



On Calling a Pastor by Pastor Glenn Huebel

In the near future, our congregation will have to begin the process of calling another pastor to fill the vacancy left by Pastor Kitzmann's retirement. The Board of Elders has been studying, praying, discussing, and formulating resolutions for more than a year in order to prepare for this transition and to make sure that everything is done in good order. I am also conducting a Bible study on the doctrine of the ministry on Sunday mornings. I think it would also be helpful to set forth some basic Biblical principles on the doctrine of the call in this newsletter article.

The doctrine of the call, like all other doctrines of Christianity, can be traced back to the Gospel. This is most clearly presented in Romans chapter 10 where Paul sets forth God's gracious will for all people

to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ (v 5-13). God wants all people to call upon the Name of the Lord (v 13). But how is this gracious will of God accomplished? Beginning in verse 14, Paul asks a series of questions creating a kind of spiritual chain tracing faith to its source. People cannot call on the name of the Lord without believing, and they cannot believe unless they hear the Gospel, and they cannot hear the Gospel without the public preaching of the Word (v 14). Of course Christ has commanded the Church to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matt 18:18ff; Luke 24:47), but there is one final link to this holy chain. HOW ARE THEY TO PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? (v 15) Just as people cannot believe without hearing or hear without preaching, so they cannot preach (rightly) without God's sending them to do so. The Prophet Jeremiah identifies those who have "run" without God's "sending" as false prophets (Jer 23:21). One must not place himself into the preaching office in the Church. He must wait for God to send him. Thus, Lutherans confess in the Augsburg

Confession, "No one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call" (AC XIV). Calling and sending are simply two sides of the same coin. From God's perspective a person is sent. From the congregation's perspective a person is called. Both of these Biblical terms indicate that the placement is made by God, not man. The congregation is not just "hiring" a servant to do a task.

But the question naturally arises whether it is legitimate to identify the congregation's call with God's sending. Some may note that the Prophets and Apostles did not receive a call from any congregation, but were sent directly by God to the people, and they demonstrated their divine authority through signs and wonders. Even the Old Testament priesthood was divinely sanctioned at Mt. Sinai and consisted of the tribe of Levi, particularly the sons of Aaron. No one could legitimately question in future generations whether a person possessed divine authority to do priestly things because everyone knew that the Levites had the sanction of God. God, in fact, tolerated no one else performing priestly duties (2 Sam 6:5-

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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

11). But in the New Testament, the pastoral office is not tied to family lines. Congregations consult and pray, and with the advice of pastors (Circuit Counselor included) they issue a “call.” How do we know that the person who accepts our call is the one God sent? In this matter we may differentiate between an *immediate call* and a *mediate call*. An immediate call is a call God gives directly to those He has chosen, such as His call to Moses, to the ancient Prophets and to the Apostles of the Lord. A mediate call is one which God issues through means or instruments. We see both of these in the New Testament, and those called either way are regarded as divinely sent. (Acts 20:28) This assurance is based in part upon the foundation that both the congregation and the pastoral office are divinely instituted. The congregation is commanded and authorized to establish and fill the office of pastor and the pastor is commanded to be a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God in service to that congregation. Just as in marriage, a man and a woman come together by mutual consent but it is God who has joined them together because it is a divine institution. We must trust that God is intimately involved in the process we will undergo so that we humbly and consciously yield to Him in all that we do. Once the call is given and accepted, the yoke is laid by God and may not be broken by either side without Divine sanction.

This means that “call” is far more than a pious word for religious employment. The concept of the call is not synonymous with hiring any more than a marriage vow is synonymous with a business contract. The divinely placed yoke makes the union a bit difficult and inconvenient at times. A faithful

pastor will not and, indeed, cannot rightly walk away because he doesn’t feel appreciated or because he sees greener pastures elsewhere. St. Paul declares woe on himself should he neglect the call of God (1 Cor 9:16). A pastor’s faithfulness to the call of God may result in suffering for Christ’s sake (Acts 9:16). It may make him a target of Satan. A hireling flees suffering (John 10:13). A shepherd bears the cross because of the call. A hireling thinks in terms of climbing a career ladder. A shepherd goes where God calls him and stays until God calls him elsewhere. A faithful congregation is likewise bound by the call. A pastor who preaches the Word “in season and out of season” will likely step on toes because of the Word. When a congregation dismisses a pastor to avoid or evade the Divine Word, it rejects God Himself. “He that rejects you, rejects Me,” Jesus said to the Apostles (Luke 10:16). When a pastor ruffles feathers because he consistently and reasonably APPLIES the Word, whether in discipline of an influential member, or in absolution of a poor miserable sinner, he cannot be dismissed or “fired” because the congregation wants to avoid strife and division. When a pastor administers the sacraments in accordance with their Divine institution and in care of souls, the congregation cannot cast him aside and look for a man who will do what they want. When a pastor does not have a personality that pleases the congregation, they may not, for that reason, go seeking for a “better fit.” The yoke of a call is a very serious matter because no one should put asunder what God has joined together.

