

Where do pastors come from? Lately there has been talk of a shortage. The latest statistic I could find was from November of last year. Our church body reported 537 congregations looking for a pastor. Last month, the seminaries placed 83 pastoral candidates for ministry 137 calls were available, 54 unfilled.

Altogether in our church body, about 1 in 12 churches are vacant in search of a pastor. That's similar to the situation we find the apostles in our first reading from Acts 1. By that time, 1 in 12 apostles were no longer with them. Judas had betrayed Jesus and committed suicide. They needed another man to take Judas' position.

So what do they do to remedy this? Peter gathers with the other Christians at that time, we read, **“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and”** told them all that Scripture said about Judas. But Peter ultimately said that someone should take his office.

Where do pastors come from? As I was beginning to discern God's will for me to enter the ministry, a mentor used the analogy of a traffic light. He said, “You can feel called, but that just means you have a yellow light. You aren't truly called to the ministry until a congregation calls you into the ministry, that is the true green light.”

Then he went on to give me bad driving advice, but good ministry advice. He said, “A yellow light means speed up! Keep on doing what you're doing! Volunteer at your church and take part of the ministry that is already happening!”

And so it is that the Church encourages young men to become pastors and teachers, and young women to be deaconesses and teachers through doing what they're already doing: ministry to their neighborhoods and involving fellow Christian men and women to partner with them in it.

Back in the late 2000s, it was this church's partnership with St. Paul in Grafton to help run VBS at this congregation. Since the time of these photos, five of these men have been ordained into the holy ministry. Where do pastors come from? Through continuing service in the church that already started before they went into the ministry.

But as we look at this text from Acts, we note one thing. Peter gathered with 120 other Christians to have a meeting. It may have looked a lot like the meeting this church had back on February 11, 2018. Perhaps we could say Acts 1 is proof of the first call meeting in history of the church.

Without the church raising young people to serve, there is no ministry. Without the Church calling men to serve at their congregations, there are no pastors. My green light moment was April 2018, when I received my call to serve you here at Faith Lutheran Church. Where do pastors come from? First, 3. A pastor is called through the Church.

Peter didn't simply select a random bystander on the streets of Jerusalem. He said that they should select "...**one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.**"

To be an Apostle is to be a witness of Jesus Christ, so this was necessary. Peter's criteria for an apostle cannot apply to pastors today as there is nobody alive who was alive at the time of Jesus. However, the Church selects among the faithful to serve as pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, and deaconesses.

Whether you're a pastor, a Lutheran school teacher, or any Christian, Jesus calls us simply to follow Him. He calls us to listen to His voice. From the day you are baptized into Jesus Christ, until the day that you die, Jesus calls you to receive Him in the places He promises to be: the Lord's Supper, the Word preached, taught, and read, and in the Words of forgiveness repeatedly applied to us through the Pastor Sunday to Sunday.

Where do pastors come from? The way the Church raises up the next generation of pastors, Lutheran school teachers, and other church workers is not through a revolutionary day camp or spiritual retreat—not that those things are bad—but by giving Jesus to those we are closest to in our homes, in our classrooms, and in our churches.

People ask me why I switched from a career of engineering to a career of ministry, and it's not as though it was a transformation from atheistic scientist to devoted Christian, throughout high school I was in God's Word, I was attending church, and I was involved in my high school youth group. In college, I regularly attended worship at the local LCMS congregation.

As we consider the future leaders of Christ's Church, the answer might be right under our noses. Invite grandsons to be a part of what's going on here at church. Encourage daughters to help out at events such as Vacation Bible School. Walk with your family and friends alongside Jesus and His Word just as the disciples did during Jesus' earthly ministry.

As congregations with a vacancy consider a new pastor to succeed their previous one, there are many criteria they may consider: age, accomplishments, their ability to grow a church, and what have you. Above all, pastors are called to be faithful, to walk where Jesus leads them, and entrust the results to their Lord and Savior.

Where do pastors come from? Second, 2. A pastor walks with Jesus.

How did Peter conduct this call meeting in Acts 1? Prayerfully. Verse 14 tells us that the first Christians devoted themselves to prayer. In verse 24 "...**they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of**

**these two you have chosen.”** They cast lots, which essentially means they rolled dice, and the lot fell on Matthias rather than Joseph called Barsabbas.

Jesus Himself chooses men to serve in the ministry as they prayerfully consider this high calling. I remember praying to Jesus one night on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 to give me a sign to go into the ministry. The next day in my devotion book, *The Treasury of Daily Prayer*, this was the devotional reading, from Martin Luther’s Works, volume 22, Sermons on John 1–4, page 482:

“This ministry [of Word and Sacrament] will endure and is not to be replaced by any other. But the incumbents of this ministry do not remain; they die. This necessitates an ever-new supply of preachers, which calls for the employment of certain means. The ministry, that is, the Word of God, Baptism, and Holy Communion, came directly from Christ; but later Christ departed from this earth. Now a new way of sending was instituted, which works through man but is not of man. We were sent according to this method; according to it, we elect and send others, and we install them in their ministry to preach and to administer the Sacraments. This type of sending is also of God and commanded by God. Even though God resorts to our aid and to human agency, it is He Himself who sends laborers into His vineyard.

Therefore everyone must realize that he has to be sent. That is, he must know that he has been called; he dare not venture to sneak into the office furtively and without authorization. It must be done in the open. The sending is done through man, for example, when a city, a prince, or a congregation calls someone into office. But at the same time this person is sent by God.”

In many ways, I considered that to be an answer to prayer, and 13 years later I have not since turned back.

As we consider all the human intermediaries, we have to confess, like Peter, that it is the Lord who chooses pastors. It is the Lord who raises up Lutheran school teachers, DCEs, and deaconesses to serve in His harvest field.

Despite all the twists and turns your life may take, know that the Lord has a plan for your life. It may not be to enter the ministry, but it is a plan to prosper you and give you what you need to get from here to heaven. For this purpose, Jesus sends pastors and other church workers to be there in those pivotal life moments: the birth of a child, a baptism, a confirmation, a wedding, a death of a loved one, and all the moments in between.

In all these things, the Father sends pastors to be that voice of the Good Shepherd to console, to guide, and to forgive.

Where do pastors come from? Lastly, 1. Jesus chooses pastors. Just as He chose the twelve, just as He chose Matthias, He chooses pastors to serve His Church today. **THE LORD CHOOSES PASTORS THROUGH THE CHURCH TO SHOW THE PEOPLE JESUS.**