

Procedure of the Call

[This essay was delivered at the 1962 Convention of the Western Wisconsin district.

The slides which accompany the essay are available from the Seminary Library.]

By Reginald A. Siegler

- I -

Every Call to the public ministry requires devout and reverent consideration befitting that which is divine, for the public ministry in its various forms is a vocation that is divine in a fashion that may be claimed for no other vocation.

God Himself has vested authority for the establishment of the public ministry in Christian congregations.

God guides the congregations in the exercise of their authority.

God specifies the duties of this vocation.

God has provided the means with which this vocation is concerned, the keys of heaven.

God has through reconciliation established the reason for such a vocation, the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ, the fulfillment of His purpose for mankind.

God has laid down the qualifications required in those who are to serve in the public ministry.

God Himself sends His laborers where they are to work.

- II -

Every Call requires the exercise of Christian courtesy and brotherly love. The church at large (District), the calling congregation and the present congregation are all to be considered. Courtesy and brotherly consideration demand prompt notification of District officials (President and Visitor) prompt assurance of devout and prayerful consideration of the Call to the calling congregation, and a speedy resolution of doubt for the two congregations involved.

- III -

The issue to be settled in considering a Call is "Where can the pastor (teacher) best serve the kingdom of God?"

- a. As much as is humanly possible the personal likes and dislikes, the material advantages and disadvantages are to be kept out of consideration.
- b. The congregation must devoutly aid the pastor in weighing the two Calls, (their own and the new Call) and prayerfully advise the pastor.
- c. The final decision must be made by the pastor himself.

- IV -

The decision to accept a Call is to be carried out "as speedily as practicable."

- V -

A desirable sequence of procedures when a congregation calls:

1. Notification of elected officials of the District regarding the vacancy.
2. Arrangement for meeting (in consideration of District's representatives.)
3. Drawing up of list of nominations by District's officials.
4. Submission of list and discussion.
5. Unanimous adoption of list.
6. Majority opinion determined through ballots.
7. Unanimous acceptance of majority opinion.

- VI -

A congregation may add its own nominations to the list presented by the officials of the District, but such a congregation in brotherly concern for the church at large should always consult with the duly elected (divinely called) representatives of the District before the list of nominations is adopted.

The orderly procedure of our Districts requires that nominations made by others (neighboring pastors, members of neighboring congregations) always be made through the District's officials.

The Executive Secretary of Education serves as an adviser to the officials of the District, and nominations from the Ex. Sec. are properly sought and given through the office of the President of the District (until our Districts adopt a different procedure.)

- VII -

Visiting Committees (to hear the nominated pastor preach) although not specifically forbidden in Scripture, and although making it possible to establish certain obvious points (e.g., that the nominee does not read his sermons, does not have offensive mannerisms, pulpit tone, etc.) are to be discouraged because:

Such committees are unable to assess the total qualifications and hidden gifts.

Such committees are easily misled by unimportant considerations.

Such committees limit the congregation to consideration of nominees not too far away.

Such committees can create serious disorder for the Synod, exposing the pastors to the accusation of "seeking preferment" and doubt regarding the validity of the Call.

Such committees will make it difficult for a pastor to consider the Call objectively and would in many cases prejudice a conscientious pastor against a Call, making him feel guilty possibly of inviting a Call.

- VIII -

Nominees should not be approached for the purpose of establishing whether a Call would receive consideration before a Call has been extended. Every Call must receive devout consideration. On the other hand, a pastor who considers leaving his Call (the Call in which he is serving) without specific direction from God through another Call or through clear indications that his work in his congregation can no longer continue is also unfaithful to his Call.

For that same reason "trial sermons" are indications of unfaithfulness to a Call. A trial sermon is an attempt to escape from a Call given by God. The only justifiable trial sermons are those delivered at the Seminary or under similar circumstances. Such trial sermons or practice sermons delivered to establish a preacher's qualifications are delivered before the nominators rather than before a vacant congregation.

- IX -

Seminary and Teacher's College graduates are to be assigned their first Call by the Assignment Committee and are not to be called directly.

Procedure of the Call

1. Call

A call brings with it sleepless nights, soul-searching, re-evaluation of the work that is being carried on in a congregation, and sometimes heartache. Whether a Call is accepted or returned, it is to be considered as something that has been done under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit for the welfare of the kingdom of God.

- I -

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God guides the congregations in the exercise of their authority.

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God has through reconciliation established the reason for such a vocation, the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ, the fulfillment of His purpose for mankind.

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God Himself sends His laborers where they are to work.