Does this mean that a called person may use his position and security to neglect his office or to abuse his

authority? Of course not! Unfortunately, that happens in this sinful world. There was rampant abuse of the pastoral office during the Middle Ages as our Lutheran Confessions bear witness. Though having a high view of the call, Lutherans have never advocated for the divine office to be outside of accountability to the Church. The principle is that as God alone sends, so God alone may remove a pastor from office. And as God sends mediately so He removes mediately. The congregation that calls a pastor may also remove that pastor from office, *for just cause* and *with due process*. Lutherans have observed from Scripture only three just causes for legitimate removal of a pastor:

FALSE DOCTRINE: God roundly condemns false preachers and commands all his people to depart from them (Gal 1:8). Therefore a congregation is well justified for removing a pastor who intentionally and persistently preaches, teaches, and/or practices false doctrine. This is not even optional. God commands it to be done. It should be noted, however, that everyone errs in preaching and teaching from time to time. The ancient principle is that error does not make a heretic. A heretic is one who refuses to be corrected and enlightened and persists in error against the truth. Pastors in Lutheran congregations are bound to teach in accordance with the Lutheran Confessions. The congregation rightly expects him to do that, and holds him accountable against that standard. A “Lutheran” pastor who decides that he no longer believes in the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, or baptismal regeneration, or the practice of infant baptism, or the doctrine of original sin, etc., should resign his office as a pastor of the

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congregation. If he doesn't, the congregation must remove him unless he returns willingly to the truth.

IMMORAL LIFE: God holds pastors to the standard of an exemplary Christian life as a pattern for the flock. A pastor who does not "practice what he preaches" dishonors God's Name and brings offense both to Christians and unbelievers. Such a pastor, after admonition to repent, must be removed from office for the sake of the ministry. In some cases the sin may be of such a magnitude that the pastor loses the trust of his flock and no longer qualifies for the pastoral office. Often it happens that pastors rightly removed from office because of sin, remain repentant sinners who live out their lives as beloved sheep in the flock. Disqualification from the pastoral office is not, in and of itself, removal from the flock of Christ. Obviously, as it is with false doctrine, committing sins does not mean a pastor is living an immoral life; otherwise, God would have use angels to shepherd His people. God uses sinful people as preachers to show the power of His grace. Faithful pastors are, however, daily repentant.

NEGLECT OR INCOMPETENCE IN OFFICE: If a man comes to the point where he cannot or will not fulfill the basic, reasonably expected duties of the pastoral office the congregation may remove him for the sake of the ministry. Ideally the pastor would, in most cases, recognize the problem and voluntarily remove himself through resignation of his office, but this does not always happen. Sometimes men come out of seminary and into a congregation, and it becomes obvious fairly quickly that they do not have the requisite qualifications for carrying out the pastoral office. They do not believe or teach false doctrine or live in impenitence, but they cause the church to suffer in countless ways by sheer lack of common sense

(sober-minded, 1Tim 3:2), immaturity (not a recent convert, 1 Tim 3:6), foolishness, or whatever else alienates unnecessarily. In this category I would include men who have no leadership sense whatsoever (able to manage, 1 Tim 3:4), men who have personalities that are fundamentally alienating (not quarrelsome, 1 Tim 3:3), men who have a lack of basic social skills (not violent, hospitable, well thought of by outsiders, 1 Tim 3:3,7), men who abuse authority (not domineering, 1 Pet 5:3), men who love money or this world (not for shameful gain, 1 Pet 5:2), etc. It is impossible to make an all inclusive catalogue of incompetence but we usually know it when we see it. Most of my confessional brothers in the ministry do not like this last cause for removal because it can be used for malicious and political ends to remove faithful pastors unjustly. I don't doubt that it can, and has been, abused with evil intent, but all just causes can be abused by consummate legalists. Clever legalists can crush the tiniest infractions of the law and evade the most outrageous sins whenever it is in their interest to do so. We are not going to stop that from happening. We cannot, for fear of potential abuse, allow God's flock or the ministry to suffer from incompetence and neglect because we know that God does not want that to happen. Let's say you are looking for someone to care for your children and find a person with a spotless record on a background check. He or she had no arrests for domestic violence or theft or sex abuse, and perhaps not even any traffic violations. After hiring the person you begin to discover that though he is a nice person and has no evil intent, he just doesn't have basic common sense or good judgment. In fact, you have serious doubts that he could handle an emergency or that he is capable of taking care of the basic needs of your children. Would you feel compelled to keep such a person because there is no blatant cause for termination except that you don't trust him to do his job? Are we to believe that God's call intends to protect pastors who are incapable, incompetent or chronically negligent in performing the basic duties of the

office? Surely God does not want His beloved saints to be destroyed or starved by incompetent pastors any more than by false doctrine or immorality. God sends faithful shepherds, not incompetent ones (Jer 23:4). We cannot defend incompetent pastors in God's Name – no matter what their theology might be.

