconditional obedience as the one by whom God desires to make known to it His will and lead it to eternal life, and the more faithfully a pastor administers his office, the more highly it should esteem him. A congregation has no right to depose such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, it rejects Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name he ministers to it. A congregation can depose an incumbent of the holy ministry only if it is clear from the divine Word that God Himself has deposed him as a wolf or hireling. Of this we read in the Holy Scriptures: “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16). “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). [Walther, C. (1999). *Church and Ministry : Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry* (electronic ed.) (303–304). St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

Walther: 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”:

There are also pastors who cause a great deal of annoyance. But the congregations should not require the pastor to live like an archangel; that he cannot do. He has flesh and blood like other Christians, and so weaknesses appear here and there. Then, if mature Christians are present, they will say to their pastor, “Dear pastor, it was not right to do what you did.” If they are merely weaknesses, one must bear with them and not demand perfection [*nicht Alles auf der Goldwage wagen*] “and with the measure you use it will be measured to you” [Matthew 7:2]. But this should not be used to defend a pastor who lives in sins that dominate [him]. If he refuses to be instructed, one should show no mercy. If the congregation members of such a pastor then come to the [District/Synodical] President and tell him, “This is the situation; will you agree with us if we dismiss him?” he will then reply, “Of course, that is right; such a rascal doesn't belong in the Holy Office.” But the opposite also occurs, that [some] individuals make the sin greater than it is.[Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 6223–6230). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay “The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod”:

After all, a pastor can become very unfaithful in his office: lazy, careless about his official acts; he may fall into sins of drunkenness and other great vices we mentioned earlier; he may become obstinate, so that no one can get along with him; he may become power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way; he may take the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled; he may become lax about visiting the sick and may snap at people when they come to see him; and he may fall into any of the many of the sins that appear in the lives of pastors.

Now, to be sure, a congregation has the right to admonish such a pastor, and to remind him of his duty, as we read in Col.4:17 where the apostle tells the Colossians, "Tell Archrippus, see that you do all the work you were given to do as the Lord's servant." The apostle is here giving the congregation a direct command to admonish its bishop and to remind him to be faithful in his office. [1879 Essay, "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod", page 36]

Walther's 1879 Convention Essay "The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod":

You see, a Synod will always support the congregation if it can prove that its pastor is unfaithful to his office, lazy, indifferent, immoral, power-hungry stubborn, or is living in manifest sins. Through the district president the Synod will visit the congregation and will support those who are right. He may know best how to disarm those who support the unfaithful, wicked pastor. From John's Third Epistle, verses 9 and 10, we learn that already in apostolic times a congregation was provided help by a district president, even though that title was not in use at that time. John writes: "I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who lives to be their leader, won't listen to us. So, when I come, I'll bring up what he's doing when he talks such wicked nonsense about us." [1879 Essay, "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod", page 36]

Walther: Congregations shall not be so presumptuous as to arbitrarily depose their pastors and others who administer an ecclesiastical office. But if they fall into pernicious errors and are found guilty by lawful procedure (1 Timothy 5:19; "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses") and refuse to accept instruction from God's Word either by the congregation or by the pastors called in for this purpose; or if they become manifest as contumacious impenitent sinners; or if they have committed an offense by which they have lost their good report among those who are without and by which they cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, then Christian congregations in Christian order (to which under circumstances belongs a provisional suspension) must remove them from office as such as God Himself has put out. (Matt. 7:15: Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Hos 4:6: Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest to Me. John 10:5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. 1 Tim. 3:7: He must have a good report from them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.) [The Form of a Christian Congregation, CFW Walther, page 128]

Walther: Thus it is also with the name 'bride of Christ,' which, as we have seen, is also applied to believing Christians in the Word of God. For as a bridegroom gives to his bride, if he really accepts her as his spouse, the keys to the entire house, and thereby makes her a participant in all his goods and the mistress of his house, and gives her power over all supplies and treasures in his house: so Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, has also given to all believing Christians, as his bride, the keys of his house, made them partakers in all his goods, and given them authority and power over all the treasures of his house, and therefore also the authority and right of calling their pastors. Whoever denies that believing Christians possess all these glories, must also deny, in defiance of the Word of God, that they are by faith the bride of Christ. [The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor, CFW Walther, page 30]

Wyneken: He, as a child of God in fellowship with all saints, is a partaker of all things, including the power and authority over all things, which Christ's kingdom alone creates. Indeed, as a king, priest,

and prophet born of God, he is clothed with the highest worth and highest office. There is no higher office or honor in Christianity. Between Christ and His redeemed nothing exists but the Word and faith that lays hold of it, as Luther says (Halle Edition, 19:1545): “Where God’s Word is pure and certain, there everything else must be: God’s kingdom, Christ’s kingdom, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, the Sacrament, the office of the ministry, the office of preaching, faith, love, the cross, life and salvation, and everything the Church should have, as Christ says: ‘We will come to him and make our home with him’ [John 14:23]; And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age [Matthew 28:20].” Thus indeed the clergy cannot be essentially higher than the laity. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 8144-8151). CPH. Kindle Edition.]

Wyneken: In short, the office does not consist in suppression of the laity in order to elevate the clergy at the laity’s expense, such that the office boasts of sovereignty and it magnanimously leaves the laity to boast of obedience. The dignity, the desire, and the joy of the true co-worker of God is to draw ever more his community of believers into their freedom and its worthy use, to encourage them and lead them ever more in the exercise of their rights, to show them how to exercise their duties that they be more and more convinced of their high calling and that they demonstrate that they are ever more worthy of that calling. He does not live in fear that the laity will overstep its boundaries. For where are the boundaries of true, spiritual, heavenly freedom? He fears that they will exercise their freedom as little as the eagle fears its young will encounter the sun in flight, with the slight anxiety that they might fly too high or above him. For where the flight approaches the boundaries of fleshly freedom, he descends; he does not ascend. There the true watchman of God stands at the boundary with the divine Word, before which the sinking child of God is ashamed, is humbled and turned back...the office is loved and honored, and God is thanked for it, and the obedience to the office mandated by God is willingly brought with the desire of the heart. That is our goal. That is what we work for. That is how carrying out the office leads to [godly] desire and joy. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth* (Kindle Locations 8210-8223). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Pieper: In this article we are speaking of the public ministry in the narrower sense, that is, of the office by which the means of grace, given originally to the Christians as their inalienable possession, are administered by order and on behalf of Christians. The ministry in this sense presupposes Christian congregations. Only a congregation can establish the public ministry. Smalcald Articles (Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops): “Wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church [the churches, the congregations] to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.” (*Trigl.* 523, 67) This is Scriptural. [Pieper, Francis: *Christian Dogmatics*. electronic ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, vol 3:439]

