

Fourth, Luther explained, “For since we have proved all these things to be the common property of all Christians, no one individual can arise by his own authority and arrogate to himself alone what belongs to all” (34). Our pastors serve on behalf of us all. We do not call our pastors “priests,” but ministers who serve us with God’s Word and sacraments. The pastor’s first obligation is to teach the Word of God to us faithfully. “Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other functions [or offices], which are built upon it” (36).

Finally, when the church needs a pastor and finds a capable man able to teach the Word correctly, the “community as a whole [has] both right and command to commit by common vote such an office to one or more, to be exercised in its stead” (36). We use seminaries to form and test capable men for this office. “Let those who come together cast their ballots and elect one or as many as are needed of those who are capable. By prayer and the laying on of hands let them commend and certify these to the whole assembly, and recognize and honor them as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, believing beyond a shadow of doubt that this has been done and accomplished by God” (37). These are the pastors and their ministry which we receive with all joy and thanksgiving to God.

#### **Future Dates (see [wylcms.org](http://wylcms.org) for information)**

February 9-10: Tell the Good News About Jesus Convocation, Ramkota, Casper. (*Registration available at [wylcms.org](http://wylcms.org)*)

February 16-17: Youth Breakaway (grades 9-12), St. Andrew’s, Laramie

#### **THE NEXT ROUNDUP**

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around December 20 (Winter/January 2024 issue).



## ***Wyoming District Round-Up***

December 2023

*District Website: [www.wylcms.org](http://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.

**Our Savior’s, Chadron** (served by **Rev. James Rockhill, Bethle-**  
**hem, Crawford and Redeemer, Harrison**) has paused calling during the  
holiday season.

**Immanuel, Powell** (served by **Rev. Kenneth Mars, Christ the King,**  
**Cody**) has submitted nominations and is awaiting a call list.

**Trinity, Morrill** (served by **Rev. Scott Firminhac, Our Savior’s,**  
**Torrington**) is in the pre-call process.

**Rev. Mark Preus (St. Andrew’s, Laramie)** returns from sabbatical  
January 14. St. Andrew’s is being served by **Rev. Mark Maas (King of Glory,**  
**Cheyenne)** during the sabbatical.

**Rev. Darren Pflughoeft (St. Paul’s, Lusk)** returned the divine call to  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Annandale, Minnesota.

**Rev. Allen Strawn (St. Paul’s, Bridgeport)** has received a divine  
call to Calvary Lutheran Chapel, Madison, WI.

### **The Christian in Community: Joseph and His Brothers**

The divine history recorded in Genesis does not avoid the hard situations of life, situations that destroy communities, homes, and churches. It tells of sexual violence and murder (Genesis 34), death, incest (Genesis 35), family betrayal and slavery (Genesis 37), prostitution (Genesis 38), seduction and false witness (Genesis 39). In the center of all that is reported we see the response of Christians and non-Christians to the Word of God and the promise of the Savior.

You should know well the final fourth of Genesis (chapters 37–50), which tells us how God used the cruel betrayal of Joseph’s brothers to bring Joseph to be ruler in Egypt, by which the family of Jacob and many others were preserved alive through seven years of famine. God saved faithful Joseph from death, from soul-destroying sin, and from slavery so that He may work His good and gracious purposes. Through it all,

God was fulfilling His promises and sustaining His little, long-suffering, dearly beloved Church. This beautiful history prepares us to read Exodus, where the promised Savior not only preserves His people but also makes of them a church and a great nation.

In the summary given in Genesis 50:15–21, God teaches us two lessons important for our households and congregations, especially as we consider the sins that have poisoned and corrupted our little home and church communities. First, He reveals in the history of Joseph that out of His great love for us “God works all things for the good of those who love Him” (Romans 8:28), that is, those who trust in God and His Word. Joseph speaks God’s Word so tenderly and comfortingly to his wicked brothers, who are now repentant: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (verse 20). Here is great comfort for us, especially in evil times.

Second, Joseph and his brothers give us a powerful example of the necessity and way of reconciliation. The way is simple and is taught again by Jesus in Matthew 5:23–24 and Matthew 18. Joseph’s brothers come to him confessing their sin and seeking his forgiveness: “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father” (verse 17). And they humbled themselves before him.

And Joseph, as the faithful Christian and godly example God made him to be, replied, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?” (verse 19). Which is to say, I forgive you, for God Himself has forgiven me also, a poor miserable sinner, for Jesus’ sake. And Joseph demonstrated that this forgiveness was a true reconciliation of their brotherly hearts and minds and lives, for he added, “So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them” (verse 21).

By these two great teachings God restored the broken community of His little church and made them whole again. They were comforted and strengthened in faith by the demonstration and teaching that God is Lord over sin, afflictions, persecution, death, and the devil and uses these evils as His own instruments to work His good and gracious will for us Christians. See how He turned all these evils to our eternal good in the unjust and cruel death of His dear Son! And the fellowship of the ancient church of those days was reunited and restored by godly confession and forgiveness, preparing them for the days to come, days of growth in Egypt and days of persecution and slavery (Exodus 1–2). God grant us this same comfort and the help of His work of reconciliation through Jesus’ blood.

### **REFORMATION 500**

In late 1523 Luther wrote *Concerning the Ministry* (AE 40.7–44) to the churches in Bohemia (centered around Prague, Czechia). The question for them was how to obtain sound pastors without having to go through the papacy to receive Roman ordination and priests. Luther’s counsel is still enlightening for us today.

First, if the terrible emergency of persecution or war should come among us, or our faithful pastors were taken away and replaced by unfaithful pastors or imposters (who should be shunned), we would still have God’s Word. In such case, “It would be safer and more wholesome for the father of the household to read the gospel and, since the universal custom and use allows it to the laity, to baptize those who are born in his home, and so to govern himself and his according to the doctrine of Christ, even if they did not dare or could not receive the Eucharist” (9). Every Christian household, indeed every Christian, should prepare himself for such emergency conditions.

Second, Luther spoke highly of our pastoral ministry and of the divine call and ordination into the office. “Ordination indeed was first instituted on the authority of Scripture, and according to the example and decrees of the Apostle, in order to provide the people with ministers of the Word. The public ministry of the Word, I hold, by which the mysteries of God are made known, ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church, on which the whole power of the church depends, since the church is nothing without the Word and everything in it exists by virtue of the Word alone” (11).

Third, because the Roman church had made the Ministry of the Word into an office of sacrifice (especially the abominable “sacrifice of the mass”), Luther set against this false teaching the New Testament office of priest. “*One is born to be a priest, one becomes a minister...* [The Christian] was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and Spirit in the washing of regeneration [John 3:6f.; Titus 3:5f.] Indeed, all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians” (18, 19). Furthermore, he added, “Christ is a priest, therefore all Christians are priests” (20). Luther utterly rejected the Roman “priesthood” as contrary to God’s Word.

Luther listed seven “functions of a priest”: “To teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice [our bodies, including our thanksgiving and praise], and to judge of all doctrine and spirits” (21). At length he explained that these functions are “common to all Christians” (21); they are our common possession. These gifts belong to us, must be given to us, and in emergency or according to our vocation must be used by us for the salvation of souls.