



DP Vantage Point

*For Christ and for His world SWD Magnifies partnerships,
Multiplies ministries, and Maximizes resources.*

October 1, 2015

“Pastor Appreciation Month”

Adapted from a recent ordination sermon

Brothers in Christ:

As a pastor your task is not that complicated. You are to simply proclaim the word of God. You are to be an example for all to see of what it means to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus. You are to share the gifts which God has given to His church. Those gifts of Word and Sacrament are what our Lutheran church has been about since it was founded nearly 500 years ago. As Martin Luther reformed the church, taking it back to what our Lord originally intended, back to what the apostle laid the foundation for, the words of the Augsburg Confession were written to describe and define what this pastoral office is about. Some may roll their eyes in disgust and grouse that we would still hold to such sacred truths. However, the words of the Augsburg Confession have been tried in the furnaces of time. And yet generation after generation of Lutheran pastors have taken their stand on the words of Augsburg V:

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel 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.

What began on the day of Pentecost as our Lord poured out His Spirit on the disciples still continues these days, our Lord continues to bless His church with men who are called and set aside to proclaim His saving Word. Those men, these pastors, are God's gifts to His people. It is not because they are so special. Each is an ordinary man, much like the original 12. Each is a sinner in desperate need of our Lord's forgiveness. What makes each a precious gift is that they have been set aside by our Lord through His church to preach the saving message of forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus and to administer His holy Sacraments.

Pastors are one of Lord's many gifts to His church. That is true according to the Apostle's words in Ephesians 4. It happens “According to the measure of Christ's gifts to His church”. Pastors are gifts given by our Lord Jesus to His church, and Pastors share our Lord's gifts of Word and Sacrament, equipping God's people so that you might serve Him together.

As pastor in a very practical way it is also your task to cast the vision of what it means to be a believer, a forgiven saint. You are called to set an example of what it means to be a believer in life's many and varied situations. It is your task to lead this God's people in the direction that God wants them to go. As you know from your experience, this is an awesome, and a humbling calling. This is also a wonderful and exciting privilege. You have been called here to serve God as you serve His people. There is no higher calling on the face of this earth.

It's humbling to serve as a pastor because we get to see what God is able to accomplish in spite of our weaknesses and in spite of our shortcomings. It is humbling to stand at the bedside of a dying believer and see

the joy that the promise of eternal life brings to dying eyes. It is wonderful to see two people in a marriage that was heading for the skids, once again be revived by the love and forgiveness that only our Lord can supply. It is exciting to see new parents bring their baby to the baptismal font so that that baby can become part of God's family of believers. It is humbling and precious to stand at the graveside helping a family dry their tears of mourning with the promise of eternal life. You have been called to this place to lead people into a healthy relationship with our God. You have been called here to support the aged as they prepare to transition into eternity. Be known here as a man of God...A man of God faithful to God's Word. You have all the tools necessary to accomplish that task.

But you are not called or ordained to accomplish all of that alone. You are to serve God's people. You are to prepare them, equip them, and build them up. Listen to Paul's words again: 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

Just because you are now a pastor is not a time to take a break. Now is not the time to turn inward and think only of yourself. That would be easy to do. It's natural for us to do that. But that is not what St. Paul encourages. Listen again to his words. He tells us that God has blessed this church "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Paul says that you are here and we are at our own congregations in service together to our Lord "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith." That includes all who are members of this congregation. That includes even those who are not yet here.

Building up the body of Christ includes the task of preparing God's people for works of service, works of ministry. There is nothing amiss in that. It is what our Lord wants for you in this office, and for the people you serve, His people.

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.]

Such is your God-given task from this day forward as a pastor in the Lutheran Church. On behalf of a grateful church I thank each of you for being faithful, confessional Lutheran pastors who care for God's flock! I thank you for your service!!

May our gracious Lord have mercy!
Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
President LCMS-SWD

A Word from Walther about our place of service:

Consider, in the second place that notwithstanding the contempt of the world the great God has highly honored the office of teachers of religion and has exalted it above every other office. To begin with, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh and while personally administering this office, from the very beginning cheered the first teachers with these words: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Luke 10:16. What glorious credentials has He furnished His ministers by these words for their itineraries throughout the world! Furthermore, the Word of God has revealed to us the fact that not only marriage unions, but also unions between ministers and their congregations are concluded in heaven. What is told us concerning Jeremiah and Paul applies to all true ministers: they are appointed not only in the present time, not only at their birth, but they have been appointed by God from eternity, to be His helpers for saving those who are entrusted to them. Lastly, no one has been given more glorious promises than teachers of the Gospel and ministers of the Word of God. By the prophet Daniel, God says: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Dan. 12:3. When the time comes that the worldly shall gnash their teeth, they shall witness all the elect and angels saying to God: "This man has been a faithful minister and teacher. He has proclaimed the saving Word of God to a world of castaways. On yonder earth he was despised, persecuted, and maligned, but he shines now as a star with imperishable luster. [Walther, C. F. W., Dau, W. H. T., & Eckhardt, E. (2000). *The proper distinction between law and gospel: 39 evening lectures* (electronic ed.) (402). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.]

SWD News and Tidbits:

- 1) SWD Fall Pastors' Conference October 12-14:

It will be held at the Stoney Creek Inn, Onalaska, WI. **Celebrating God's Gift of Christian Stewardship** will be the theme for our conference. Our speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He will speak to the joy and privilege of Christian stewardship as it pertains to **Witness, Mercy and Life together** in the church. President Harrison will base his discussion on St. Paul's offering to the Jerusalem church in Acts. We will also have a presentation from Mrs. Maureen Schneider, Concordia Plan Services on the many changes going on in health care; as well as from Rev. Jason Lane, Concordia University-Wisconsin, on Luther's Influence on Hymnody and Liturgy.