Dr. Robert Preus: The position of Luther and all the dogmaticians on the matter of dismissal of a minister comports with the theology of the Confessions exactly and with no deviation. The call is God’s call. It is to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. If he is unfaithful to his call by false teaching or ungodly living, God will remove him, and He will do so mediately just as He call the minister mediately... But when he no longer edifies the church by doctrine or life, but destroys it, then God Himself removes him Hos 4:6; 1 Sam 2:30. Therefore, there are two reasons for which God removes unfaithful ministers from their office: (1) Because of doctrine, when they teach error. Mal. 2:7 “the lips of the priest should guard knowledge, and they should require the Law of his mouth.” (2) Because of life, when he acts in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed... 1 Sam 2:30. And then also the church not only can but also should remove such a one from the ministry.” [“The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy” Pages 45-46]

Kurt Marquart, The holy church of Christ is not at the mercy of the arbitrary fantasies of her ministers, nor are the later subject to the tyranny of those they must serve. Both ministers and people are strictly accountable to Christ, and in Him to each other, in mutual submission to His alone-saving Word (Romans 14:4.7-14, 1 Peter 5:2-4) [The Church: and Her Fellowship, Ministry and Governance. page 110]

Harrison: The Missourians were adamant about preserving the unique and divinely mandated character of the Office of the Ministry, and at the same time, preserving the divinely given dignity, rights, and glory of the priesthood of the baptized. The limit of the authority of the office is the Word of God. Missouri's strength was absolute obedience to the Word of God and the guarding of the glorious freedom of the Christian. The pastorate guarded the rights of the laity, and the laity were taught wherein the dignity of the office lay. "Our pastors seek obedience to the will of the Lord and not to their own arbitrary will. When our pastors seek to bring hearts under the obedience of the Word, they simultaneously grant the highest and most blessed freedom," Wyneken declares. [Harrison, Matthew C. (2011-07-01). At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (Kindle Locations 8048-8053). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.]

Overview of the grounds for the removal of a pastor from his divine call:

When looking at the what might disqualify a pastor from his call, a good place to begin is with the behaviors and personal qualifications that St. Paul's describes as necessary for those who serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry. According to the Apostle Paul, a pastor is to be, in 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

- ἀνεπίλημπτον, above reproach, no hooks, unimpeachable
- μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, the husband of one wife
- νηφάλιον, sober-minded, may be idiomatically rendered as 'one who holds himself in' or 'one who always has a halter on himself.'
- σώφρονα, self-controlled, pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one's behavior
- κόσμιον, respectable, pertaining to being modest in the sense of moderate and well-ordered
- φιλόξενον, hospitable, showing hospitality to strangers
- διδακτικόν, able to teach, being able to teach
- μὴ πάροινον, not a drunkard, person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard, person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard.
- μὴ πλήκτην, not violent but gentle, pugnacious and demanding—bully, violent person.
- μὴ, a marker of emphatic negation—'by no means, certainly not.
- ἐπιεικῆ, gentle, gracious, forbearing.
- ἄμαχον, pertaining to a lack of conflict and contention, not quarrelsome, not contentious, peaceful.
- ἀφιλάργυρον, not a lover of money, not being desirous or greedy for money, not loving wealth,
- τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—influencing his own household well.
- τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος; Children being in subjection with all propriety; ie. With behavior which is befitting, implying a measure of dignity leading to respect—propriety.
- μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθεῖς (to be so arrogant as to be practically demented—to be insanely arrogant, to be extremely proud, to be very arrogant.) εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέση τοῦ διαβόλου. Certainly not a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil

- δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἑξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὄνειδισμὸν (to speak disparagingly of) ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα (that which brings or is a means of sudden danger—‘danger, trap) τοῦ διαβόλου well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, a trap of the devil.

Through the Prophet Ezekiel our Lord speaks strong words to those shepherds(pastors) who “scatter the flock”

- **Ezekiel 34:8-10** As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.
- If that is our Lord’s attitude toward those who scatter the flock, what implications does that have for the district president, especially in light of the LCMS Constitution, Article III Objectives: “9. *Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights*”?

Dr. Martin Luther writes these powerful and pointed words about the removal of a pastor from his call: *In fact a spiritual minister is more readily removable than any civil administrator, since if he is unfaithful he should be less tolerable than a civil officer. The latter can be harmful only in matters of this life, whereas the former can be destructive of eternal possessions.* Therefore, it is a privilege of the other brethren to excommunicate such a one and substitute someone else. [LW, volume 40, page 35]

Martin Chemnitz designates two causes for removal from a divine call:

“1. because of their doctrine when they teach error; 2. because of their life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed ... For just as God calls, so also He removes through means.”

C.F.W. Walther lists the following in his 1879 essay: “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation” as reasons for a congregation to admonish its pastor and even removed their pastor from his divine call

- Offensive lifestyle
- Domineering in their office
- unfaithful,
- indifferent,
- immoral,
- living in manifest sins
- lazy,
- careless about his official acts;
- he may fall into sins of drunkenness and other great vices;
- he may become obstinate, so that no one can get along with him;
- he may become power-mad, so that everything has to be done his way;
- he may take the attitude that when he has spoken, the matter is settled;
- he may become lax about visiting the sick and may snap at people when they come to see him;

More recently, in 1992 the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations was asked a question regarding the dismissal of a pastor from his call. While CTCR opinions are not binding, they do help us understand the practical applications surrounding the dismissal of a pastor from his call:

The Commission was asked the question:

Does a congregation have a right to dismiss its pastor for reasons other than the three most often cited?

1. Persistent teaching of false doctrine.
2. Scandalous and offensive life.
3. Inability to perform the duties of the office.

For instance: Can a pastor be dismissed because he has lost the confidence of the majority of his members? Is persistent 'lording it over the flock' cause for removal?

Response: If the question is 'May a congregation dismiss its pastor when in the responsible judgment of the congregation he fails to meet the Scriptural qualifications for the office and/or he is unwilling or unable to perform the duties of the office, so as to be detrimental to its God-given mission? The Commission on Theology and Church Relations holds that there is nothing in the Scripture and the Confessions to prohibit this action.

