



May 2018

## **LEADING IN A GODLY MANNER:**

# Working with Your People for the Sake of Christ's Mission

---

### 2017–18 LCMS Circuit Bible Studies

Studies in pastoral theology using C.F.W. Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

---

## **PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE**

### **Author: Dr. Lucas V. Woodford**

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Mayer, Minn.

Collegium Fellow for DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

[lucas.woodford@gmail.com](mailto:lucas.woodford@gmail.com)

### **General Editor: Rev. Mark W. Love**

Senior Administrative Pastor

Trinity Lutheran Church & School, Toledo, Ohio

[markwlove@gmail.com](mailto:markwlove@gmail.com)



DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel, a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has assisted more than seven hundred pastors and the congregations and agencies they serve since its beginning in 2008. The DOXOLOGY program provides advanced training in pastoral care skills, combining the classic heritage of the cure of souls with the insights of contemporary Christian psychology. Information and resources can be accessed at *[doxology.us](http://doxology.us)*.

**DOXOLOGY**  
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

# Leading in a Godly Manner: Working with Your People for the Sake of Christ's Mission

References in Walther: Articles 44–47, 49–50 [Walther's titles: *Congregational Administration*; *The Life of the Preacher*]

## PASTORAL MINISTRY AND PARISH ADMINISTRATION

Consider the following quote from Walther, along with the corresponding questions, to help provide a beginning perspective on the administrative task in a congregation today and how it compares to Walther's time. You will note that Walther advocates for a special lay office — the office of overseer — to handle church administration. However, what he considers church administration is not necessarily the same as what is considered church administration today. Furthermore, most congregations today tend to lump that responsibility into the preacher's overall duties and expect one pastor to be able to do it all. Consider Walther's quote and the translator's note, then discuss the questions below.

"Since the church exists independently of the state here in America, the preacher has an even greater obligation to work toward having the *office of overseer* established in his congregation to help him, to apply church discipline all the better, to maintain good order within and outside of public worship gatherings and other gatherings, to administer church goods conscientiously and appropriately, to supervise the school, and the like. [He should work toward] having it conferred on devout men with the necessary gifts and [toward] their conducting it rightly (1 Tim. 5:17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)" (p. 421).

What the translator calls "the office of overseer" is not the New Testament office of *episcopos*. (See translation notes in the preface, p. xxvi.) *Vorsteher* and *Aelteste* were the words used in early Lutheran churches for the laymen elected (or appointed) to assist the pastor in his spiritual care of the congregation and, in the earliest days of the Synod, the temporal affairs of the congregation as well. Hence, the office of overseer referred to in Article 44 can best be equated with the office of elder in our contemporary situation.

1. What did Walther consider church administration, and what is considered church administration by pastors

(and churches) today? What are the differences? (For example, how much of your time is dedicated to church discipline as a matter of church administration?)

2. What duties are given to the elders in your church's constitution? What duties are given to the church council? What do they actually do? How can these leaders be better equipped to assume their responsibilities?
3. How would you characterize the average pastor's preparedness to be both a preacher (and all that goes with it) as well as to fulfill "the office of overseer" (according to Walther's definition) in our churches today?
4. Do our parishioners today have reasonable expectations about what a pastor can and should do regarding the administration of a congregation?
5. What do you find most difficult about the administrative task (i.e., attention to all the details, setting an agenda, facilitating a meeting, attending multiple committee meetings, managing personalities, developing long-range and strategic plans, time allocation for administration vs. ministry, etc.)?
6. When you have a chance to talk to other brothers about administrative challenges, what do you tend to discuss? What do you find most helpful?
7. Do you have any kind of annual administrative planning process for the coming year?

### Reflection

It has been observed that within many North American churches today the role of pastor has morphed from the biblical and historical role of *seelsorger*<sup>1</sup> to that of primarily a leader or CEO. However, since Walther calls for an additional

<sup>1</sup> *Seelsorger* is the German term that refers to the pastor's role as one who gives "care of souls." Included in this would be "the *cura animarum* — the cure of souls." Here "clergy were viewed as 'physicians of the soul' precisely because they were engaged in a healing art. Their work included both diagnosis and treatment, just like physicians of the body. But the work of pastors as spiritual physicians focused on the diagnosis and treatment of ailing souls." Harold L. Senkbeil, "The Cure of Souls: Good for What Ails You," *For the Life of the World* 11, no. 2 (April 2007): 10. [ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/TheCureofSoulsSenkbeil.pdf](https://ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/TheCureofSoulsSenkbeil.pdf)

individual or individuals to fill the function of the “office of overseer,” it seems that administrative skills are important.