2. Dip. of Voc.

The Diploma of Vocation was developed on the basis of these principles. The Diploma of Vocation gives the name and location of the new Call, but unless the Pastor happens to be familiar with the congregation, his curiosity about the place to which he has been called will have to wait, because the Diploma of Vocation speaks of the more important things, the Scriptural principles, and leaves the description of the physical plant and the congregation to an "Accompanying Letter."

The Diploma of Vocation reminds us from the start that this is the Lord's business - "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." Amen.

It comes because the Lord has guided a group of Christians to extend this Call. "Having called upon the Lord, our God, for guidance, and in the exercise of the authority with which He has vested His Church on earth." It comes as an exercising of the authority, the Ministry of the Keys, which the Savior vested in His church on earth.

3. Bottom

The Call reminds the Pastor that this is the Lord's work, the work of the Church, and urgent... "We ask our pastor-elect, for Jesus' sake, to take charge of the pastoral office in our congregation as *speedily as practicable*." The Pastor will not play with this Call, postpone action on it, deal lightly with it.

"To faithfully discharge the same in all its parts, in accordance with the Word of God, and so as to fulfill the detailed conditions hereinafter specified..." Once more the Pastor is reminded that His Call is always to work "in accordance with the Word of God."

The Pastor is reminded again, that His work is the subject of the earnest prayers of the Christians, the children of God. "We pray God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to convince our pastor-elect by His Holy Spirit that the call which we herewith extend to him is a divine call, to conduct him safely into our midst, and to bless his sacred ministrations among us, to the glory of His name, to the salvation of ourselves and our children, and to the advancement of His glorious kingdom. Amen. Upon the pastor now rests the responsibility of determining if it is the Lord's will that the pastor should labor in this new field.

It does a pastor good also to see once more summarized that to which God through a Christian congregation authorizes and obligates those called to the public ministry. "To proclaim to us, by preaching and teaching, the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the canonical writings of the Old and New Testament and professed in the confessional writings of the Ev. Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord..." The Pastor is reminded again that he has been called to his office because he has confessed that the confessions of our Lutheran church agree completely with the Word of God. If he finds himself in disagreement with the Confessions, honesty and integrity must force him to acknowledge that he has forfeited his office. The Lord has determined the requirements of this vocation.

He is "to administer the Holy Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution."

He is to discharge toward all the members of our congregation the functions of a pastor and curate (one who has the cure) of their souls in an evangelical manner, in particular, to visit the sick and dying and to admonish indifferent and erring members.

4. P. 2

He is “to faithfully guard and promote the spiritual welfare of the members of the congregation, in particular, to instruct our catechumens in the Word of God as it is taught in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, and thus prepare them for their first communion.

5. School

Here is a reminder that the Pastor is called to serve the whole flock, the children as well as others, yes, especially the children, for they are the church of the future. Their Christian training in the best possible manner will always lie upon his heart.

6. P. 2

He is “to guide us in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church, agreeable to the Word of God.” What Pastor will not think of lax members, who have not been admonished as they should be, who have not been blessed with the application of the *divinely ordained discipline* of the church, and are apparently, at least in the opinion of the pastor, sowing the signs of impending spiritual death?

He is “to serve the congregation as an example by his Christian conduct, and by the grace of God to do all that is possible for him to do, within the limits of his calling, for the upbuilding of our congregation and for the general advancement of the kingdom of Christ.”

Here follows a blank on the Diploma of Vocation. Sometimes congregations have special tasks which they wish to impress upon a pastor. It may be that he is to be called also to some service in the school, or perhaps a special area of the work of a congregation is to be his special responsibility. Perhaps a nearby institution is also to receive his special ministrations. Such phases of the work can be placed into the Call on this blank. But of the entire Call whether it speaks of a vocation in general or specifically in that location, the Diploma of Vocation stresses what the Word of God clearly teaches: this is of God.

7. P. 2 Bottom

On the other hand, we obligate ourselves to receive our pastor elect as a minister of Jesus Christ. “When the Pastor comes to this section of the Diploma of Vocation, no doubt he thinks with gratitude of faithful members of a congregation who have done just that... according to him the honor, love, and obedience which we owe him as such... as a minister of Jesus Christ... according to the Word of God” ...and perhaps he thinks with grief of others who view him purely as a lecturer, to be heard on occasion, and to be ignored at pleasure ...a necessary evil together with the undertaker.