When a congregation comes to the regrettable conclusion, in accordance with the revealed will of God, that for the sake of the Gospel ministry in its midst it must dismiss the pastor from his call, *the congregation should exercise Christian compassion in its dealings with the pastor and its concern for the welfare of his family*. Adopted on September 21, 1990 [Quoted from 1992 Convention Workbook, page 67]

While CTCR opinions are not binding, those of the Commission on Constitutional Matters are binding. With that in mind we read this from the 1995 LCMS Convention CCM Report.

4) Congregational autonomy does include the authority of the congregation to dismiss its pastor for any reason. However, as noted previously, if it wishes to remain a member of the Synod that autonomy is limited. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has spoken to this matter in response to a question addressed to it prior to the 1992 Synod Convention. The Commission on Constitutional Matters concurs with that response which is found on page 67 of the 1992 Convention Workbook. Adopted April 9, 1994 [Quoted from the 1995 Convention Workbook page 329, "Opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters. 8.11 3-4 "Congregation's Right of Self-Government".]

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations states the following in its "Theology and Practice of 'the divine call'." (February 2003)

- ***May a call be terminated?*** How and on what basis removal takes place is a serious and sensitive matter. As we have seen earlier, C. F. W. Walther affirmed that a congregation has a right to remove a pastor, but this dare not be done presumptuously or arbitrarily. A pastor should be removed only after cause has been sufficiently established by lawful procedure, after he has refused to accept instruction, etc. Proper causes simply make it clear that God has already deposed the man as a hireling or "wolf." Page 42.

- ***Removal from Office***

The church has traditionally laid down two grounds for deposing pastors and other servants of the Word: persistent teaching of false doctrine, and leading a scandalous and offensive life. Persistent teaching of false doctrine undermines the foundation of the faith. A scandalous life leads people to blaspheme God's name. These causes not only provide the grounds for removing a man from service in the congregation, but they also render him ineligible for receiving any subsequent call to another congregation or place of service. He is no longer in the office of the public ministry. These reasons presume that the pastor has undermined the ministry of the Word, and in biblical terms is no longer "apt to teach" and "above reproach."

A third reason has often been cited within the Lutheran tradition, namely, the inability or refusal to perform the duties of the office. Inability has reference to physical disabilities or diminished mental capacities that involuntarily prevent one from carrying out the responsibilities of the office. The

refusal to carry out the duties of the office, in the words of Walther, is deliberate unfaithfulness in the office. This cause for removal may include behavior such as laziness, carelessness in carrying out official acts, drunkenness, obstinacy, and laxity about visiting the sick.

Walther adds two other causes, which may be regarded either as further elaborations of the two above-mentioned causes, or as separate reasons. The first of these is that a pastor may be guilty of overstepping the authority of the Word and becoming “domineering” in the office (as when he imposes his will upon a congregation in matters where the congregation has the proper authority). Finally, removal might become necessary in a situation where the pastor is not “a totally wicked person,” but may, for example, have the problem of an inadequately—or perhaps even overly—sensitive conscience.

As we have already noted, the removal of a man from the office of the public ministry is a very serious matter and should not be carried out capriciously or arbitrarily. It is of utmost importance that the church act corporately—hearers and teachers, laity and clergy together. Thus too, a congregation needs to involve the circuit visitor and district president. Working cooperatively, they will follow due process and so seek the best possible result for all parties involved. The congregation should also be prepared to heed the advice of the district president regarding biblical reasons for removing a man, and this in spite of a pastor’s popularity in the congregation. When a man has been removed from the office for reasons that come under the third cause listed above, it is possible that following a period of repentance, counsel, and rehabilitation, he could once again become eligible for a call. (Pages 42-43)

Involvement of the District President in the Process of Removal:

In accordance with Bylaw 4.4.6 of the *2010 Handbook The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, page 194, district president involvement is warranted:

The district president, even without formal request, may through the proper channels arrange for an official visit or investigation when a controversy arises in a congregation or between two or more congregations of the district or when there is evidence of a continuing unresolved problem in doctrine or practice.

- (a) He shall ask for a full report on the case in order that he may have a clear understanding of the situation.
- (b) If he authorizes anyone to represent him in such matters, his representative shall be accorded the same rights.

Suggested Guidelines for the Removal of a Pastor from His Divine Call:

While the congregation has called their pastor to publicly proclaim God’s Word, to administer the Sacraments in accord with Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions, and to conduct the work of the ministry as outlined in the “Diploma of Vocation” and its Supplement, the congregation in no way abdicates its rights as the calling entity; viz. the local congregation. The local congregation that extends the call, together with the ecclesial leadership of the District which represents the church at large, are entrusted with holding pastors accountable in their ministry and their behavior. God calls pastors into congregations mediately and He dismisses pastors from their call mediately.

Consequently, when “in the responsible judgment of the congregation [the pastor] fails to meet the Scriptural qualifications for the office and/or he is unwilling or unable to perform the duties of the office, so as to be detrimental to its God-given mission” and the congregation “comes to the regrettable conclusion, in accord with the revealed will of God, that for the sake of the Gospel ministry in its midst it

must dismiss the pastor from his call, the congregation should exercise Christian compassion in its dealings with the pastor and its concern for the welfare of his family.” (Adapted from the CTCR response, 1992 Convention Workbook).

Several essential elements to bear in mind throughout the dismissal process:

- 1) The district president is encouraged to keep in mind the “Objectives” of Synod as stated in Article III of the LCMS Constitution; especially the section that states: “9. Provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights.” [LCMS Handbook; Article III Objectives, pages 13-14]
 - a. The ultimate responsibility lies in the office of the District President to walk with the congregation and its pastor through these troubled times.
 - b. The District President may ask the Circuit Counselor and/or regional Vice-President to make the initial contact with the pastor and congregation leaders.
- 2) When a congregation or one of its various boards, normally the Board of Elders, is concerned with their pastor’s performance, that concern ought always to be expressed in these ways:
 - a. The law of Christ-centered, Christian love.
 - b. The criteria laid down by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 18.
- 3) Christ-centered care for the pastor and his family, as well as the congregation, is essential throughout this process.
 - a. Spiritual care for the pastor, his family and the congregation is to be coordinated by the district president in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
 - b. There may be a need at some point to refer the pastor and/or his family to various health care professionals (e.g. a psychological evaluation, or counseling etc.).
 - c. The congregation may also need the assistance of a group such as “Ambassadors of Reconciliation”, trained reconcilers, a Critical Incident Stress Management team, etc.