Furthermore, Walther advocates a functional view of the one Office of the Ministry and asserts that the office of overseer is an auxiliary office stemming from the preaching office. He cites both Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard (p. 421) to substantiate this assertion, but he also wrote on this elsewhere (see his *Theses on Ministry*). But again, it will serve the group well to discuss what Walther meant by congregational administration as compared to our 21st-century definition. Walther envisions this office of overseer to be held by lay elders or presbyters, and he includes a long quote about it from his 1858 work *Lehre und Wehre*.

Additionally, congregational size, constitutional arrangement and practice vary from one place to another, and these often shape how the office of overseer might be implemented and how lay elders might function in various congregations. The following questions will help guide group discussion about these issues, though possible differences among brothers may be cause for additional study on this topic. (In particular, see the 1981 LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, which is available at [lcms.org/about/leadership/mission-on-theology-and-church-relations/documents/lutheran-doctrine-and-practice](https://lcms.org/about/leadership/mission-on-theology-and-church-relations/documents/lutheran-doctrine-and-practice).)

## THE PASTORAL OFFICE AND AUXILIARY OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

### Comments 1–5 (p. 421–431)

“The Scripture passages cited leave no doubt that there were such congregational overseers, lay presbyters (*Senioren*) or elders, rulers in apostolic times. However, their ministry was no more instituted originally by God alongside the preaching office than that of the deacons, but rather, like the diaconate, [it was] an auxiliary office branched off from the preaching office in Christian-ecclesiastical freedom [and] to which certain functions of the latter were assigned” (p. 421).

1. What were or are the different functions of the various offices Walther identifies (i.e., preaching office, lay presbyters or elders, deacons, etc.)? (If desired, do some additional exploration in the 1981 CTCR document, p. 13ff.)
2. Does a lay elder truly hold the office of overseer or merely perform the function of that office under the authority of the one in the preaching office? Why or why not? Why is it important to be clear about this?
3. In Comment 2, Walther distinguishes between elders/overseers, deacons and presbyters, noting that elders should not be ordained, and cites Acts 6:1–4 as a rationale. However, he does note they can be publicly installed. Review what *Lutheran Service Book*’s rite of

installation for elders and church officers says about the supportive and assisting role of laity in relation to the office of pastor.

4. How does your congregation recognize the role or function of elders or deacons within the work of your local church? Is that different than a church council within your congregation? If you have two separate boards (i.e., elders and council), what are the different functions of each, along with the qualifications to be on each, and how do they compare to what Walther describes?
5. Walther describes the function of various lay elders or presbyters or church councils since the time of the Reformation (pp. 424–429). He highlights more than once how they dealt specifically with the “sins, failures, or serious errors that had been done” by members of a congregation, who would then be “admonished by the church council to discontinue their offensive life, with the threat that if they did not improve, they would be renounced and made known before the entire Christian congregation.” In what ways and how often do your elder or deacon boards deal with issues of sin? How are these situations handled? How is the matter of confidentiality handled by your lay elders?

## PASTORAL LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH GOVERNANCE

### Reflection

Pastoral leadership is an area of pastoral work that is unfortunately a point of demarcation in the church. Things are often put at odds by some in the church when they need not be. Therefore, just as some might be prone to pit

evangelization against soul care, so others might pit leadership against shepherding. Some pastors rely on secular leadership strategies as the exclusive mode of pastoring, while others believe effective soul care has nothing whatsoever to do with leadership.

Both extremes are, of course, false alternatives. A pastor who thinks he can accomplish everything the Lord of the Church has given him to do using only the methods and approaches of leaders in business and industry is obviously mistaken. The Church grows and is built one soul at a time as the Holy Spirit first gathers people into the Kingdom, then nurtures them by the Gospel and the Sacraments. The vitality of the Church is rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word, not in the ingenuity, initiative, charm or people skills of the pastor. Yet in the same breath, we must add that every conscientious pastor needs to muster every personal aptitude he's been given in service to the Lord who has enlisted him. In other words, pastors must develop good leadership sensitivities and skills.