During the installation of a new pastor, vows are made both by the pastor and by the congregation. The bond created is a sacred union that, like the marriage union, God intends to be a blessing to both. Pastors bring that blessing laboring diligently in the Word. Congregations who want the blessing need to make sure their pastor has time and encouragement to be in the Word and prayer (See Acts 6). As the pastor grows in his knowledge of the Word and in faith, the congregation receives the benefit in his teaching, preaching, and in the wisdom of his leadership. God brings blessing to the pastor through receiving the fruits which the Word brings. When his people hear the Word gladly (coming faithfully every Sunday), put it into practice, and evidence true faith in Christ in the way they speak and live the pastor has great joy. This fruit shows itself most beautifully in the harmony and love that a congregation shows to one another as well as to him. Every pastor's heart is deeply grieved by division and strife. May God bless us all through the administration of Word and Sacrament, and may He guide us to make a wise decision as we contemplate candidates for the office of pastor.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Huebel





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The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

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Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

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Mrs. Shirleen Simek, Financial Director

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Angel Tree Christmas Update

by Laralynn Conaway, Angel Tree Coordinator

On behalf of those who worked on the Angel Tree project this year, I would like to extend a sincere "Thank You" of immense gratitude and thanksgiving to the congregation and the MLCA and ECC parents and teachers for a fantastic Angel Tree Christmas this Christmas season! Because of your support, we delivered 160 gifts to 80 children in 31 different homes across Keller, Fort Worth and Arlington. The final gift was delivered on Sunday, December 22 - just



again to everyone for being faithful servants and being a light of hope to these families.

We received a note of thanks from Prison Fellowship that I wanted to share with everyone:

By joining forces with Prison Fellowship this Christmas, you've been part of a monumental, nationwide effort to ensure that more prisoners' children - the invisible victims of crime - know that God sees them and loves them. Though they often struggle in the shadows, you showed up to put a smile on their faces, a gift in their hands, and the unfailing hope of Christ in their hearts...you've been part of a team representing nearly 8,000 churches and organizations serving approximately 375,000 children with a parent in prison. Those numbers are incredible! Thank you! We could never hope to do it without you...We are so encouraged by the many ways God uses your church's faithful ministry to the children and families He holds so close to his heart. God's blessings to you this Christmas and New Year, The Angel Tree Team.



in time for Christmas! Volunteer drivers traveled as far as 25 miles away to Arlington and as near as just two miles away right here in Keller. When the gifts were delivered to each home, the family was presented with a gift from Messiah; a beautifully written and illustrated book, "The Story of Christmas".

The stories that came back from the volunteer drivers are touching and heartbreaking at times, but the stories are also full of joy, hope, happiness and love. The beaming smiles, excited hugs and joyful laughter from the children and the caregivers was wonderfully overwhelming. Please continue to keep these children, caregivers and incarcerated parents in your prayers throughout the entire year, not just during the Christmas season. Thank you

The Elders' Corner by Edward Conaway

Happy New Year! May God bless everyone in 2014 and going forward. I would like to talk about evangelism in this month's Elders Corner. Many times when we think of evangelism, we think of it taking the form of "officially preaching the gospel either from the altar or maybe even going from door to door to spread the good news. While these are traditionally the way we spread the Gospel, it is not the only way.

The Spirit works faith when and where He will. It is not up to us to know when and where that will be, but only to realize that we may be

used by the Spirit for this purpose. This may be as simple as a smile, or saying Thank you to someone, or telling someone that they did a good job.

As the world becomes a darker place, the light that shines through us will become brighter. People will start to think, "What does this person have that makes them so happy?" This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Giving us the opportunity to then share the Good News about Salvation. Just thinking of this hopefully brings you a smile. We are saved through faith in Jesus!

This is especially true when people come to Messiah on Sunday mornings. I know that people feel strange if they introduce themselves and then find out that the person has been a long time member. But don't feel strange, if you do not know the person then it is a new connection and will strengthen our church. With the bonus that if the person is new, then we have welcomed someone into our church home.

So in 2014 and beyond, know that God loves you and that you are saved. Share your smile and have a wonderful year!