What follows are the suggested steps to be followed:

- 1) Duly elected and/or appointed congregational leaders, including but not limited to the congregational chairman, vice chairman and elders, may gather facts regarding allegations or incidents of pastoral persistent false teaching, persistent immoral lifestyle, lording it over the flock, a persistent pattern of negligence of pastoral duties, and/or offensive behavior.
 - a. Such allegations must be attested to by two or three witnesses in accord with 1 Timothy 5:19 “Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.”
 - b. The steps of Matthew 18 regarding winning a brother are to be followed.
- 2) Such allegations are to be placed in written format, documented.
 - a. The written allegations are to be delivered to and discussed with the pastor so that he can review them and, if he desires, to provide a written response to the allegations which may be later presented at the congregational meeting. It is suggested that the district president be present for this.
 - b. Copies of this document and all documentation will be shared with the district president.
 - c. The congregation leaders will also keep the original document in a private file for their records
- 3) It is the district president’s role in a situation such as this is that of “due process”, viz. protecting the rights and the welfare of both the congregation and the called worker.
 - a. The district president is advised to offer the best Biblical counsel, the best confessional counsel, the best LCMS bylaw counsel possible in accord with LCMS Bylaws as well as the Policies and Guidelines of the Council of Presidents.
 - b. The district president is also advised to encourage the congregation to document all incidents, that Matthew 18 be followed.

- c. The district president is also advised to insure that the pastor in question is aware of the incidents and allegations that have caused a breakdown in trust, and that he has been given the opportunity to correct the behavior.
- 4) Depending on the nature of the allegations the district president may opt to encourage the called worker either to consider requesting *a leave of absence* from his responsibilities, or to “resign” his call for the good of the congregation and for the good of his ministry.
 - a. If the pastor requests a leave of absence and the congregation agrees, it is suggested that the congregation along with the pastor establish specific criteria to re-evaluate his ministry, as well as to seek counseling to address the possible physical, emotional, or psychological reasons that brought about the leave of absence.
 - b. It is further suggested that specific criteria also be established for the return of the pastor to his responsibilities in the congregation.
 - c. If the pastor decides to resign his call, please refer to “Guidelines for Assisting Called Workers and Congregations with the Resignation from the Divine Call”.
- 5) Advisors for pastor and congregation:
 - a. The district president is encouraged to appoint a pastoral adviser for the pastor to assist him in examining the charges and preparing biblical responses to charges. It may be that the circuit visitor or area-vice president could serve in this capacity.
 - b. The district president may also consider appointing an advisor for the congregation, if he himself cannot do that, to assist the congregation and its leadership in following the appropriate steps for dealing with their pastor. It may be that the area vice-president, circuit visitor and/or a trained reconciler would be a fitting choice.
- 6) Only after all attempts at face-to-face reconciliation have been exhausted, the leaders may then proceed to call a special congregational voters’ meeting.
 - a. This meeting must be called in accordance the constitution and bylaws of the congregation with its reason (viz. dismissal of the pastor from his call) properly announced to the membership of the congregation.
 - b. It is suggested that because of the seriousness of the possible dismissal of a pastor, this be considered at a special congregational voters’ meeting where there is only this one item open for discussion.
- 7) Suggested outline for the congregational meeting at which removal from a pastoral call is as follows:
 - a. Proper notice to all voters and congregational members must occur according to the congregation’s constitution and bylaws.
 - b. District president and circuit visitor are present.
 - c. The district president leads an opening Bible Study on the theology of the divine call and the proper removal of a pastor from a divine call is presented by district president.
 - d. The district president also explains the Dispute Resolution Process of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to all present.
 - e. Congregational chairman explains the congregation’s constitution and bylaws regarding the dismissal from a call.
 - f. The Elders present documented allegations and/or evidence to the congregation
 - g. The pastor responds to the documented evidence to the congregation. (The pastor is encouraged to have advisor with him during this meeting to assist him in preparing his biblical responses to charges. This advisor is to be appointed by the district president.)
 - h. Motion is made and seconded for the dismissal of the pastor from the congregation’s call.
 - i. The congregation may choose to conduct only the hearing of the charges and the pastor’s responses at this meeting and then call another special meeting to take action.
 - j. Decision is best made by anonymous ballot.
 - k. If pastor is removed from his call, this becomes effective on the day of the meeting, immediately.

- l. The congregation is encouraged to provide a generous transitional/severance agreement with income and benefits for the pastor and his family. This is to be in the form of a written agreement, signed by pastor and congregational chairman.
- m. The meeting will adjourn with prayer led by the district president.
- 8) If the pastor is not dismissed from the congregation's call, the district president is advised to make arrangements for continued reconciliation between the pastor and the congregation. This could take place under the guiding hand of a trained reconciler or a professional group like the Ambassadors of Reconciliation.
- 9) If the pastor is dismissed from the congregation's call, after the voters meeting the district president is encouraged to provide counsel for both the congregation and its now former pastor (and his family).
 - a. Since the dismissal of a pastor is one of the most traumatic events that can occur in the life of a congregation, the district president may suggest that the congregation host a town hall type meeting in the weeks that follow, and/or a visit from the District's Critical Incident Stress Management Team, or perhaps the Ambassadors of Reconciliation or similar group.
 - b. It is suggested that the congregation not rush into the call process for a new pastor but that they proceed deliberately.
 - c. It may be that the best course of action for the congregation is to seriously consider a certified "Intentional Interim Pastor" who can help the healing process.
 - d. Since the dismissal will also be traumatic for the pastor and his family, it is suggested that the district president meet with the pastor to provide encouragement and to discuss various scenarios. The district president may also be advised to encourage the now dismissed pastor and his family to seek professional counseling, both for the pastor's benefit and to help determine suitability to consider another call.
- 10) At all times during this stressful and unfortunate process all involved are to be encouraged to remember the words of St. Paul, "So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. [2 Corinthians 2:8-11]"

Soli Deo Gloria

Resources and Additional Reading:

Abiding Word, Theodore Laetsch ed. Concordia Publishing House, 1958, Volume 1, "The Call into the Holy Ministry" by P. F. Koehneke, pages 383-385, and Volume 3, page 457f.

At Home in the House of our Fathers, Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison editor and translator, C. F. W. Walther "1879 Essay on the Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod".

