

LEADER

# I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

— BIBLE STUDY —

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SET APART TO SERVE  
LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT



# LEADER NOTES

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

The goal of *Set Apart to Serve* is to create an intentional culture of church work formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, school and entity, as the Lord desires all people to have eternal salvation. (1 TIMOTHY 2:4)

## AN INTRODUCTION TO SET APART TO SERVE

The Holy Spirit creates, nourishes, and sustains saving faith in His people through the Word of Christ. The purpose of this study is to examine firstly, God's desire that all people have eternal salvation, and secondly, the instruments through which He delivers salvation to His people. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes [in Me] has eternal life" (JOHN 6:47).

— The leader's notes are in orange throughout. —

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# IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

## READ REVELATION 1:4–8

① How is Jesus described?

**Jesus, the Son of God, is...**

- a. Eternal — “who is and was and who is to come”
- b. Throned in heaven [as the exalted God-Man]
- c. “The faithful witness” [of the Gospel]  
“The firstborn of the dead” [which refers to His resurrection. He is the Savior who will raise us]
- d. “The ruler of kings on earth”

**Jesus, the Son of God,**

- e. Loves us
- f. Freed us from our sins with His blood
- g. Made His people a kingdom, and made His people priests
- h. Has glory and dominion over all forever and ever
- i. Is coming soon (on the Last Day) as judge over all
- j. Is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last — the eternal God and Logos, through whom all things were made, and in whom alone is eternal salvation

## READ REVELATION 21:1–7

② How is Jesus described?

- a. The preparer of His bride for the new heaven and the new earth
- b. The One who will dwell with His people and be with them forever
- c. The One who will wipe away every tear from our eyes and take away death, mourning, crying, and pain (because of His defeat over sin, death, and the devil)
- d. Throned in heaven
- e. The One who accomplished, “It is done!” (v. 6)
- f. The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end

**TRANSITION >> What does Jesus have to do with eternal salvation?**

# IT'S ALL ABOUT ETERNAL SALVATION

## READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:1–7

- ❶ For whom should we pray?
  - a. *All people*
  - b. *Kings and people in high positions*
- ❷ Why does St. Paul command us to pray for kings and people in high positions?
  - a. *So that “we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim. 2:2).*
  - b. *The Lutheran Study Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009)*
    - i. *A stable civil government allows Christians to carry out their vocations unhindered and without harassment. The uncommon prosperity and peace of the Roman Empire (the so-called Pax Romana) opened many doors for Paul to carry out his ministry throughout the Mediterranean world (p. 2070).*
- ❸ For what (ultimate) purpose do we pray for all people, including kings and all who are in high positions? (v. 3–4)
  - a. *We pray for that which is our Savior’s purpose: He desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (if time permits, see John 1:14,17; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 18:37–38).*
- ❹ How does St. Paul describe how God won salvation for all (universal atonement)<sup>1</sup>?
  - a. *Jesus Christ, true God and true man, became the mediator between God and men.*
  - b. *He gave Himself as a ransom for all to save us from sin, death and the devil.*

## READ ARTICLE IV

### “Justification,” from the Augsburg Confession (1530)

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (**ROM. 3 and 4**).

- ❺ Who is central in AC IV?
  - a. *Jesus Christ, the one who works salvation for all people through His death and resurrection alone, by grace, without any work or merit of man.*
- ❻ Why does the Lutheran church confess AC IV as the central article of faith?
  - a. *It testifies that salvation for all mankind is through Christ alone (through His death and resurrection). There is nothing of greater importance in all of life or creation than eternal salvation from sin, death, and the devil.*

<sup>1</sup> “How did Jesus rescue me from sin?”

A. By His death on the cross, He paid the entire penalty of my sin and guilt.

B. By His death on the cross, He fully endured and appeased (propitiated) the wrath of God toward all people (universal atonement), thereby reconciling us to God.

C. By His death on the cross, He destroyed the power of sin to enslave me.”

*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 179–180.