We obligate ourselves “to support his ministrations among us with our diligent and faithful prayers; to render the discharge of his duties easy for him by cordial one-mindedness and willing readiness, by our peaceable conduct, and in every other way possible; to provide for his decent maintenance according to our ability, and to that end pay him promptly and regularly a salary...”

This is the sacred Call, a divine Call, which will lie upon the pastor’s heart and the hearts of the members of his present congregation as well as the members of the calling congregation until a God-pleasing decision can be made.

8. Acc. Letter

An accompanying letter describes the work in greater detail, and also generally contains information about the parsonage, the church buildings, etc., so that the pastor can be assured that the needs of his family will be met, and that he can know the conditions under which he is being asked to labor. How can he decide what is

to be done? Above all his decision is to be made with prayer. But before the decision is even considered there are preliminaries to consider.

- II -

Every Call requires the exercise of Christian courtesy and brotherly love. The church at large (District), the calling congregation and the present congregation are all to be considered. Courtesy and brotherly consideration demand prompt notification of District officials (President and Visitor), prompt assurance of devout and prayerful consideration of the Call to the calling congregation, and a speedy resolution of doubt for the two congregations involved.

9. Letters to Pres. & Visitor

Before serious consideration can be given certain steps must be taken. The President of the District, and the Visitor of the Conference should be notified. The President may be considering nominating the pastor to another call list. Unless he is aware of the Calls received by the Pastors of his District, the President can easily create confusion and doubt as to the validity and divinity of Calls. The Visitor should be notified, so that he may consider the problem also and be ready to give prudent counsel when and if called on.

10. Letter of Ack.

And self-evidently the pastor will immediately assure the congregation that has sent the Call, that he will consider their Call prayerfully. It is desirable to indicate the date on which a decision can be expected on the basis of the meetings which are to be held.

11. Pres. of Cong.

As speedily as possible a meeting of the Church Council and of the congregation will be called. The congregation usually must be notified in two services of any special meeting. Most congregations have that requirement in their constitutions, so arrangements must be made. The president of the congregation is notified, and the calling of a special meeting is discussed and settled with him.

12. Books

Then begins the pastor's soul-searching and personal study. If he hasn't recently dealt with the problem of a Call, the Pastor may reread the Pastoral Epistles, pertinent passages from the Table of Duties in the Catechism and the Confessions.

13. A.C.

The Augsburg Confession includes several Articles relating to the Call. The Apology deals with the Call and with the ministry. The Pastor will probably take up his Seminary notes to review the subject. He will find that the subject of the Public Ministry and the Call to the Ministry have a prominent place in our Confessional writings, and that even in the Lutheran church certain errors have arisen and been the cause of division.

14. Common Conf.

This was one of the issues that needed to be settled between the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran church when the Common Confession was written. In this area, apparently, disagreement between the Syn. Conf. and A.L.C. has disappeared. The Common Confession, which so carefully skirted the points at issue in many doctrines, spoke clearly on the points at issue in regard to the Ministry.

15. Outline

If the Pastor would go to the trouble of outlining the doctrine of the Call, he would find that all Christians have a call as priests, but that the Bible does very clearly teach also that there is a special call to the public ministry, a Call from God through congregations of Christians. The fact that God has given to His Christians on earth the duty to administer the Keys of the kingdom of heaven; and that He caused the congregations of the early church to elect men to administer these keys; and that such men were acknowledged in the inspired Word of God to have been called by God lead absolutely to the conclusion that God calls men to the public ministry through congregations. Therefore we are assured that when a Christian congregation, guided by God's Word, with the prayer that God's Holy Spirit guide them, calls a pastor, that is a *divine call*.

16. Concerning a Call

The Pastor will find that the authors of Pastoral Theology advise a man who has received a Call to determine first whether the Call is a *valid* call. A valid Call is a Call issued by such who have a right to issue a Call. Such a question might arise where a congregation has split. It surely must arise when someone is asked to do the work of a minister as an employee of the government.

The second question to ask is: Is this a legitimate Call, one issued for legitimate reasons. A Call that has come to a Pastor because he himself suggested that he would be interested in such a Call, or possibly even applied for the Call, or perhaps suggested to a friend that he might nominate him, such a Call is not legitimate. If unhappiness, difficulties develop for that pastor in that congregation, he has no comfort in the fact that he is doing God's work to the best of his ability. He is working where he himself and not God made a place.

Sometimes congregations recognize that there are objectionable practices in their midst such as poor stewardship, lack of interest in mission work, lack of concern for the Christian training of their children, and they may try to find a man who will go along with these weaknesses. Where that enters into the picture, there, too, this call is not a legitimate Call and the Pastor will do well to return that Call.