Christian Dogmatics, Frances Pieper, Vol. III, pg 457ff.

Essays for the Church, C.F. W. Walther, Volume 2: 1879 Convention Essay "The Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod".

Pastoral Theology, John C. Fritz, CPH Heritage Series, 2000, especially pages 59-63 where Fritz defines causes for removal.

The Church: and her fellowship, ministry and governance, Kurt Marquart, International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, page 110

The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor C.F.W. Walther, Concordia Seminary Publications, 1997.

“The Divine Call”, A Report of the Commission of Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, February 2003, especially pages 21-25, “Termination of the Call”

“The Divine Deposal/Dismissal of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments” Rev. Wil Sohns, 2005 essay presented to the Council of Presidents.

The Proper Form of a Christian Congregation C.F.W. Walther, CPH Heritage Series, 1987, pages 128-136

Adopted by Council of Presidents
September 16, 2012

SEVERANCE AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

Note: The following components are meant to serve as a template which could be used to create a severance agreement. As such, they contain wording and different options which can be incorporated into a draft document to fit the situation being addressed.

Introduction

In Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16 (ESV), the Apostle Paul writes:

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

And, in Romans 14:19, the Apostle Paul encourages us with these words:

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Thus, it is our Lord's will that Christian brothers and sisters, walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which they have been called, should, therefore, with all humility and gentleness, bear with each other in love and maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

It is also our Lord's will that the gifts He has given to His church, including pastors, be employed to equip His saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, to the end that all attain to the unity and maturity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, growing in fullness into Christ, the head of the Body, each part working properly, making the Body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

In an effort to carry out these injunctions from our Lord, _____ Lutheran Church and Rev. _____, by mutual consent, establish the following agreement.

Closure to the Pastor's Ministry

- 1) Rev. _____ voluntarily resigns his call as the pastor of _____ Lutheran Church, effective _____. This signed agreement serves as notification of the resignation of his call as the pastor of the congregation.
- 2) Rev. _____ will not be responsible for any pastoral duties following the effective date of his resignation.
- 3) Rev. _____ will be given the opportunity to preach a farewell sermon on _____.
- 4) The congregation will host a farewell event for Rev. _____ and his family on _____.
- 5) Rev. _____ agrees to vacate the church office no later than _____.
- 6) Rev. _____ agrees to return church property entrusted to his care (e.g. laptop computer, cell phone, vehicle, etc.) no later than _____.
- 7) To promote healing, Rev. _____ and his family voluntarily agree to transfer their membership to another congregation.

Forgiveness, Healing and the Future Mission of the Congregation

- 1) The congregation commits itself to speak well of Rev. _____ and his family from this time forth, putting the best construction on the life and actions of Rev. _____ and his family.
- 2) The congregation commits itself to treat Rev. _____ and his wife with Christian love and concern for their physical and spiritual well-being;
- 3) The congregation commits itself to pray for Rev. _____ and his family, asking that the Lord would bless them and keep them in His care.
- 4) The congregation commits to work together as a united group to do whatever they can to bring about healing and focus people's attention on the mission of the Church.

- 5) The congregation will strive to curb all gossip and promote a Christ-like image in dealing with matters of conflict.
- 6) From this time forth Rev. _____ and his family commit themselves to put the best construction on the life and actions of God's people at _____ Lutheran Church.
- 7) Rev. _____ commits himself to treating God's people at _____ Lutheran Church with love and concern.
- 8) Rev. _____ and his family commit themselves to pray for God's people at _____ Lutheran Church, asking that the Lord would bless and keep them in His care.

Compensation

- 1) The congregation will continue to pay Rev. _____ his current salary and benefits on a month-to-month basis as follows:
 - a) Salary of \$_____ per month for a period of up to _____ months.
 - b) Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA) of \$_____ per month for up to _____ months.
- 2) Salary and benefits payments will be made to Rev. _____ on the 15th and 30th of each month for the duration of this agreement.

Housing

Parsonage

- 1) If a parsonage is provided as part of the pastor's compensation package, Rev. _____ and his family may have use of the parsonage including full utilities, except long distance telephone calls, for a period of up to _____ months.
- 2) Rev. _____ and his family agrees to vacate the parsonage on or before _____, unless this provision is extended by the congregation at its discretion.
- 3) If the congregation feels that it is in the best interest of all parties that Rev. _____ and his family vacate the parsonage, the congregation will provide him with a housing and utility allowance equivalent to 25% of his salary (the value placed on a parsonage by Concordia Plan Services when a parsonage is provided).

Housing Allowance

- 1) If a housing allowance is provided as part of the pastor's compensation package, the congregation will pay him a housing and utility allowance of \$_____ per month for up to _____ months.

Health, Retirement, Disability and Survivor Coverage

(The following items assume that the congregation participates in the Concordia Plans. If another plan is used, these items will need to be adjusted accordingly.)

- 1) Payments in the amount previously paid to Concordia Plan Services for the benefits portion of the pastor's compensation will be paid directly to Rev. _____ on the 15th and the 30th of the month.

The congregation may elect to make payments directly to Concordia Plan Services for _____ quarters.

- 2) A payment of \$ _____ per month will be paid to Rev. _____ to enable him to provide health care coverage for his family, which was previously provided through the Concordia Health Plan (CHP).
- 3) Since the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan (CDSP) coverage ceases on the last day of employment, a payment of \$ _____ per month will be paid to Rev. _____ to purchase disability and survivor plan coverage if he so desires.
- 4) Since the Concordia Retirement Plan (CRP) coverage ceases on the last day of employment, a payment of \$ _____ per month will be paid to Rev. _____ to invest in a retirement program of his choosing.

Reimbursements

- 1) The congregation will reimburse Rev. _____ for all previously agreed-upon unpaid business expenses (e.g. mileage reimbursement, books, periodicals, conference fees, etc.)
- 2) Rev. _____ will provide the congregation with the documentation required for the reimbursement of all previously agreed-upon unpaid business expenses.

Unused Vacation Time

- 1) The congregation will pay Rev. _____ for _____ (days/weeks) of unused vacation (pro-rated).

Church Worker Assessment and Release of Information

- 1) Rev. _____ agrees to go through a church worker assessment program at _____. Rev. _____ will sign a release of information so that the results of his assessment may be shared with his District President, _____.

Assistance with Moving Expenses

- 1) If Rev. _____ does not receive a Call and he feels it would be in his best interest to leave the area, the congregation would agree to assist with his moving expenses not to exceed \$_____.

