

VII. Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from their Calls



- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that a called pastor must be found guilty of persistently holding to false doctrine, falling into gross moral failure, or unwilling and/or unable to complete the duties of his office in order to be biblically removed from his call. Today there have been many LCMS congregations which have “fired” their pastors for no biblical cause. We reject the toleration of this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions call for proper due process (I Timothy 5:17-22) for any pastor whose congregation is seeking his deposal. Today some LCMS congregations have deposed their pastor without this due process, claiming that their pastor is an “at will employee.” We reject the toleration of this error.
- Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions declare that authority to extend the Call to a pastor has been given by Christ to His Church. Furthermore, they indicate the local congregation in its confession of the one true faith is the full embodiment of the Church in that place. Therefore, if a local congregation in consideration of the fraternal counsel of its synodical brethren in Christ desires to extend the call to a pastor in concord with the faith they confess in their fellowship, there is no greater authority by which they may be overruled. Today some LCMS district presidents have wrongfully exercised their offices by refusing to provide information on qualified pastoral candidates, or even by arbitrarily removing names from a call list without citing Scriptural reasons for either action. We reject these errors.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions call on all Christians to deal with sin in accord with Matthew 18:15-17. Today some LCMS district presidents and/or their circuit counselors have interfered in the ministry of a properly called pastor by talking with members and hearing complaints without the pastor present and/or without the pastor’s knowledge. We reject this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that no call to serve as a pastor should be temporary (that is, limited by time). Today the practice of issuing “temporary calls” is well established within the LCMS. We reject this error.

1. Passages from Scripture that testify about the divine call. [* Pages 5-8]

Deuteronomy 19:15-21
 Matthew 7:15
 Luke 1:70
 Acts 14:21-23
 Acts 20:28
 Romans 10:14-15
 I Corinthians 3:5-9
 I Corinthians 4:1-2
 I Corinthians 9:14

I Corinthians 12:28
 II Corinthians 5:20
 Galatians 1:8-10
 Ephesians 4:11-15
 I Timothy 1:8-11
 I Timothy 3:1-7
 I Timothy 4:12-16
 I Timothy 5:17-22
 II Timothy 1:6-11

II Timothy 1:13-14
 II Timothy 2:2
 II Timothy 4:5
 Titus 1:5-9
 Hebrews 1:1
 Hebrews 13:17
 1 Peter 5:1-4
 II John 10-11

2. The Lutheran Confessions and the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. [* Pages 8-14]

Augsburg Confession, Article V (The Ministry) 1-2

¹ So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. ² Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22].



The Power and Primacy of the Pope (Refutation of Roman Arguments) 24

In addition, it must be recognized that the Keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church. Many most clear and firm arguments show this. For Christ, speaking about the Keys, adds, for example, “If two of you agree on earth” (Matthew 18:19). Therefore, He grants the Keys first and directly to the Church. This is why it is first the Church that has 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.

The History of the LCMS confirms that Augsburg Confession Article V (The Ministry) leads us to conclude that the “Call” originates from God’s institution when it says, “God instituted the office of the ministry” [BOC, Tappert Ed., p. 31]; and Augsburg Confession, Article XIV (Order in the Church) legitimizes the “Call” as being from the God ordained authority given to extend it when it says, “Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call.”

Robert D. Preus, "The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy," in *Church and Ministry Today*, ed. John A. Maxfield (Crestwood, MO.: Luther Academy, 2001), 33.



The call is God's call. It is to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.... Therefore, as long as God endures in the ministry His minister who teaches correctly and lives blamelessly, the church does not have the authority to remove someone else's servant....Therefore, there are two reasons for which God removes unfaithful ministers from their office:

- (1) Because of doctrine, when they teach error...
- (2) Because of life, when they act in such a way that the name of the Lord is blasphemed...

A third reason for removal from the call and ministry, namely a total inability to function due to total lack of courage ([Johann] Gerhard wrote during the Thirty Year's War) or physical or mental collapse, is added in a footnote...

Gerhard goes on to say, "If anyone without due legal process and for causes which are not legitimate and sufficient (e.g. the overzealous condemnation of the vices of men, or hatred, or insignificant mistakes) is put out of office, then the one who takes his place is not to be regarded as the true, legitimate and called minister."

3. Evidence for the Existence of this Error. [* Pages 17-19]

- a. There is no question that the synod changed its doctrine on the office of the Holy Ministry. It didn't happen overnight, but the death knell was heard loud and clear when the Synod met in its 1989 convention.

1989 Wichita, KS, Resolution 3-05B (To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended) established Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) which permitted laymen to provide Word and Sacrament ministry without a proper call or ordination to congregations of the Synod. This was a clear violation of Augsburg Confession, Article XIV (Order in the Church). Some have legitimately called this resolution the rescission of the Augsburg Confession, Article XIV (Order in the Church), and it is a serious black mark on Missouri's claim to be a confessional Lutheran church body.

- b. That which pains the ACELC, and that which was instrumental in the formation of another organization, The Augustana Ministerium in 2005, is the following two paragraphs.

We know of over 40 LCMS (or former LCMS) pastors who have been unbiblically removed from their calls or forced into resignations in order to maintain the integrity of their ordination vows. Some have resigned from the LCMS "Minister of Religion—Ordained roster" in order to continue service to their congregations which, for reasons of theological integrity found it necessary to leave the LCMS. We suspect there are many other pastors or former pastors in these categories which are unknown to us.

There are still other pastors against whom actions are currently being taken to remove them from their divine calls or against whom such actions have occurred in the past but were unsuccessful. This unbiblical removal of pastors is an on-going tragedy and a blight on our synod's history.

4. The ACELC Concerns. [* Page 19]

As noted above, The Augustana Ministerium was formed in 2005. It is a pastoral association formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran congregations. One of their primary purposes has been, and continues to be, to provide emergency relief for pastors in crisis and need. Another important and relevant role is to aid ordained pastors, who are without a call to serve in a particular place, or who are on CRM (*candidatus reverendi ministerii*, that is, candidate for the reverend ministry) status, back into ministry as pastors and teachers in the church. Since its founding, the Augustana Ministerium has helped over 23 pastors either with emergency aid or mission support to the tune of over \$90,000 dollars. Some of the pastors who have been helped have been forced out of the LCMS because they refused to violate their ordination vows. We would like to see the day when this function of the Ministerium is no longer needed.

* Asterisks refer to page numbers in the ACELC *Evidence of Errors in the LCMS: VII. Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from their Calls* document. You are encouraged to download the entire document from <http://www.ancelc.net/> → Key Documents → ACELC Admonition and Error Documents. The online version contains the full text of all Bible passages, Lutheran Confession citations, examples, quotations and sources for all the citations and quotes.