Does this mean that a Pastor must hire Paul Drake to find out what motivated the sending of a Call? Ordinarily the fact that a congregation is joined with us in the confessional bond that we enjoy is sufficient proof that a Call sent by it to a Pastor of our Synod is a legitimate Call.

The pastor in his studies will find that in the area of the Ministry and of the Call many false doctrines have developed. "My Church and Others" by Mueller lists 17 such errors.

17. Mt 18:18

His studies will surely lead him to consider the Bible passages on which the doctrine of the Call is based with great care. He may start with Matth. 18:18, where Jesus says: Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Here the right and duty of congregations to administer the keys of heaven is established.

18. Tit 1:5

The fact that the early church did elect men to administer the Keys is established by such passages as Titus 1:5: For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city,... There is a definite Call to the public ministry.

19. Acts 20:28

Acts 20:28 shows that such men were acknowledged, and that by inspiration of God, to have been placed in their work by the Holy Ghost. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

20. 1 Cor 12:28

1 Cor. 12:28 also shows that "God hath set" the tasks of his church. God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, etc. but for the

pastor the words, *God hath set* are the important words just now. He will recognize the certainty of the fact that when a Christian congregation guided by God's Word, with the prayer that God's Holy Spirit guide them, call a pastor, that is a *divine call*. God hath set.

21. 1 John 1:1ff

Perhaps the pastor will turn to a passage like 1 John 1 to recapture for himself the sense of privilege, the wonderment that belongs to those called to carry on the work of proclaiming salvation. "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us: v. 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*" With what reverence we ought to approach anything that has to do with such a blessed privilege!

22. 2 Calls

The problem that faces the pastor is to weigh two calls, for the new Call does not invalidate the Call to the congregation which he has been serving. Actually, if in weighing the two Calls every factor seems equal, the conclusion that the pastor will have to make is that there is then not sufficient reason for him to leave his present charge.

- III -

The issue to be settled in considering a Call is "Where can the pastor (teacher) best serve the kingdom of God?"

- a. As much as is humanly possible the personal likes and dislikes, the material advantages and disadvantages are to be kept out of consideration.**
- b. The congregation must devoutly aid the pastor in weighing the two Calls, (their own and the new Call) and prayerfully advise the pastor.**
- c. The final decision must be made by the pastor himself.**

23. Statistics

So the pastor will begin to gather information – statistics first of all. The Statistical Reports in his library will help. By comparing statistical reports of various years, a picture of the spirit of the congregation may begin to emerge.

24. Pastor Toepel

Neighboring pastors often are in a position to evaluate a person's service in his present charge. Conference brethren will have a picture of that work.

25. Visitor

The Visitor of the conference will have certain opinions. In the case of a teacher, a careful discussion of the matter with the Pastor will take place. Such discussions will gradually help to crystallize the thinking regarding the Call.

26. Church Council

The meeting of the Church Council will give an opportunity to Council weigh the present work, its success, its progress, its weaknesses. In the Council the problem of inactive members may be discussed on the

basis of the financial reports. The question may be raised, by the pastor, Is the personality of the pastor an issue in any of the cases of delinquent members?

27. Blueprint

Whenever the pastor is urging progress in any area, the building of a Christian Day School, enlargement of the present school, increased participation in mission work, . . . or wherever it is necessary for the Pastor to speak out strongly against doubtful practices of stewardship, or of unionism in the form of lodge membership, there will always be a certain amount of opposition. This opposition will not be a factor except to this extent, that the Council will try to help the pastor decide whether a new broom could perhaps more successfully complete such necessary tasks.

But pastors and their families sometimes offend by poor judgment, by human failure; and sometimes these personal factors become obstacles to the church activity of members. At a time such as this, when a Call is being considered, the Council owes it to the pastor to help him weigh such factors also. The pastor may be very much concerned about the delinquent member living next door. The members of the Council will know whether that person was a zealous member in previous pastorates, or whether this truly is a case in which the present pastor is a stumbling block to delinquent members.

28. Millstone

Here too it applies: Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

29. St. John's bulletin

May the Pastor visit the "calling congregation" and possibly get a first-hand picture of conditions? or may he possibly make conditions stipulations, under which he might consider the Call? We have here an example of the response to such an attempt. It is the return of the Call. This pastor in returning the call gives three reasons: 1) Lack of objectives – In spite of the congregation's resolution generally adopting my suggestion of a master plan for the future, the congregation is evidently unwilling to break with old traditions and has the spirit of "resisting changes" does resent the suggestions of "outsiders"; and does not seem to strive for progress. This is indicated by the action regarding the renovation of the church, salaries, parsonage, etc.