Communication, Future Employment, and Honoraria

- 1) If Rev. _____ should receive a divine call while this agreement is in force, he will promptly inform the congregation, in writing, of receipt of the call. He shall likewise promptly inform the congregation, in writing, regarding his decision on the call. For the purposes of this agreement, “promptly” means within one week of receipt of the call.
- 2) If Rev. _____ should leave the ministry to gain other full-time employment while this agreement is in force, he will promptly inform the congregation, in writing, of his employment. For purposes of this agreement, “promptly” means within one week of gaining full-time employment.
- 3) If Rev. _____ should gain other than full-time employment (part-time) while this agreement is in force, he will promptly inform the congregation, in writing of his employment. For purposes of this agreement, “promptly” means within one week of gaining other than full-time employment.

The congregation’s obligation to provide salary, housing and allowable benefits shall be reduced proportionately by the salary and/or benefits received from the other part-time employment. Rev. _____ shall provide the congregation, in writing, with periodic evidence of the salary and benefits received from his other than full-time employment. For purposes of this agreement, “periodic evidence” means within two weeks of receipt of the salary/benefits.

- 4) Honoraria received by Rev. _____ for occasional weddings, funerals, special events or speaking engagements are not to be considered “employment” and will not reduce the salary, housing, or allowable benefits to be paid by the congregation as part of this agreement.

Cessation of Severance Payments

- 1) At the conclusion of the _____ month period on (Date), all salary and benefits outlined in this agreement will cease and Rev. _____ agrees that there will be no further claims of any kind against the congregation or its officers after this date.
- 2) If Rev. _____ should receive a divine call and be led to accept it prior to the closing date of this agreement, the salary and benefits outlined in this agreement will cease (at that time) (at the time of his installation in his new position).
- 2) If Rev. _____ should gain other full-time employment prior to the closing date of this agreement, the salary and benefits outlined in this agreement would cease at the time that the compensation from his new employer begins.

Other Concerns/Provisions

- 1)

2)

3)

Release of Liability

General Waiver

Rev. _____ and _____ Lutheran Church waives any and all claims against each other for damages of any kind arising from his service to _____ Lutheran Church or from any matter relating to the conclusion of his call as the pastor of the congregation.

Or

General Release of All Claims

- 1) In consideration of the above commitments, the undersigned, Rev. _____ (hereinafter referred to as Claimant), for himself, his heirs, representatives, agents, successors and assigns, hereby releases and forever discharges _____ Lutheran Church, _____, (hereinafter referred to as Employer), and all present and past officers, directors, agents and representatives of the Employer, related company, and the successors and assigns of each from any and all manners of claims, demands, actions, causes of actions, administrative claims, liability, damages, claims for attorney's fees, costs and disbursements, or demands of any kind whatsoever, including but not limited to:
 - a) All claims that arise out of or that relate to Claimant's employment or the termination of his employment with the Employer;
 - b) All claims that arise out of or that relate to the statements or actions of the Employer;
 - c) All claims for any alleged unlawful discrimination or any other alleged unlawful practices that arise out of or that relate to the statements or actions of the Employer, including, but not limited to, claims under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, U.S.C. Section 1981, the (state) Human Rights Act, the (state) Workers' Compensation Act, and any federal or state wage and hour laws; and claims that the Employer engaged in conduct prohibited on any other basis under any federal, state, or local statute, ordinance, or regulation;
 - d) All claims for alleged unpaid compensation, expense reimbursements, and employee benefits, wrongful discharge; harassment, retaliation or reprisal, constructive discharge; assault or battery, defamation; intentional or negligent infliction of emotional distress; invasion of privacy, fraud or misrepresentation; interference with contractual or business relationships; violation of public policy; negligence; false imprisonment; breach of contract; breach of fiduciary duty; breach of the covenant of good faith and fair dealing; promissory or equitable estoppel; and any other wrongful employment practices; and

- e) All claims for compensatory damages, liquidated damages, punitive damages, attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements.
- 2) Non-Admission. It is expressly understood and agreed that this General Release of All Claims does not constitute, nor will it be construed as an adjudication or finding on the merits of any potential claims by either party, nor does this General Release of All Claims constitute, nor will it be in any manner construed as an admission of any wrongful conduct or liability on the part of the Employer.
- 3) Successors and Assigns. This General Release of All Claims will be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties and their respective heirs, representatives, successors, and assigns, but will not be assignable by either party without the prior written consent of the other party.
- 4) Entire Agreement. This General Release of All Claims states the entire understanding of the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and merges all prior negotiations, agreements and understandings, if any. No modification, release, discharge, or waiver of any provision of this General Release of All Claims will be of any force or effect unless made in writing and signed by the parties hereto. If any term, clause or provision of this General Release of All Claims is for any reason adjudged invalid, unenforceable or void, the same will not impair or invalidate any of the other provisions of this General Release of All Claims, all of which will be performed in accordance with their respective terms. The parties further acknowledge by their signatures to this General Release of All Claims that they have not relied on any representations or statements, whether oral or written, other than the express statements of this General Release of All Claims, in signing this General Release of All Claims.
- 5) Applicable Law. This General Release of All Claims will be governed by and construed in conformance with the laws of the State of _____.

Signed by,
 (Signatories should be in keeping with the congregation's constitution and bylaws),

Representatives of the Congregation

_____ Date _____
 (Chairman of the Congregation)

_____ Date _____
 (Chairman of the Board of Elders)

_____ Date _____
 (Treasurer of the Congregation)

and

_____ Date _____
 (Pastor)

(Optional) Ratified by the Voters' Assembly of

_____ Lutheran Church of _____

_____ Date _____
(Secretary of the Congregation)

G. MINISTERIAL HEALTH

The Professional Church Worker and Family

Next to the Word of God, the "minister" of that Word is the most important asset the church has—the professional church worker. Many prayers are spoken before and after his/her decision to prepare for ministry. Many prayers continue to rise to the highest throne of God on behalf of that worker.

The worker, the worker's family and friends, and the church have invested time and money in the worker's preparation. The years of seminary/college training, the time and effort of faculties and administrators, the time spent in support by family and friends—these add up to many years of combined effort in the training of the worker. The thousands of dollars provided both by the worker and those who supported him/her amount to a significant investment in that worker.

It is important to keep that worker functioning and well. It is important that the worker's primary support base, the family, is kept well. A healthy and happy family goes a long way in the maintenance of a happy and healthy worker. The beginning worker and his family especially have significant adjustments to make. These first years are crucial, especially if the worker is a "second career" person.

