

and power but also the duty—on pain of losing the salvation of its souls and in accordance with the promise made to Christ in baptism—to avoid, to flee, to depose, and to withdraw” from all that “teach and rule contrary to God and His Word” (308–309).

Luther continued, “Since a Christian congregation neither should nor could exist without God’s Word, it clearly follows from the previous [argument] that it nevertheless must have teachers and preachers who administer the Word.” And because the false bishops and spiritual government of the pope refused either to provide or to tolerate sound pastors, “we must act according to Scripture and call and institute from among ourselves those who are found to be qualified and whom God has enlightened with reason and endowed with gifts to do so” (309).

Luther reminded his readers that every Christian has the right and duty to teach God’s Word where there is no Christian congregation or preacher, especially where the need is evident. Practically, this means you will teach God’s Word in your homes, to your neighbors, among your coworkers and friends, and the like, not as pastors, but as Christians, out of love to those who need God’s saving Word (310).

But where Christians gather together, “the whole congregation” has the right and duty “to call someone into this office when there is a need.” Luther observed that “if they were really decent bishops who wanted to have the gospel and wanted to institute decent preachers, they still could not and should not do so without the will, the election, and the call of the congregation—except in those cases where need made it necessary so that souls would not perish for lack of the divine Word” (311–312). The bishop’s duty is to confirm by ordination and installation the man who is thus called by the congregation.

And here Luther concluded by recalling that the congregation—the church!—exists and is located where the pure Word of God is present. Because the office of preaching is the office of the Word of God, “it is the highest office, on which all others depend and from which they follow... Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on him. Afterward he may also baptize, celebrate mass [the Lord’s Supper], and exercise all pastoral care” (313–314).

Future Dates (see wylcms.org for information)

June 6-7: LCC Christian Culture Conference, Casper, WY
June 8-10: Pastors Wives Retreat, C’mon Inn, Casper, WY
June 12-16: Continuing Education for Pastors, Ft. Robinson, NE
June 22-24: Headwaters Family Retreat, Ft. Bridger, WY

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around June 20 (July 2023 issue).



Wyoming District Round-Up

June 2023

District Website: www.wylcms.org

“...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS...” (Eph. 1:16)

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health

For our active-duty chaplain, **Rev. Ryan Mills (Colorado)**

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merri-**
man, NE (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Prince of Peace, Buffalo (served by **Rev. Rene Castillero, Immanuel, Sheridan**) called **Rev. Roger Mullet** (Indiana District). He has accepted the call and has tentatively asked for installation on the afternoon of July 9.

Bethel, Lander (served by **Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein, Wind River Lutheran Mission, Ft. Washakie and Mt. Calvary, Dubois**) called **Rev. Travis Berg (Trinity, Cheyenne)**, who has accepted the call and will be installed June 25.

Our Savior’s, Chadron (beginning June 1, served by **Rev. James Rockhill, Bethlehem, Crawford and Redeemer, Harrison**) did not receive a seminary candidate and has asked to receive an updated call list.

Immanuel, Burns and **St. John’s, Kimball** (served by **Rev. Andrew Dimit, assistant pastor at King of Glory, Cheyenne**): The ordination and installation of pastoral candidate **Ellery Steffensen** has been tentatively set for Saturday, July 8.

The Christian in Community: The Importance Congregation of the Elect

The teaching of our election to eternal life begins this way: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him” (Ephesians 1:3–4). The Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens us with the revelation and promise of our eternal election by grace so that we should lead holy lives as members of His body, the church.

This teaching is illustrated for us in Genesis 25:19–34, the history of the birth of Esau and Jacob and the sale of Esau’s birthright as the eldest son to Jacob for a serving of lentil soup. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the teaching that the community or church of God is the assembly of the elect, chosen

by God in Christ through the Gospel before the world began. Our election is revealed and confirmed to us by His Word and Holy Sacraments.

When Rebekah, Isaac's wife, finally conceived after 20 years of marriage, she found that she had twins in her womb that struggled with each other. The Lord revealed to her that her twins would be the fathers of two communities or nations, and that "the older shall serve the younger." Esau was older and stronger but not chosen by God. Jacob was younger and weaker but still the chosen son of promise. Thus God's Word revealed the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau. "Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated" (Malachi 1:2-3).

