

THE DIVINE CALL

1. The church is not a business. So what is it?

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it – 1 Cor 12

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy – Eph 5

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, ..., prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband – Rev 21

2. The church's mission centers on the gospel of Christ in Word and sacraments (the keys).

Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the savior - Eph 5

Go and make disciples baptizing ...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you – Mt 28

The Holy Scriptures ... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus ...

Preach the Word – 2 Tim 3 & 4

Devote yourselves to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching – 1 Tm 4

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine – Tit 2

3. God himself has established the public ministry of the keys under the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on (his disciples) and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven," – Jn 20

It was (Christ) who gave some to be ... pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ... - Eph 4

Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ... - Ac 1

4. Calls are placed in response to a need.

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. – Tit 1

5. Public ministers are servants ... of Christ ... and of his redeemed people.

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful - 1 Cor 4

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake – 2 Cor 4

I am the voice of one calling in the desert, "Make straight the way for the Lord."- Jn 1

You call me "Teacher" and "Lord" and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. - Jn 13

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. – 2 Cor 6

6. Calls are placed to those who are qualified to be called.

The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others – 2 Tm 2:2

It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us ... - Ac 1

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect ... He must not be a recent convert ... He must also have a good reputation with outsiders ... - 1 Tim 3

7. No one serves in the public ministry without God's call. The authority to issue a call comes from a group of believers to an individual to perform specific duties for them.

No one takes that honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest ... - Heb 5

And how can they preach unless they are sent? - Rm 10:

Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ... - Ac 6

Our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called - Augsburg Conf; Art XIV

Luther stressed the importance of this point: *“Because we are all priests of equal standing, no one must push himself forward and take it upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that for which we all have equal authority. For no one dare take upon himself what is common to us all without the authority and consent of the community” (LW, Vol 44). “Today [God] calls all of us into the ministry of the Word by a mediated call, that is, one that comes through means, namely, through man ... Nevertheless, it is divine Since the time of the apostles this has been the usual method of calling in the world.” (LW: Vol 26).*

8. Good order requires that Christians humbly respect the call of those who are privileged to serve under it.

An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, “I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.” The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less - Jn 3

As for those who seemed to be important – whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance – those men added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they saw that I had been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. - Gal 2

The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. ... Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way - 1 Cor 14

Terminology regarding divine calls (adopted by COP - 1996)

- WHEREAS 1) at times it is necessary for called workers to resign or to have their Divine Calls terminated ; and
- WHEREAS 2) it would be good for us to be as uniform as possible in reporting these resignations and terminations
- WHEREAS 3) it is important for us to report in such a way that the truth is told and reputations are not harmed; therefore be it resolved,
- a) that we work with six basic terms: personal, health, cause, inability to serve, position eliminated and for the good of the ministry; and be it further
- resolved, b) that these terms be generally defined as follows:
1. personal reasons - financial, family & other non-table of duties matters
 2. health reasons - physical, mental and emotional
 3. cause - persistent adherence to false doctrine; scandalous life (not blameless); willful neglect of duty;
 4. inability to serve: established inability to perform the duties of office.
 5. position eliminated.
 6. for the good of the ministry.
- resolved, c) that this be communicated by the District Presidents as they feel need within their Districts.
- resolved, d) that each District President use only these terms in reporting resignations and terminations.

Pastor Call Form (copy of standard synod forms)

Teacher Call Form