

Sheep Get a Say: How Lutherans Choose Their Pastor

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Let's start with the Bible...

God called and sent Abraham

God called and sent Israel

God called and sent the Prophets

God called and sent Jesus

Jesus called and sent the Church

Jesus calls the church to call and send pastors



Imagine if...

- The local churches started to identify women and men from within their congregations as the next leaders for their church!
- The local church identified training pathways that were theologically sound, hyper contextual, inexpensive and offered a degree!
- Pastors led the charge in collaborating in mission!
- The LCMS was a trailblazer in discovering, developing and deploying leaders “in our houses” to send out evangelists into our post-Christian contexts!
- We lived more like the early church in the book of Acts!



The Five Values of the Early Church

Michael Green

“Evangelism in the Early Church”



The Five Values of the Early Church

1. Open air preaching in the public square.
2. 1 on 1 discipleship relationships were the norm.
3. House churches were the norm.
4. Church leadership was not hierarchical - it was plural.
5. Robust reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

Which of these values could have the greatest influence on the Church of 2025 and beyond?



AC VII

*“It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel...it is **not necessary** for the true unity of the Christian church that **uniform ceremonies**, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere.”*



Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

“(Christ) grants the power of the keys principally and without mediation to the church, and for the same reason the church has primary possession of the right to call ministers.”



Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

“Even if the pope held councils, how can the church be restored to health if the pope permits nothing to be decreed against his will, if he grants no one the right to express an opinion...”

Is LCMS leadership creating space for difference of opinion on the topic of pastoral formation?



Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

“Finally this is also confirmed in Peter’s declaration (1 Peter 2:9): ‘You are a...royal priesthood.’ These words apply to the true church, which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of choosing and ordaining ministers. The most common practice of the church also testifies to this, for in times past the church chose pastors and bishops. Then the bishop of either that church or a neighboring one came and confirmed the candidate by the laying on of hands. Ordination is nothing other than such confirmation.”



Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

“All this evidence makes it clear that the church retains the right to choose and ordain ministers. Consequently, when bishops either become heretical or unwilling to ordain, the churches are compelled by divine right to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves in the presence of their pastors.”

Catholic Bishops were withholding ordination from “godly teachers” identified and called by local congregations. This greatly upset the reformers. The reformers main goal was that called and ordained ministers were equal, and the authority for the call was given to the local congregation.



Smalcald Articles - Written by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

Concerning Ordination and Vocation

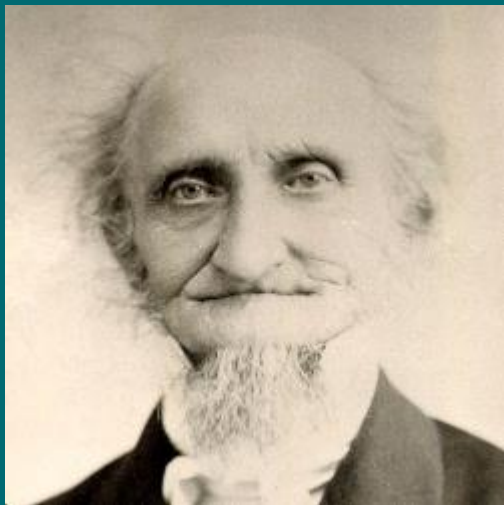
“If the bishops wanted to be true bishops and to attend to the church and the gospel, then a person might - for the sake of love and unity but not out of necessity - give them leave to ordain and confirm us and our preachers, provided all the pretense and fraud of unchristian ceremony and pomp were set aside. However, they are not now and do not want to be true bishops. Rather, they are political lords and princes who do not want to preach, teach, baptize, commune, or perform any proper work or office of the church. In addition, they persecute and condemn those who do take up the call to such an office. Despite this, the church must not remain without servants on their account.”



Smalcald Articles - Written by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

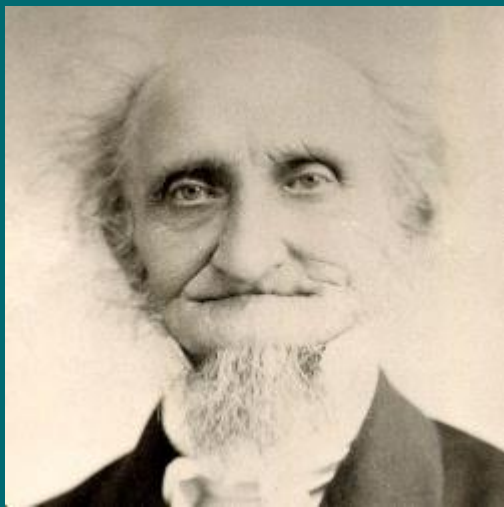
“Therefore, as the ancient examples of the church and the Father’s teach us, we should and will ordain suitable persons to this office ourselves. They may not forbid or prevent us, even according to their own laws, because their laws say that those who are ordained even by heretics should be regarded as ordained and remain ordained. Similarly, St. Jerome writes about the church at Alexandria that had originally been ruled by the priests and preachers together, without bishops.”





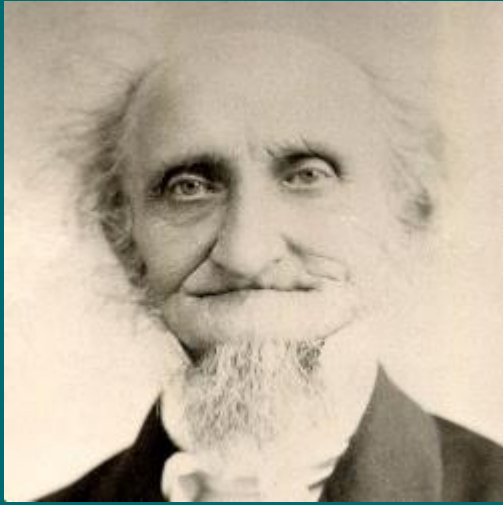
“This synod knows very well, that if with the symbolical books she admits that the entire church has the keys immediately, then her entire hierarchical doctrinal system will collapse like a house of cards. Therefore, as long as she is unwilling to give up her hierarchical system, she cannot admit that the church has the keys immediately and originally, and not through the office of the ministry.” -CFW WALTHER *On the Congregation’s Right to Call their Own Pastor*





Now finally, so far as the second appendix of the Smalcald Articles is concerned, it says there among other things by way of proof that "the churches must retain the power to demand, choose, and ordain pastors" as follows: "Here belong the sayings of Christ which witness that the keys were given to the entire church, and not to a few special persons, as the text says: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them etc." Whoever can after this still insist that the keys were not given to the entire church, to all believing Christians, but only "to a few special persons," be it only Peter, or only the apostles, or only the pastors, let him say what he will, Lutheran doctrine it is not. -CFW WALTHER
On the Congregation's Right to Call their Own Pastor





Luther, as quoted by Walther in *Church and Ministry*:

““And now let me ask you, my dear tyrants: If the election and calling of your congregation creates bishops, and if a pope is a pope without the confirmation of any superior, why should not a Christian congregation create pastors merely by its call, especially since it regards the rank of bishops and popes higher than that of ministers? Who has given you the right to take it from us? Our calling has in its favor the Holy Scriptures, while your calling is mere human invention [Menschentand] without Scripture; but with that you deprive us of our right. You are tyrants and rascals, who deal with us as would the devil’s own apostles.”



So...what should we do?

Run tests in pastoral formation with willing partners:

Kairos University - *Luther House of Study*

**Institute for Lutheran Theology - *The Center for Missional
Pastoral Leadership***

Questions?