Tuesday evening we will enjoy a cruise of the Mississippi on the LaCrosse Queen. Conference registration fee is \$110.00 which includes all meals including the cruise which includes Pizza and beverages. The hotel is full at this time. Conference deadline is this Friday. Agenda attached.

2) Current SWD Financials:

The latest SWD financials are attached; viz. the congregation intentions as well as the Statement of Activities.

3) Planning for the 2016 LCMS National Convention:

It is both an honor and a major commitment to host a convention for the LCMS. Unlike the other districts we will not just show up and check in. We are in need of some 300 plus volunteers to man the various booths, such as the registration and information. We are in need of pages and greeters, as well as ushers and more. To pull this off we need your help and the help of God's people. The work begins in serious in the next few days. We have team captains appointed. Along with us they will be recruiting the various volunteers. My plea is that you share this information with God's people as it is shared with you. We have the opportunity to showcase SWD, our common mission and ministry, to let the church at large see that "cheese-head" is a compliment.

4) National Convention Assessment:

Herman Strozier, our business manager, is working on getting the assessment to you as quickly as possible so that you can plug it into your budget planning. We are waiting on information from the LCMS regarding the cost of hotels and meals. If you can't wait and want an approximate number, give Herman a call.

5) Visitation:

Most of our Circuit Visitors are aware that I am making the rounds to their congregation as part of President Harrison's visitation emphasis. In some cases I am preaching, in others I am meeting with their elders or main board. If you would like such a visitation so that God's people might have a greater appreciation of what we do together in SWD and the LCMS, please give Karen a call. She can set up the date.

6) My calendar highlights for the next few weeks:

- October 1, Passionate Believer magazine planning
 - pastoral visitation with a larger congregation's staff
- October 4, Installation of Neil Carlson at Holy Cross Racine, part of a new two-point parish.
- October 5, Elder meeting at Pilgrim West Bend, role of the Circuit Visitor.
- October 6, SWD Ministerial Health Taskforce
 - Phone conference with ministerial formation committee CSL
 - Staff 1-1 meeting, which is one exec and the dp
 - Pastoral visitation
- October 6 evening, Retired Pastors' retreat, Waupaca
- October 7, morning, pastoral visitation...central part of district

- Evening, Congregational visitation, Role of Circuit Visitor at Redeemer Sheboygan.
- October 8-11, Partners meeting in Santiago, Dominican Republic.
- October 12-13, SWD Pastors' Conference LaCrosse
- October 16, Meeting with the 4-06 taskforce on Lay Deacons, St. Louis
- October 18, preach at Trinity Potter, Congregation Visitation, Role of Circuit Visitor
- October 19, Generosity Conference, Milwaukee
- October 20, pheasant hunting.
- October 21-23, Upper Midwest District Presidents' meeting, SWD office Milwaukee.
- October 25, morning, preach at the 140th anniversary of Zion and St. Paul's LaValle.
 - Afternoon, Preach for and install Greg Koepsell at Good Shepherd Oshkosh
- October 29, All SWD staff meeting, SWD office.

7) Student Indebtedness:

There has been a lot of chatter, good conversation, lately about helping our seminary and commissioned workers with their student indebtedness. Some of the conversation has been good, others futile handwringing with nothing to show for it. But here's an example that something can be done; for the past several years the Racine/Kenosha circuits have banded together for a pig roast fund raiser with the proceeds dedicated to help the pastors in those circuits with their student indebtedness. The most recent pig roast was this past weekend. Here's the report that was posted on Facebook: ***"What a successful day! Almost 300 people attended and \$14,429.27 was made to help the pastors! Thanks to all of you for your generosity and support!"***

Thanks to the pastors and congregations of Racine/Kenosha for your great example to the rest of the church. Wonderful! Perhaps it is time for all of us to stop talking and do something about student indebtedness? That is not an indictment; rather a challenge.

8) Calls and Vacancies:

Vacant and Calling Congregations:

- Beloit – Messiah (evaluating)
- Cedarburg – First Immanuel (associate pastor)
- Delevan – Our Redeemer (associate pastor)
- Franklin – Risen Savior (evaluating)
- Mayville – St. John (senior pastor)
- Milwaukee – Hope
- Milwaukee – Oklahoma Ave. (evaluating)
- Racine – Prince of Peace
- Random Lake/Batavia – Immanuel & St. Stephen (evaluating)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate pastor)
- Town Wilson/Waldo – Trinity/St. Thomas
- Wales – Bethlehem
- Wauwatosa – Our Redeemer
- Wauwatosa – Pilgrim

Pastors considering a call

- Shane Cota, Boulder Junction WI, to Town Wilson/Waldo – Trinity/St. Thomas
- William Mueller – Sub Bethlehem, Fort Wayne, Indiana to St. John, Mayville

Pastors accepting a call

- Gregory Koepsell – Alive, Monticello, Minnesota to Good Shepherd, Oshkosh
- David Knuth – Our Redeemer, Jacksonville, Illinois to Pella, Waupun

9) SWD Prayer List:

- Peter Kelm as he continues cancer treatments; with the chemo not working they are shifting to radiation therapy
- Dennis Schueler recovering after several hernia surgeries and will now be starting treatments for esophageal cancer
- Ken Krueger, husband of Immanuel Brookfield teacher Cheryl, as he is at home in hospice care after a battle with cancer

May our Lord bless!!

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Confessing Christ for the Next Generation

*It is time for us to be distinctly Lutheran, to plant new churches, to honor our vocation,
and to embrace our communities.*