**TRANSITION >> How does God give saving faith (eternal salvation) to His people? How does eternal salvation go from universal atonement to for you?**

## READ ROMANS 10:13–17

*Romans 10:13–17 is significant for the Set Apart to Serve initiative. Faith comes by hearing. God calls pastors to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ that God's people will hear and have saving faith. In love, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has established seven “commissioned” offices to support the Office of the Holy Ministry and to assist the faithful in their God-given vocations (LSB Agenda, 210, 214). All this begs the question: Why do we form and recruit church workers (pastors and commissioned workers)?*

- <sup>13</sup> “For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
- <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?  
And how are they to **believe** (πιστεύσωσιν) in Him of whom they have never heard?  
And how are they to **hear** (ἀκούσωσιν) without someone **preaching** (κηρύσσοντας)?
- <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are **sent** (ἀποσταλῶσιν)? As it is written, “How beautiful the feet of those who preach the good news!”
- <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the **gospel** (εὐαγγελίῳ). For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”
- <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing,<sup>2</sup> and hearing through the **word** (ῥήματος) of Christ.

### 7 Through what does God give saving faith to His people (v. 17)?

- a. *Through the Word of Christ, the Gospel — the very Word of God*
- b. *The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:*

#### **Word (ῥήματος) of Christ**

##### > *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV*

- “It is interesting to note that ῥήμα and λογος are addressed in the same section of TDNT. ῥήμα is used much less in the NT than λογος, though often interchangeable. ῥήμα in classical Greek is used for “saying,” “definitely stated,” and “solemn announcement.”
- Rom. 10:17 [So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word (ῥήματος) of Christ], certainly has in view the recorded ῥήματα; nevertheless, as the χριστοῦ shows, it refers also to the Word of the present Lord as this is at work in [hearing the Word] (p. 109).
- The Word as Spoken Word ... No one knows this Word without proclamation. There can be no [hearing] and no [faith] without this λεγεῖν [speaking] and ῥήμα [hearing] (p. 119).

##### > *Michael Middendorf, Concordia Commentary: Romans 9–16* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016)

- Together with Paul's interpretive applications in 10:6 and 10:7, 10:17 proves that “the Word” (ῥήμα) of 10:8 refers to the message of Christ ... The content of their message is the “Word of Christ” (ῥήματος Χριστοῦ, 10:17). He is the source of righteousness and salvation, and He is righteousness and salvation for anyone and everyone who believes (Rom. 10:10–11) (p. 1011).

<sup>2</sup> Small Catechism, Apostles' Creed, Third Article: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” Also, see the Large Catechism, Part II, paragraph 44–45, “They taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. There is no Christian Church in that. For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord.”

8 What does St. Paul call this Word of Christ through which salvation is given (v. 16)?

a. *The Gospel — the Good News*

b. *The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:*

### **Gospel (εὐαγγελίῳ)**

› Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II (Leader may read pp. 717–720 in its entirety). Excerpts include:

- Jesus is the One who brings the good news (εὐαγγελίζομαι) of the expected last time ... The answer which Jesus gives to the Baptist [referring to Matt. 11:5] is that the longed for time is now dawning, that the eschatological good news expected from the days of Dt. Is. is now being proclaimed, and that the Word has power and brings into effect what is spoken (p. 718).
- According to Lk. 4:18 Jesus in His sermon at Nazareth applied Is. 61:1 to Himself. [Luke 16:16: “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached”] ... The task of Jesus was to proclaim [the kingdom of God]. This was His mission, His sacred duty (p. 718).
- The phrase [proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God] gives us a comprehensive picture of the whole activity of Jesus. His whole life was proclamation of the Gospel. ... [Christ’s] manifestation, not merely His preaching but His whole work, is described in terms of εὐαγγελιζεσθαι [Good News] (p. 718).
- [Referring to Rom. 10:15], Paul is following the tradition of Palestinian Judaism that the watchers on the walls in Dt. Is., the witnesses of Yahweh’s coming, become evangelists (p. 719).
- The same Gospel is proclaimed in both missionary and congregational preaching. Paul makes no distinction. God Himself speaks in preaching, and He does not speak to Christians or to heathen, but to man as such, revealing Himself to him in grace and judgment through the Word (εὐαγγέλιον) (p. 720).
- Εὐαγγελιζεσθαι [Good News] is not just speaking and preaching; it is proclamation with full authority and power ... for the Word is powerful and effective ... it is not a word of man, but the living, eternal Word of God. The Holy Spirit, who was sought for the day of salvation, attests Himself now in the time of fulfillment when the glad tidings are proclaimed (1 Pet. 1:12). Hence Εὐαγγελιζεσθαι is to offer salvation. It is the powerful proclamation of the good news, the impartation of σωτηρία [salvation] (p. 720).