2) Attitude toward the House of God – I cannot approve the congregation's disregard for the condition of the Lord's Temple and its willingness to let it remain in this disgraceful condition indefinitely. Neither can I approve the thoughtless disregard for the safety of your worshippers should fire break out at the entranceway and trap a thousand people within.

3) Attitude toward workers – To accept the call to St. John's would mean that I would have to take a \$25.00 per month cut in salary. My family has sacrificed many things that I might do work which I considered vital to the kingdom of God. But sacrificing this amount of salary to a large congregation means that the workers are asked to bring the sacrifice which the members themselves should bring."

We must recognize that a pastor who visits the congregation that has called him, examines its property, tries to make stipulations, will always raise doubt regarding the purity of his motives, and will cause offense regarding the divinity of the call. Did God guide the decision or did the pastor's wife like the kitchen?

The pastor will be far on the road to a decision by the time the meeting of the Church Council is finished, however; the meeting of the congregation is most of the time the deciding factor. Sometimes the pastor may have decided before the meeting to ask for a release or to return the Call if the congregation does not change his mind; however, the issue is most of the time still in balance at the time of the meeting.

30. Empty chairs

One factor that may tip the scale is the concern of the members as it is evident to the attendance at the meeting. If out of 150 voters 20 bother to attend the meeting, all factors being equal, the empty chairs will speak louder than the most eloquent supporter of the pastor's continued service in the congregation. The pastor will

probably feel that it is time to give the absent members the opportunity to be enthused for the Lord's work through another pastor.

What is the congregation to discuss? Two things should be avoided. First, this is not a bargaining session, in which the larger salary will win. The salary is at issue to this point: Will the pastor be able to meet his obligations for the support of his family? Beyond that the issue is only: Are the members truly sharing, "communicating with him that teacheth?"

31. Gal. 6:6,7

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If a congregation through the consideration of the Call becomes aware of the fact that it is underpaying its pastor, such a failure should be corrected, but it is not the issue at the Call Meeting, nor should an offer of a raise be considered at a Call Meeting.

The second mistake to be avoided is that someone simply assumes that as a layman he is not in a position to judge the work, and therefore he makes a motion: "Let's give the pastor a vote of confidence, and then let him decide for himself." The congregation should with prayer and sincere concern approach the problem asking: "Where can the pastor best serve the kingdom of God."

31a. Statistics

Members of the congregation are to help the pastor decide. That means that the work, the program of the congregation, the mission opportunities, the congregation's work in connection with other congregations, all are to be considered. These are to be weighed against the work to which the new Call would obligate the pastor, as the accompanying letter, the Statistical Reports and any other sources of information can portray the work. The pastor's abilities and weaknesses as each member has learned to know them, will begin to form an opinion in the mind of each member.

Here it is proper to warn that a meeting to consider a Call does not give license to air publicly what should have been discussed privately.

After weighing every possible phase of the congregation's work against the work in the other congregation, taking into consideration the tasks or the program lying before the congregation and the pastor's gifts for fulfilling these tasks, at the same time taking into consideration that each vote represents not just a personal opinion, but the opinion of his household, each member will finally with a prayer that God's Holy Spirit guide him, be ready to express through his ballot his opinion concerning the field in which the pastor should be working. If the vote indicates a very definite opinion that the pastor should remain to carry on the work in his present congregation, a motion to ask the pastor to return the Call is desirable. If this motion is not passed unanimously, I believe it would be right for the pastor to invite those who expressed their wish that the pastor would leave, to discuss their feeling privately with the pastor. The relationship of pastor and member should be one of understanding. It may be that for the sake of one voice the pastor will feel that it would be best for him to accept the new call.

If the pastor returns the Call, the congregation should not let the lessons of the discussion be forgotten. These lessons should be applied. Members should strive to put them into effect, strive to help the pastor carry out the program discussed at the Call Meeting.

32. N.W.C.

Sometimes it is completely apparent to all that the pastor's gifts are being called to a wider field, and the congregation will have to admit that it has no right to stand in the way.

Is it always necessary to present the Call to a congregation? I consider a Call always an opportunity for the congregation to review its work. The Call should always be brought to the attention of the congregation. Sometimes it is apparent that there was a breakdown in synodical communication or a lack of consideration for the rest of the fellowship. Even then the coming of the Call is capable of teaching a lesson, the need of brotherly

consideration or orderly procedures in our Synod. In such cases announcements with an invitation to express any opinions to the members of the Council or the Pastor are sufficient. Such a procedure must bear the approval of the Council.