The plain fact is that every group needs a leader, or else people are prone to wander off in all directions at once. Pastors really don't have a choice as to whether they are going to be a leader. The only question is, what kind of leader are they going to be? Are they going to get out ahead of their people and lead them, or will they be wasting a lot of energy scurrying around to round them up? Which one would pastors rather be: a leader or a chaser? They can take their cue from Jesus — He believes in leading, not chasing. Here's how He describes the work of a shepherd:

“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:3–5).

*Note the pattern:* Jesus, the Good Shepherd, calls His sheep one by one, leads them out into His flock, then gets out ahead of them all. And they follow along behind Him because they know His voice. He speaks with a compelling combination of love and authority.

Walther was mindful of the leadership responsibilities of a pastor along with the various dimensions of governing an organization. He aimed to maintain a healthy balance between the theology of church and ministry and the practical dimensions of what we today call pastoral leadership. Recognizing the congregation as the highest authority, he exhorts pastors to know their place in relation to the congregation as a whole, while also understanding the basics of a constitution, how to conduct a congregational assembly and who presides at various assemblies.

“[T]he preacher should ensure that regular and, as needed, also special *congregational assemblies* are held in Christian order to discuss and implement what is necessary for governing the congregation (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:6; Acts 6:2; 15:1–4, 30; 21:17–22; 1 Tim. 5:20)” (p. 432).

Here he quotes Luther: “A bishop, as bishop, has no authority to impose on his church any statutes or ceremonies without the consent of the church in clear words or of a tacit kind, because the church is free and a queen” (p. 433).

1. Consider the church governance structures of 16th- and 19th-century Germany, with which Luther and Walther were familiar, and then note how Walther describes the setting of the church in America (Comment 2). What were the main differences between the German and American structures? How do they compare to the general governance structures of American Lutheran churches today?
2. What form of governance do you have at your congregation (i.e., board-based or policy-based)? Compare how various constitutions organize the congregation, and describe the roles and responsibilities of the pastor and officers of the congregation. How closely does your congregation follow the constitution and bylaws of your church? Who is allowed to vote? How does your congregation in its governance ensure that God's Word is the sole authority in all matters of doctrine and practice?
3. Consider Walther's Comment 3 on who has the right to vote in congregational assemblies: “All adult (roughly those who have reached the legal age of majority), male members of the congregation should have the right to active *participation in speaking, discussing, voting, and resolving* in such congregational assemblies, since this is a right of the entire congregation ... Youth are excluded from exercising this right (1 Pet. 5:5), as well as female congregational members (1 Cor. 14:34–35)” (p. 438). Does your congregation follow this same practice? Why or why not? What rationale was used by your congregation to embrace or reject women's suffrage?
4. Describe your congregation's written and unwritten expectations regarding your pastoral duty toward church administration and leadership. (For example: What do they expect from you as pastor regarding the meetings you are to attend or lead? Who writes and prepares the agenda? Who organizes committees? Who creates strategic plans for stewardship, outreach, vacation Bible school, Sunday school, etc.?)
5. How well did seminary training prepare you for the leadership role and responsibilities your congregation expects of you? How do you maintain a healthy balance, making sure the church is rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word (and not in the ingenuity, initiative, charm or people skills of the pastor), while at the same time developing and utilizing your personal aptitude and leadership skills in service of the Lord's Church?