› Michael Middendorf (Concordia Commentary: Romans 9–16)

- The focus of all these verbal actions [proclaim, send, and bring the Good News] emphasizes God’s initiative and purpose in sending the Good News to be proclaimed, heard, believed, and confessed (p. 1010).

› Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans (LW 25)

- And thus the meaning is that the preaching of the Gospel is something lovable and desirable for those who are under the Law. For the Law shows nothing but our sin, makes us guilty, and thus produces an anguished conscience; but the Gospel supplies a longed-for remedy for people in anguish of this kind” (p. 416).

9 What is the significance of being “sent?” Who is sent (v. 15)?

a. *The significance is that God calls (ἀποστέλλειν) men in the service of proclaiming His Word, or speaking His words on His behalf.*

b. *The ones sent are pastors — men called into the Office of the Holy Ministry.*

c. *The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:*

**Sent (ἀποσταλῶσιν)** – third person plural, aorist, passive, subjunctive – referring to a potential future action.

› Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I

- When ἀποστέλλειν is used it rests on the commission linked with it ... Jesus uses ἀποστέλλειν, since He thereby shows that behind His words and person there stands God and not merely His own pretension (p. 404).
- We must say finally that the word [“sent”] does begin to become a theological term (Matt. 10:5,16, Luke 22:35; [John 20:21]; Roman 10:15; 1 Cor. 1:17) meaning to send forth to service in the kingdom of God with full authority (grounded in God) (p. 406).

› Michael Middendorf (Concordia Commentary: Romans 9–16)

- Paul draws attention away from human activity. Instead, he emphasizes the divine initiative by explaining how “the same Lord” (10:12) reaches out to all people via “the Word of the faith,” which draws near to them (10:8). Humanity, left on its own, could never come to the saving message of righteousness in Christ (10:6–8) and is not even seeking it (9:30–32; 10:20–21). Instead, through God’s sending, the Good News comes from outside of us (extra nos) to us so that we might believe it and then call on the Lord Jesus for salvation (p. 1006).
- This proclamation is not done directly by the divine voice booming out from the sky; neither does it come from within ourselves. Most importantly, it is not a message we need to go out and find (10:6–8). Instead, it comes to us, and it does so incarnationally by those whom God has sent (p. 1007).

10 What are these called men to do (v. 14)?

a. Preach the Word of Christ

b. The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:

**Preaching (κηρύσσοντος)** – present, active, participle, genitive, singular, masculine – denotes preaching now and ongoing action.

› Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III. Pages 703–714 are worth reading in their entirety. The following are pertinent excerpts:

- [Preaching] is the declaration of an event. Its true sense is “to proclaim” ... The decisive thing [in preaching] is the action, the proclamation itself. For it accomplishes that which was expected by the OT prophets. The divine intervention takes place through the proclamation (p. 703–4).
- Preaching is not a lecture on the nature of God’s kingdom. It is proclamation, the declaration of an event. If Jesus came to preach, this means that He was sent to announce the [kingdom of God], and therewith to bring it (p. 710).
- The Word proclaimed is a divine Word, and as such it is an effective force which creates what it proclaims. Hence preaching is no mere impartation of facts. It is event. What is proclaimed takes place ... It is salvation history [Jesus incarnate, Jesus crucified, Jesus risen] which must be preached, and the preaching of salvation history is itself an event of salvation. What is at work in this Word is not just the content of what is proclaimed; it is God Himself (p. 711).
- The goal of proclamation in the hearers is faith rather than understanding. Jesus does not bring a new doctrine which claims the intellect. He brings a message which demands faith ... What counts is the faith which arises through the hearing of the Word, and this faith is content with the simple word ... The true hearing of preaching involves more than listening; it is also obedience. This act of obedience is not the work of man. It is effected by God’s Word (p. 712).
- “And how are they to preach unless they are sent” — This statement is decisive for our understanding of the preaching office ... Without commissioning and sending there are no preachers, and without preachers there is no proclamation. True proclamation does not take place through

*Scripture alone, but through its exposition, Lk. 4:21. God does not send books to men; He sends messengers. By choosing individuals for this service, He institutes the office of proclamation (p. 712).*