The decision finally must be made by the pastor. The two Calls come to him, not to the congregation. He must answer. The congregation can only Advise. Whether the pastor accepts or returns the Call, the decision must be made without delay, and must be announced as soon as possible, again also to the responsible officials of the District as well as to the congregations involved.

- IV -

The decision to accept a Call is to be carried out “as speedily as practicable.”

33. “Where the is?”

Should the pastor accept the Call, it is his duty “as speedily as practicable” to take up his work in the new congregation. “As speedily as practicable” may take into consideration the completing of a program, if it is not too lengthy, for example, the completion of the Lenten season or Christmas season, or possibly the completion of instruction for a group of children or adults who are well advanced in their course of instruction.

34. Moving date

Otherwise the issue will be mainly one of moving. The pastor may feel that two weeks will be about right. His wife may well feel that she can’t get packed in less than a month. It is a disorder to delay unduly the taking up of the work in a new Call. Such procrastination indicates that the conviction that the new Call is the one in which the Lord would have the pastor work is not overpowering.

35. A.C. XIV

And now the question: What is the Procedure and what are the considerations involved in calling a new pastor? The District in 1936 adopted a set of regulations as the result of a memorial to the Synod from the Winnebago Pastoral Conference. The Synod in 1937 then adopted what was evidently a compiling of the actions of the various districts. The new constitution of the Districts also has a paragraph regarding the procedure. These regulations are not to be found in Scripture, but they are applications of Scriptural principles and our congregations ought to follow them as a matter of co-operation with the other congregations of our Synod and the elected officials of our District. The regulations are attached.

- V -

A desirable sequence of procedures when a congregation calls:

- 1. Notification of elected officials of the District regarding the vacancy.**
- 2. Arrangement for meeting (in consideration of District’s representatives.)**
- 3. Drawing up of list of nominations by District’s officials.**
- 4. Submission of list and discussion.**
- 5. Unanimous adoption of list.**
- 6. Majority opinion determined through ballots.**
- 7. Unanimous acceptance of majority opinion.**

35a. Regulations in summary

A desirable procedure, taking into consideration the regulations would be this:

1. The District President is notified of a vacancy and arrangements are made with him regarding the vacancy or supply pastor.
2. A “Call Meeting” is arranged in such fashion that the District’s representatives can be present (the President, vice-presidents, Visitor or the Vacancy Pastor may represent the District.)

3. The District President, often in consultation with the two vice presidents and the Visitors, draws up a list of nominations. It is my opinion that this is the most important duty of our District officers, that duty which would lay upon delegates of the convention the duty of considering the election as the most important part of their work. In this we must think of our officials as called by God to an important task and responsibility in the church.

4. The District President personally or through an appointed representative, one of the vice-presidents, the Visitor or the Vacancy Pastor, submits the lists of nominations to the congregation. With the nominations will be a description of essential qualifications such as experience, training, possibly age and family status.

5. After considering the qualifications of all the nominees the congregation votes to accept the list. This vote must be unanimous. If any name on the list is not acceptable to a member of the congregation, he need only state that fact. Accepting the list means that there is no man nominated who would be unacceptable to some member of the congregation as his pastor.

36. Blameless

The bishop must be blameless. It must be recognized as desirable that every adult of a congregation, men and women, have the opportunity to express themselves in this connection. If the danger of politicking were not so great, the solution would be that the list of nominees were posted before a Call Meeting. Some congregations have this arrangement in their constitutions. Generally our Synod seems to be fearful of this arrangement. Another arrangement would solve the problem if it did not create other problems, the arrangement of asking everyone, men and women, to attend the Call meeting, with the understanding that Scripture speaks regarding the voice of women in the church. Our authorities on Pastoral Theology, however, point out that the voice of a woman raised in opposition to some nomination for the pastorate that is to serve her, should be heard.

6. The congregation, after considering all factors that can be brought out, votes by ballot, asking for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

7. When one candidate has a majority, it is not only customary but necessary that that candidate be given a unanimous vote.

These principles are not always followed formally, but in principle they are.

There are several questions that should be considered here:

1. May the congregation make its own nominations to be added to the list presented by the District's officials? That is the right of the congregation.

- VI -

A congregation may add its own nominations to the list presented by the officials of the District, but such a congregation in brotherly concern for the church at large should always consult with the duly elected (divinely called) representatives of the District before the list of nominations is adopted.