Often the worker finds after getting into a church-related career that the family does not share his enthusiasm. This has an impact on both the worker and the congregation. Negative relationships can arise. Relationships become strained, not necessarily by the worker but by those persons surrounding the worker.

Factors such as demand on the time of the professional worker, salary, living condition, expectations, and involvement with the problems of others affect the health and well-being of the worker and his/her family.

It is important, therefore, that due concern and care is given by the Circuit Counselor as he goes about his work to help keep those professional workers in his circuit and their families functioning and well.

Building Fellowship in the Circuit

The professional worker can be, and often is, one of the loneliest people in the church. He (or she) has to be a lot of things to a lot of people. Every day he has to dip into the resource of himself (and of course, of his God!) to respond to the diverse matters that his people present to him. He needs is a support base, a resource pool, others who understand his role because they have it too! And that resource pool is his circuit brothers/sisters to whom he can turn for counsel and advice and who can share with him on the basis of their experiences.

It is important that professional workers (pastors, teachers, etc.) get together professionally and socially. They are "set-apart" individuals who often have nobody else to turn to for understanding. Getting together with peers is a healthy thing to do professionally and socially (*Winkel* conferences, preachers' or teachers' clubs, morning sports and/or study groups, etc.).

The circuit visitor, possibly assisted by his wife, can be the organizer of such opportunities or, if he does not have such skills, can call other professionals in his circuit or region for assistance. Sometimes a retired worker is a good person to take care of such assignments.

"Get together" was the advice of a retired district president, "and especially involve those (pastors or teachers) who are constantly absent." Building fellowship lends itself to the prevention and elimination of many problems that can arise in the life of a professional church worker.

Physical/Psychological Health

The very nature of the work of a church professional lends itself to a breakdown in physical and psychological health. Long hours of sitting (study, counseling, meetings, in the car, conferences, services, etc.) can take a toll on the physical well-being of the professional worker. His/her body needs exercise. In one of the older orders of installation the congregation is asked to see to it that the pastor has time, and takes it, "for necessary mental and physical recreation." Already then the church deemed it important that their workers have "sound" bodies.

Does the pastor have a day off? Does he have adequate help? Is his salary adequate that he can afford to play golf, tennis, or whatever physical exercise appeals to him? Can he and his family afford to have a healthy diet? Keep the house warm and comfortable? Receive proper medical and dental care? Have regular check-ups? Engage in good health habits?

Sometimes the strain of his/her work builds up to a breaking point. Who watches for the signs of such a buildup? Many congregations have their own pastoral care committees whose sole responsibility is the well-being of the pastor and his family. Some parishes budget in an account known only to the treasurer, or the president, which is to be used to help the pastor get professional help when needed.

Some districts have set up a method whereby their workers can receive help (district-employed counselor; district-contracted pastoral counseling centers; etc.—contact the district president for such information) when professional help is needed.

The circuit visitor is at the cutting edge in spotting when tension, burn-out, and dysfunction signs are evident. Rather than try to solve such problems, the visitor should seek the help of professionals to whom professional workers and their families can be referred.

The Concordia Plans are most helpful with long-term help. If it is believed that a worker or family member needs psychological counseling or therapy, Concordia Plans offers such coverage. For details consult the Plans by phoning 1-800-THE-PLAN.

How do the Concordia Plans assist with the medical care and mental health care expense problems of the church worker?

A. Expenses

The Concordia Health Plan provides for the reimbursement of medical expenses, dental expenses, and mental health care expenses for those members of the family that have been enrolled in the Plan. Although there is some degree of personal involvement in the cost of the various types of care, represented by deductibles and co-payments, there is a maximum out-of-pocket expense incurred by the family on an annual basis, and the Plan reimburses up to a lifetime maximum of \$1,000,000.

B. Replacement Income

The Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan provides assistance in the form of replacement income to the disabled worker. This permits the continuation of living for the disabled worker and family, and also provides for the waiver of contributions for the three Plans during the period that the worker is disabled. Thus, the continued coverage of the Health Plan is available for the expense of the worker and family without the payment of contributions.

Additionally, this plan provides replacement income to the survivors of a deceased worker, as well as a single sum burial benefit. These make possible meeting the terminal illness expenses, as well as the ongoing expense for food, clothing, and shelter for the family.

The Concordia Retirement Plan provides assistance in the form of replacement income to the retired worker, from which can be deducted the ongoing cost of the Concordia Health Plan for medical, dental, and the mental health care expense.

The Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers, which preceded the Concordia Retirement Plan, provides replacement income for retired workers, disabled workers, and the surviving spouses of retired workers. Participation in this plan is limited to older professional church workers. No new members are being added.

How do workers seek the assistance offered by the Concordia Plans?

C. Reimbursement of Expenses

To seek reimbursement of health care expenses from the Concordia Health Plan, a form is complete and submitted with each patient's itemized bills. For a worker who is covered by other group health insurance, it is necessary to submit the report of what has been paid by the other insurance plan, as well as submitting the itemized bills to be reimbursed. For a worker who is also covered by Medicare, claims should first be submitted to the Worker Benefit Plans office for processing, and then to Medicare. For a retiree, who is also covered by Medicare, claims should first be submitted to Medicare for processing, and then to the Worker Benefit Plans office.

D. Disability and Death Benefits

To seek a disability benefit from the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan, the worker must request from the St. Louis office a disability claim form. When received, the form should be completed by the worker, employer, and physician, and should be returned to the Worker Benefit Plans after 14 days of disability have been experienced. The benefit is then issued at the end of each completed month of disability, and newly completed forms will be requested as they are needed by the St. Louis office staff.

To seek the death benefits, notice should be given the Worker Benefit Plans of the date of death. As soon as possible, a certified copy of the death certificate should be supplied, and the single sum death benefit will follow shortly. The monthly, survivor income benefit will begin being paid during the first week of the month following notice being given of the death, and will require that Worker Benefit Plans be sent a copy of information received from Social Security about that benefit.

E. Retirement Benefits

To seek a retirement benefit from the Concordia Retirement Plan, the worker must notify the St. Louis office of the Worker Benefit Plans. This notice should be provided 45-60 days prior to the date of retirement, and the specific date of retirement should be given. An application form will be sent, which is to be completed by the retiring worker and the employer. The completed form should be sent to the Worker Benefit Plans office so that it arrives 30 days prior to the retirement date. This process should result in the benefit being received during the first week of the month following the retirement date.