- *Without the resurrection there would be no preaching office. It exists only because the risen Lord has charged His disciples to declare the message: And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead, Acts 10:42 (p. 713).*
- *Sending [sent (ἀποσταλῶσιν) – Rom. 13:15] implies on the one side a restriction, but on the other an enhancement, of the power of the herald. The one who sends gives him the content of the message and authority. ... A preacher is not a reporter who recounts his own experiences. He is the agent of someone higher whose will he loudly and clearly makes known to the public. Without calling and sending preaching is a self-contradiction and even a deception. It holds out something which has no reality. If there is no sending, the preaching of Christ is propaganda, not mission (p. 713).*

› **Martin Luther**

Sermons I, “Sermon at the Baptism of Bernhard von Anhalt” (LW 51:326)

- *Therefore the preaching and the baptizing that follows it is the equivalent of being sprinkled with the blood of Christ Himself, except that here it is done spiritually (for physical sprinkling will not do it), in that we believe and declare: I have been washed of sin and death by the blood of my Lord Christ. How? By the preaching of the Gospel. There I hear that Christ died and shed His blood in order that all who believe in Him might have forgiveness of sins and be justified and saved.*

The Freedom of a Christian (LW 31:346)

- *To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching.*

Selected Psalms II (LW 13:291)

- *Here we also see the power of this preaching of the Gospel. Beyond all the might and power of the world and of all creatures, Christ proves His ability to draw the hearts of men to Himself through the Word alone and to bring them to His obedience without any compulsion or external force at all. Apart from Christ, all men are everlastingly subjects and captives in the power of the devil, of sin, and of death; but He rescues them for an eternal, divine freedom, righteousness, and life. The great and marvelous thing is accomplished entirely through the office of preaching the Gospel. Viewed superficially, this looks like a trifling thing, without any power, like any ordinary man’s speech and word. But when such preaching is heard, His invisible, divine power is at work in the hearts of men through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, St. Paul calls the Gospel “a power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom. 1:16).*

› **Michael Middendorf** (Concordia Commentary: Romans 9–16)

- *In Romans 10, “the Word of the faith” (10:8) cannot be heard without one proclaiming” (10:14). The indefinite present active participle here, κηρύσσοντος, emphasizes the action of “one proclaiming” more than the personal “we are proclaiming” expressed with κηρύσσομεν 10:8 (p. 1007).*

› **Gustaf Wingren**, *The Living Word* (Philadelphia, Muhlenburg Press, 1960)

- *Redemption is not just something in which we hear in the Word. It is something which is even now happening to us when we encounter the Word (p. 94).*
- *The Kerygma found in all the separate stories is that which is basic to the whole New Testament. The Kerygma about Christ’s death and resurrection; or better, Christ’s death and resurrection is the stream that flows deep down into every individual passage, the stream under any particular event described in the Gospels (p. 68).*

› **Werner Elert**, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962)

- *It is self-evident that among the three “tokens of the church” Luther grants pre-eminence to the*



*Gospel. Where the Gospel does not resound, there even Baptism and Holy Communion cannot stimulate the church. But this is true only of the preaching of the Gospel. “I am speaking, not about the written but about the spoken Gospel...” For the former the private reading of Scripture would have to suffice — the latter needs the proclamation before many (p. 260).*

- 11 What is the action and responsibility of the recipient of the preached word (v. 14, 17)? (If time allows, see the Table of Duties in the Small Catechism, specifically the section, “Certain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities: [1] To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers, and [2] What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors).”

a. *To hear — the Holy Spirit transports the preached Word into the ear of the hearer and creates, nourishes, and sustains saving faith.*

b. *The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:*

**Hear (ἀκούσῃν)** – third person plural, aorist, active, subjunctive – the action of hearing without saying anything about its continuance or repetition.

› Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

- The NT revelation, too, is a Word to be heard. It is message, proclamation ... In the apostolic era, however, ἀκοήν becomes a technical term for the preaching without which there can be no faith, for the κήρυγμα of Christ ... Hearing, then, is always the reception both of grace and of the call to repentance. This means that the only marks to distinguish true hearing from purely physical hearing are faith (Mt. 8:10, 9:2, 17:20) and actions (Mt. 7:16, 24:26, Rom. 2:13) (p. 220).

› Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans (LW 25)

- The expression “what has been heard” (auditus) is used here as the equivalent of “hearing” (auditus) (that is, the perception of the word which has been heard), which we might call its “sound” or its “voice.” ... But [Paul] uses this expression here to show that the Word is the kind of thing which no one can grasp unless it is received by hearing and by faith (p. 418).