The orderly procedure of our Districts requires that nominations made by others (neighboring pastors, members of neighboring congregations) always be made through the District's officials.

The Executive Secretary of Education serves as an advisor to the officials of the District, and nominations from the Ex. Sec. are properly sought and given through the office of the President (until our Districts adopt a different procedure.)

37. Nominated by cong.

Nominations arising from the congregation should go through the District officials because they may know reasons for judging that a Call would be a tragedy and mistake for certain people, possibly because of a problem or program in that person's congregation, possibly for reasons of fitness. Therefore, if the District's officials are not able to advise regarding a nomination made from the floor, it would be desirable to adjourn the Call Meeting until the approval of the District's President can be obtained.

In addition, again, nominations added from the floor must be included in the list of nominations which is unanimously accepted as the Call list. The approval amounts to this, that no member of the congregation knows of a reason why he could not accept any person on the list as his pastor, should the Call go to him.

38. Blameless

A Bishop must be blameless.

Neighbors, members of other congregations, neighboring pastors *have the right to nominate, however through the orderly procedure of the District*, through the President. Electioneering for a favorite candidate should be absolutely avoided. Pastor and congregation want the assurance that the pastorate of that congregation is of God.

The necessity of having the nominations pass through the office of the District President is especially apparent when we consider how the Divinity of the Call becomes suspect to a lady teacher who receives five and six Calls in the course of a Spring.

2. Another question frequently encountered is: May the congregation send a Visiting Committee or Auditing Committee to hear men who have been nominated for a pastorate preach?

- VII -

Visiting Committees (to hear the nominated pastor preach) although not specifically forbidden in Scripture, and although making it possible to establish certain obvious points (e.g., that the nominee does not read his sermons, does not have offensive mannerisms, pulpit tone, etc.) are to be discouraged because:

Such committees are unable to assess the total qualifications and hidden gifts.

Such committees are easily misled by unimportant considerations.

Such committees limit the congregation to consideration of nominees not too far away.

Such committees can create serious disorder for the Synod, exposing the pastors to the accusation of “seeking preferment” and doubt regarding the validity of the Call.

Such committees will make it difficult for a pastor to consider the Call objectively and would in many cases prejudice a conscientious pastor against a Call, making him feel guilty possibly of inviting a Call.

39. No

Although the practice of sending such committees is not specifically forbidden in Scripture, conclusions based on Scripture lead our Synod to declare with all possible emphasis *no!* Such congregations are thus ignoring the important considerations which led to the nominations by the District’s duly elected *nominators*, who have acted prayerfully on the basis of their knowledge of the needs of the congregation and the capabilities of the men nominated. Such committees will be capable of advising only on the basis of a moment of contact.

40. “Let’s go over my sermon again...”

It may be that the Pastor happened to use a striking phrase or illustration. He may never use that phrase again. He may not have realized its effectiveness. It may be that the Pastor recognized a good sermon when he heard one and is on that day really delivering such a good sermon.

41. “glass with animals.”

It may be that the night before was the night on which some sick call kept the Pastor from receiving sufficient rest, so that the committee hears him at his worst.

More serious than these possibilities is the disorder that could arise in our Synod through such a practice. Such committees will generally limit consideration to nominees near enough for a convenient committee visit.

42. “seeking preferment”

If such a practice were general, the view, that a man has been successful in “seeking preferment” would have to replace the trust that his Call is divine. “Drawing upon my not inconsiderable experience, Andrew, my advice to a young man ambitious of preferment in our calling is to steer clear of two subjects, politics and religion.” And the conscientious pastor would find it hard to overcome his prejudice against such a Call so that he could consider it objectively.

43. Sem. graduating class

A special consideration is the Calling of a Candidate or Graduate from our Seminary. The students naturally are called to preach where vacancies exist. The temptation will surely arise to nominate such a student and extend the Call to him directly. This would, however, ignore the fellowship which we enjoy with others in our church, for the training of each candidate for the ministry has been carried out at great expense to the church at large, the Synod. There is no way of estimating exactly, as far as I know, the cost per candidate, but probably a method as accurate as any would be to divide the number of graduates in any given period of time into the total cost of conducting our ministerial training schools during that same period of time. Such a result would ignore the inestimable benefits of the Christian training which many laymen, people who do not complete the course, but who do bring their knowledge and zeal into the congregations and are a great benefit to the church, receive; however, the figure does show what we are spending as a Synod in order to supply pastors.