Notice should be provided of the death of a retired worker in the form of a certified copy of the death certificate accompanied by a letter identifying the surviving spouse or the person legally responsible for the decedent's final business affairs.

F. Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers Benefits

To seek the benefits provided by the Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers, notice should be provided the Worker Benefit Plans office of the nature of the event (i.e. death, disability, or retirement) so that the appropriate form can be supplied. When received, the form should be completed and promptly returned to the Worker Benefit Plans office. Monthly benefits payable will be issued to arrive during the first week of the month after the information has been received in the St. Louis office.

What are the "special" or "unique" circumstances that you need to be aware of in dealing with the Concordia Plans?

G. Rules of Thumb

1. Consult with the Concordia Plan Services office in St. Louis. Most often you can receive advice, suggestions, or even begin the process of securing forms or seeking benefits.
2. As a general rule, early detection and intervention, especially in the areas of substance abuse and mental health problems, will enable care to begin before problems have the chance to multiply.
3. It is not always apparent what causes disruptions to ministry, but often the cause underlies what is most evident. Someone who has a problem with alcohol may prefer to be viewed as having some form of organic liver ailment rather than be found to be damaging the liver by drinking. Look beyond what is most evidently wrong.
4. There will be occasions when it will be important to separate a worker's inability to function (as a result of limited capability) from that resulting from disabling causes. "Disability" is defined in the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan as a medically determinable condition that prevents a worker from functioning. The disabling condition is diagnosed by a physician and receives treatment by a physician. Employment problems are not covered by the Plans. Distinguishing between employment problems and disabilities is sometimes difficult but necessary, if avenues of assistance for the worker are to be pursued.
5. Perhaps the most difficult decision to make is whether or not a terminating worker is, in fact, disabled. This, too, requires much more information, than would ordinarily be required, in order to make appropriate decisions concerning disability.

With the limited amount of time that is available to you for helping your fellow pastors, how can you best assist them when illness strikes or they become unable to function, or help their family when death occurs?

The best answer is to "get help" for them. By knowing where that help is available and by knowing that it is there you can guide your fellow church worker to the Worker Benefit Plans office. Then that resource is at their disposal.

G. CONCLUSION

THE OFFICE OF CIRCUIT VISITOR AS A CHURCHMAN IN RELATION TO SYNOD, DISTRICT, CIRCUIT, CONGREGATION AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Rom. 12:4-5)

St. Paul’s words inform the circuit visitor how to view the church, not only the individual believers but also every congregation and the larger church. Believers are not autonomous, and neither are congregations. There is “one body,” called the church. The binding of individual believers, congregations, and the whole church is nothing other than Jesus Christ and his Word.

Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Creed teaches this and more. He not only rightly confesses the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit’s one-work of salvation but Luther also emphasizes the gathering of believers into the church. “Just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith” (Book of Concord, Kolb Wengert, p. 355-6). As God converts, He also gathers believers and congregations into communities, the community of saints, the church on earth. The Spirit working through the Word of God is the animating power and impetus of the Synod. This organic unity is bound to become organizational. The organizational binding of the Constitution and Bylaws, however, is secondary and peripheral. The very glue of Synod is the confession of the Word of the Triune God and its doctrinal exposition in the Lutheran Confessions. It is this Word, God’s doctrine, that gives life and sanctifies (John 6:63; 17:17; 1 Tim. 4:16). God Himself is the One who gathers and binds congregations, as He gathers “the whole Christian church on earth.” Congregations joining the confessional fellowship of Synod is always the way of the Gospel, of joyful and free action, never one of coercion.

Congregations should not act as independent franchises that share a corporate logo. Christ is each congregation’s head, as He is the head of all the congregations (Col. 1:18). Being grafted into Christ together with others lifts every believer, worker, and congregation out of the isolation of individualism.

Every congregation is Christ's concern as is His whole church, for the church is one. Every congregation is to be concerned about the parish down the street, and the whole church, and places the others' needs ahead of her own, as is the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:3-11). Likewise, the whole church should be just as concerned about the one congregation. Like John the Baptist, each must decrease as Christ must increase (John 3:30). Isolation from the church by any congregation or worker plays into the devil's delight. The ever active devil (Mark 3:15; 1 Pet. 5:8) has one target: the church. The church is the devil's mission field (Rev. 12:17). He aims to stamp Christ out of every church and from the heart of every worker with his lies and accusations (John 8:44; Rev. 12:10). When members of the body of Christ become disabled, caught unaware by their own weaknesses and sin, the constant crying of the church comes to their aid. All the commands for prayer use the plural form of "you." The community of the royal priests (Rev. 5:10) pray for and with one another, along with Christ, the great High Priest (Acts 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4; Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17-18; Heb. 3:1; 1 John 2:1). Christ Himself prompts our prayers for each other (John 15:7). The one body has many members with the common concern for the other. "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:26). Luther writes: "Thus others bear my burden, and their strength is my strength. The faith of the church comes to the aid of my fearfulness; the chastity of others endures the temptation of my flesh; the fastings of others are my gain; the prayer of another pleads for me." (AE 42:161)

And Bonhoeffer:

"The law of Christ is a law of bearing. Bearing means forbearing and sustaining. The brother is a burden to the Christian, precisely because he is a Christian. For the pagan the other person never becomes a burden at all. He simply sidesteps every burden that others may impose upon him (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, New York: Harper and Rowe Publishers, 1954, p. 100).

Bearing and forbearing are fundamental for the life together as congregations in a circuit, and circuits as part of districts and the Synod, the one church. Essential for the church is the joyful burden of the lost, so that they too might be brought into the one body of Christ. Christ's work through His church is seen as one, done on behalf of and along with the Lord, all for the benefit of others. The church is God's coworker, in prayer, mercy, and witness (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; 1 Thess. 3:2), which is the one work of the Gospel. The work of world-wide mission and the training of pastors, teachers, and other professional workers are the necessary works, a privilege which is owned by every parish, and the whole church. Circuit visitor, you are perhaps more of a pastor to the professional workers in your circuit than anyone else. May God bless you as you address the health and wellbeing of those co-workers in your circuit who need your love, encouragement, support and help especially in times of special need! God bless you as you help to keep them well and functioning to God's glory and in the best interest of those whom they serve, in Jesus Christ!

Soli Deo Gloria

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February 2020

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