6. Consider Walther's Comment 4 regarding who is to preside in the congregational assembly. What does it mean that the "external *leadership* of the assembly naturally belongs to those who oversee the congregation in general or to those in particular who are to administer the office of external governance as an auxiliary office branched off from the preaching office" (p. 439)? Who does this refer to, and is this how your congregation is arranged today? Also review the variation on *Roberts Rules of Order* set forth in this same comment. How are meetings conducted in your voters' assemblies and other board meetings?
7. What leadership skills do you think are essential for every pastor to cultivate and utilize? Why?
8. What administrative duties can and should be given away to lay elders or other elected officers of the congregation?
9. How are new members brought into your congregation? Are they instructed in both the doctrine and administrative polity of the church?
10. Consider Walther's emphasis about cultivating unity in the church: "If it is the duty of every Christian to be diligent in upholding *unity* in the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), then this duty doubtlessly applies to a minister of the Church to a doubly high degree. He should therefore earnestly cultivate warm, brotherly *fellowship* with his *colleagues* and *neighbors in ministry*, if applicable with his schoolteacher as well" (p. 461). How is this best done? What specific steps, behaviors, actions and habits should be utilized to foster such unity? For those that have a school as part of the congregation ministry, how can you better cultivate unity with the school principal, school board and parents?
11. How does Walther address the strife among fellow ministers (see Comment 1, p. 461–462)? What suggestions does he provide for cultivating that unity among brothers?
12. What role and place does Walther give to the circuit (pastoral conference) and synod among the brothers? What encouragement does he provide about them (p. 463–473)?

## CALLS AND RELOCATION

### Article 50: Calls and Resignation (pp. 474–503)

Walther very thoughtfully addresses the solemn and sacred nature of each call a preacher may receive and consider. In fact, he gives extensive encouragement and advice for pastors to contemplate when they are confronted with another call, as well as the prospect of needing to resign a call for various reasons. As a group, collectively consider the summary of Walther's exhortations below and evaluate their helpfulness and/or appropriateness to considering a call or even a resignation.

*Questions to guide the discussion include:* How do Walther's rules compare to the way calls are considered today? Are these still relevant ways of discerning a call today? Are they too restrictive? If so, how? How helpful are they regarding a brother confronted with intense opposition in his congregation? Is there anything that is missing from these rules for evaluating a call?

Walther lists five rules for whether a preacher should allow himself to be relocated or accept another position offered to him (p. 474):

1. Let the preacher wait quietly for a call away to be issued to him and *never himself seek to get away*, least of all to obtain a higher salary or a more comfortable or an easier position (Jer. 23:21).
2. *Let him not yield for the sake of the evil people in his congregation* who make his life bitter (Rom. 12:21), unless it has to do solely with his frail person, and [unless] what is simply impossible for him on account of the poor personal relationship into which he has fallen with the greater part of his congregational members can therefore be accomplished by another orthodox preacher (2 Cor. 13:10).
3. It must be clear for all to see that the new ministry offered to him is not only a *more important* one in itself but also that precisely he could use his gifts in it for greater benefit to the Church *than if he were to remain* (1 Cor. 12:7).

*Questions:* Is it ever appropriate to visit with your district president about your current ministry and indicate that a call would be welcome? What factors should be considered in this case?

*Questions:* What impact does yielding to evil people have on the rest of the congregation? (See Luther's counsel to Joh. Draco, p. 494.) How can these situations be best handled both spiritually and administratively? Why, in your opinion, are we seeing more and more conflicted congregations? How can this be addressed pastorally and in a proactive manner? What responsibilities do we have to a brother who is experiencing opposition in his parish?

*Questions:* Note Walther's comments on "productive" and "unproductive" administration of the pastoral office (p. 478). What are your responses to his counsel? If your current call is not the one you were assigned upon graduation, what were the factors influencing you to accept it? Do you ever doubt the validity or viability of your ministry? How can your call and ordination assist you with godly confidence for ministry?

4. *Let him not decide easily on his own*, but relinquish the decision to both his present congregation and the one calling him away, as well as to some experienced theologians (Prov. 12:15).

*Questions:* In your opinion, how can a pastor afford both the calling congregation and the one he presently serves an equal voice in advising him regarding a call? What role can a trusted colleague in ministry or mentor play in such a decision?

5. Let him not leave his congregation without its *express consent*, unless the latter absolutely withholds its consent manifestly before everyone out of pure stubbornness and in disregard for the well-being of the Church.

*Questions:* What does a "peaceful release" from a call mean? (See the advice of the Braunschweig Ministerium, p. 492.) Discuss how the manner in which a pastor handles a call can assist both congregations involved to better grasp and value the doctrine of the church and office.

**NOTE:** *Concordia Publishing House is offering a 20 percent pastoral discount to purchase Walther's Pastoral Theology.*