44. Report of expenditure, NWC & Sem

Such a figure for 1958 to 1959 would show a total expenditure of \$570,211 for N.W.C. and the Seminary. In those two years roughly there were 57 graduates, leaving a cost of \$10,000 per graduate. Each student has paid approximately \$2,500 of this amount, so \$7,500 is roughly the Synod’s cost, without taking into consideration the fringe benefits. The congregations have for that reason given into the hands of the presidents of the various districts and the faculty of our Seminary the duty of placing each graduate according to an analysis of his ability and the needs of the various congregations. Where this procedure is ignored, it must be looked upon as a lack of consideration for the rights of the other members of our Synod. A candidate will generally be instructed and urged to return any Call which comes to him directly.

45. Agenda “charge”

Where the congregations carefully and prayerfully, considering their relationship to the church at large, call a Pastor, and that man is assured that his Call is legitimate and valid, and is moved to accept that Call, that Pastor may enter upon his work in the assurance that God will be with him in his work. That pastor may receive his charge as coming from Christ Himself.

“Go then and feed the flock of Christ which is entrusted to thee, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord over God’s heritage, but being an ensample to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, thou shalt receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The Lord bless thee from on high, and make thee a blessing unto many, that thou mayest bring forth fruit, and that thy fruit may remain unto eternal life. Amen.”

46. Agenda “Promise”

And a congregation may with assurance follow the leadership of such a man; the members should gladly promise and truly strive with God’s help to fulfill the promise made at the installation service:... “To receive your Pastor as a minister of God, and to show towards him such love, honor, and fit obedience in the Lord as are due to an overseer and guide placed over you by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.”

Regulations Pertaining to the Divine Call - adopted by the Synod in 1937

1. That the pastor receiving a call first notify his congregation and then the District President of the receipt of the call, and that the District President be informed as soon as a decision has been made in the matter.
2. That the congregation arrange for a consultation with the District President as soon as possible in order to appoint a supply pastor and to discuss possible candidates for the permanent pastorate.
3. Since the District President is responsible to his district for the supervision of doctrine and practice in their midst, the final list containing the names of all candidates approved by the congregation should be submitted to him for approval.
4. Wherever there has been a manifest violation of the sanctity of the call, authorization of the installation should be held in abeyance until the matter has been thoroughly investigated and disposed of.

(These regulations were adopted with understanding that teachers are to be included insofar as these regulations apply to them.)

Procedure of the Call

Article XI (New Constitution of Districts)

In case of a vacancy in the pastorate, congregations shall notify the President of the District so that he may assist such congregations in supplying the pulpit and administering the Sacraments during the vacancy. The President shall also counsel the congregation in the filling of its vacancy. Similar notice shall be given and counsel requested in case a congregation is calling a teacher for its school. The President may delegate someone to represent him in these matters.

Procedure to be Followed in Filling Vacancies in the Pastorates of our Congregations (Resolutions adopted in District Convention - 1936) This was the West. Wis. District's answer to a memorial to the Synod, referred to the Districts. The Synod in 1937 adopted a set of resolutions somewhat more precise, but essentially the same.

The recommendations were adopted:

1. That the pastor receiving a call immediately notify his District President of the receipt of the call, and also inform him as soon as a decision has been made in the matter.
2. That the congregation in which the vacancy occurred notify the District President of such vacancy as soon as feasible. That this be done either through its secretary or through the vacancy pastor, when there is one, or through the Visitor.
3. That the District President then take steps immediately to assist such congregation in filling the vacancy by asking it to call a meeting for that purpose and by offering his advice to the congregation in choosing a pastor.
4. That all nominations be submitted to the District President. Nominations originating in the congregation must be approved by the congregation. We deem it advisable, however, that such nominations also be submitted to the President if at all possible. Suggestions made by others must never be submitted to the congregation, but directly to the President of the District before the date of such meeting.
5. That the President of the District personally, or through a representative delegated by him for the purpose, submit the list of nominees to the congregation prior to or at the meeting held for the purpose of calling a pastor.
6. That, in cases where there has been a flagrant violation of the divinity of the call, authorization of the installation should be withheld and the matter thoroughly investigated. We understand the

words: “thoroughly investigated” to mean, with a view of exercising discipline in cases of such violation.

7. That the Synod in this convention adopt the necessary provisions to bring this mode of procedure to the attention of all congregations in, or affiliated with, our Synod, and urge them officially to declare their adherence to the same.

(These resolutions had been submitted to the Synod by the Winnebago Pastoral Conference, studied by a committee of the Synod and submitted to the Districts)