Many years later, when Jacob "bought" from Esau the birthright belonging to the oldest son, he was only making legal and public what God's Word had already declared. God had already elected Jacob. His Word had revealed Jacob's election to Rebekah. We see how Jacob believed God's Word, held fast to it, devoted himself to it, and risked all to keep it. At the heart of God's Word was, as now, the promise and salvation of Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham and Isaac, and now, of Jacob. Jacob believed in Jesus, who was revealed in God's Word. He was justified and saved by this faith.

Esau, on the other hand, despised the promise of Jesus bound up with his birthright. He was more interested in satisfying his earthly desires and saving his own fleshly life: "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" He showed himself willing to give up the promise of Christ, the headship of the household, and the leadership of the church in exchange for a bowl of soup. God's hatred of Esau was revealed in Esau's hatred of God's Word and promise.

The Scriptures teach us that from eternity God has elected us Christians in Christ to receive His inheritance as sons. Like Jacob, we did nothing to earn God's choice. Like Jacob, we are younger and weaker in the world. And yet, we are the people He has chosen and called. How do we know this? Because we are baptized into Christ and believe in Him. Because we hear this calling and election preached to us and taught us in Scriptures day by day. Because He forgives our sins and gives us the Lord's Supper.

Our election in Christ is no source of personal pride, but rather of comfort and thanksgiving and joy. It is a reminder to us that our membership and place in our congregations is not random or self-chosen, but that it is bound up with God's eternal purposes and choice of us in Christ Jesus. He chose us. He gathered us together to Himself. We are the community of the elect, the assembly of the predestined, the mystical body of the eternal Christ our Head. All we receive and all we do in Christ's church according to His Word is the working out of His eternal purposes. "In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:5-6).

REFORMATION 500

The Lutheran Reformation was the restoration of divine teaching—doctrine. God's doctrine informs and defines all of life. So a correction of a church's teaching inevitably leads to a correction of its life. Doctrine and life are united in the daily existence of every Christian congregation. Our Lutheran congregations are cautious about change for this simple reason: they do not want to change or lose God's doctrine. Of course, not all changes in practical matters of worship and organization signal a change of doctrine. But where a misunderstanding or error in teaching is corrected, that correction usually leads to a change in practice.

As the Lutheran Reformation matured in the middle of the 1520s, Luther found himself addressing numerous questions from those who were embracing the pure doctrine of the Bible for the first time. These issues were very practical: liturgy and worship, almsgiving and the care of the poor, judging the doctrine they heard, and of great urgency, calling a Lutheran pastor when the congregation was vacant. The reformation of doctrine was leading previously Roman Catholic congregations, who now desired and demanded the pure Gospel and Sacraments, to do things different. They wanted to become Lutheran congregations. And so the questions: What was the right thing to do, the right practice? And how could they establish and prove these changes from Holy Scripture?

In the late Spring of 1523, at the request of the congregation in the little town of Leisnig, Luther wrote, "That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture" (AE 39.305-314). Luther began by establishing "where and what the Christian congregation is... The sure mark by which the Christian congregation can be recognized is that the pure gospel is preached there" (305). God's Word, and God's Word alone, most surely makes Christians and gathers them into true Christian congregations.

Consequently, everything in the congregation is organized and put in order for the sake of God's pure gospel (pure doctrine!) in order to save souls. "For the soul of man is something eternal, and more important than every temporal thing," such as humanly instituted practices, bylaws, or church officials. So Luther instructed that "this matter of judging teachings and appointing or dismissing teachers or pastors . . . must be dealt with according to Scripture and God's Word" (306).

Luther proceeded to teach many things that are built into the understanding and practice of our own dear Synod. God gives "the right and the power to judge teaching . . . to all Christians equally." He cited John 10 concerning the sheep who hear the Shepherd's voice. Pastors are given the command to teach publicly in the church, but the sheep "are to judge whether they teach the voice [i.e., the words] of Christ or the voice of strangers" (307). For this reason both pastors and their hearers are engaged in the governance of congregations, district, and Synod.

Luther summarized, "Thus we conclude that wherever there is a Christian congregation in possession of the gospel, it not only has the right