› Michael Middendorf (Concordia Commentary: Romans 9–16)

- Paul uses the verb “to hear” (ἀκονω), common elsewhere in the NT, only five times in Romans ... [there is a] relationship between hearing and believing. Hearing is passive ... In fact, you would have to take action not to hear ... [Works] refers to humans doing something toward God in the arena of righteousness. Faith, therefore, in the context means to not do anything; it is simply to let oneself be given to in the sense of passively receiving the gift of salvation. The direction in action is all from God to us (p. 1006–7).

- 12 What is God’s desire for all people (v. 13–14)? (See also 1 Tim. 2:3–7)

a. *That all people believe, and with this saving faith may also have eternal salvation.*

b. *The study leader is encouraged to share insights from the following:*

**Believe (πιστεύσῃν, faith)** – aorist, active, subjunctive – the action of believing without saying anything about its continuance or repetition.

› Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

- Acceptance of this kerygma is πιστεueiv. It is thus clear that the element of confident hope is less prominent in the specifically Christian concept of πιστις ... [it] looks primarily to what God has done, not to what He will do (Vol. VI, p. 209).

› Michael Middendorf (Concordia Commentary, Romans 9–16)

- Faith, therefore, in these contexts means to not do anything; it is simply to let oneself be given to in the sense of passively receiving the gift of salvation. The direction of the action is all from God to us (p. 1007).

- This section on “the righteousness from faith” (10:16) concludes by describing how God calls people to Himself by bringing the Good News to them. ... Paul draws attention away from human activity. Instead, he emphasizes the divine initiative by explaining how “the same Lord” (10:12) reaches out to all people via “the Word of the faith,” which draws near to them (10:8). Humanity, left to its own, could never come to the saving message of righteousness in Christ (p. 1005–6).

#### › Martin Luther on faith and saving faith

##### Thesis Concerning Faith and Law (LW 34)

- True faith, that gift of the Holy Spirit, must be understood (p. 109).
- [Consider also Luther’s explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed.]

##### Disputation Concerning Justification (LW 34)

- Faith itself, which is poured into us from hearing about Christ by the Holy Spirit, comprehends Christ (p. 153).
- Faith is not called a work in accordance with the Scriptures. Faith looks to the Word of promise, works look to the law. For faith is divine, not a human work. Faith and work, accordingly, ought to be distinguished (p. 189).

##### The Freedom of a Christian (LW 31)

- Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God (p. 346).

##### Galatians 1535 Commentary (LW 26)

- They [the Roman church] say that we must believe in Christ and that faith is the foundation of salvation, but they say that this faith does not justify unless it is “formed by love.” This is not the truth of the Gospel; it is falsehood and pretense. The true Gospel, however, is this: Works or love are not the ornament or perfection of faith, but faith itself is a gift of God, a work of God in our hearts, which justifies us because it takes hold of Christ as the Savior. Human reason has the Law as its object. It says to itself, “This I have done; this I have not done.” But faith in its proper function has no other object than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was put to death for the sins of the world. It does not look at its love and say, “What have I done? Where have I sinned? What have I deserved?” But it says, “What has Christ done? What has He deserved?” And here the truth of the Gospel gives you the answer: “He has redeemed you from sin, from the devil, and from eternal death.” Therefore, faith acknowledges that in this one Person, Jesus Christ, it has the forgiveness of sins and eternal life (p. 88).
- As I have said, faith grasps and embraces Christ, the Son of God, who was given for us, as Paul teaches here. When He has been grasped by faith, we have righteousness and life. For Christ is the Son of God, who gave Himself out of sheer love to redeem me (p. 168).

##### Lectures on Romans (LW 25)

- For these four points are so interrelated that the one follows upon the other, and the last is the cause and antecedent of all the others, that is, it is impossible for them to preach unless they are sent; from this it follows that it is impossible for them to hear unless they are preached to; and from this, that it is impossible for them to believe if they do not hear; and then it is impossible for them to call upon God if they do not believe; and finally it is impossible for them to be saved if they do not call upon God. Thus, the whole root and origin of our salvation [saving faith] lies in God who sends (p. 413).

#### **TRANSITION >> Who does God call and send to preach His Word for saving faith?**

**NOTE:** *Set Apart to Serve* is a comprehensive, collaborative, long-term initiative that is developing a culture where LCMS congregations, school, and entities are forming and recruiting youth and second-career people to consider full-time church work. In the LCMS, there are eight of these full-time sacred and honorable church work vocations. Note: Please download The 8 LCMS Vocations booklet at [thelc.ms/8-lcms-church-work-vocations](http://thelc.ms/8-lcms-church-work-vocations) or request copies at [SetApart2Serve@lcms.org](mailto:SetApart2Serve@lcms.org).

# THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

## READ JOHN 20:19–23

❶ What is significant about v. 21?

*a. Jesus is instituting the Office of the Holy Ministry by “sending” the apostles as the Father sent Him to preach the Word of Christ.*

❷ What significant work does Jesus give those in this Office?

*a. To forgive sin [to the penitent] and to withhold forgiveness [from the impenitent].*

## What work, duty, and responsibility does Jesus give to those in the Office of the Holy Ministry?

❸ Acts 10:42

*a. To preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*

❹ 2 Tim. 4:1–2

*a. St. Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word (this charge is given to all in the Office of the Holy Ministry, through whom God gives saving faith).*

❺ Matt. 28:18–20

*a. Jesus charges His apostles (and those in the Apostolic train — pastors) to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and teaching (διδάσκοντες) God’s Word. (See Power and Primacy of the Pope, paragraphs 30–31 and 60, concerning Matthew 28:18–20 and the pastoral office.)*

❻ 1 Cor. 4:1–2

*a. To be stewards (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries (μυστηρίων; mysteriorum) of God. These mysteries are Christ in the Word and Sacraments. See Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXIV 80.*

❼ Ephesians 4:11–16

*a. This text describes the “one office” of the Holy Ministry. Suggested reading: Thomas M. Winger, Concordia Commentary: Ephesians (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2015), p. 449–476. Winger identifies the many “aspects” of the one pastoral office. “These men, the ministers, are therefore not to be regarded as officers created by the church at her own good pleasure, but are gifts to her, appointed and given by God himself” (p. 449).*

*b. Also from Winger: “The usage of the five terms in Eph. 4:11 elsewhere in the NT demonstrates a certain overlap of categories: within the one divinely instituted office of the ministry, certain men held only one, but other held many, of these five offices” (p. 458). (Also, see Power and Primacy of the Pope, paragraph 67.)*

## How is the Office of the Holy Ministry specifically described?

### 8 1 Tim. 3:1–2 and Titus 1:7

- a. Described as an overseer (ἐπίσκοπῆς). Speak the word “episcopos” out loud. This word should sound familiar to the hearer. “Episcopos” means overseer, bishop, and guardian — someone who is given responsibilities concerning the Word of God and the pastoral office. The one who aspires to this office desires noble work. This study is focused on what a pastor is, therefore, we will not focus on the qualifications listed in 3:2–7.

### 9 Titus 1:5

- a. It is interesting to note that St. Paul uses πρεσβυτέρους in 1:5 and ἐπίσκοπον in 1:7 — both terms used for the same pastoral office. Speak the word “presbyteros” out loud. This word will also sound familiar to the hearer. The ESV translates “presbyteros” as elder. This is not equivalent to the lay position “elder” in our congregations today. In the apostolic church, the “presbyteros” was a pastor, a man with the authority of a call by God to “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

### 10 1 Peter 5:1–4

- a. Note in v. 1, St. Paul uses the word Πρεσβυτέρους, of which he considers himself a συμπρεσβύτερος, or fellow elder (or pastor).
- b. In v. 2, St. Paul uses the word ποιμάνετε (shepherd). “Shepherd” is used metaphorically throughout Scripture to describe the pastor, one who preaches God’s Word and administers His Sacraments to God’s people in the local congregation, serving under the chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. (See Jer. 15; Eph. 4:11; John 10:5–12; The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, p. 510, paragraph 14)
- c. Thomas Winger (Concordia Commentary: Ephesians)
  - i. The noun ποιμήν, “shepherd,” to men in the office of the ministry. However, the cognate verb ποιμαίνω, “to shepherd,” is applied to the office beginning with Christ’s words to Peter (Jn. 21:16) ... It is therefore not difficult to identify [shepherds] as representatives of Christ who care for his people at the level of the local church, that is “pastors.” ... [S]o pastors lead the church; but rather than diverse secular notions of leadership, the pastoral image suggests leading the flock to water, food, and safety. Their role is to speak Christ’s Word and give His cleansing and nourishing sacramental gifts.
- d. See the Smalcald Articles, XII:2, “Thank God, today a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd” (John 10:11–16).

### 11 Discuss how you have been served by your pastor as God intended him to serve in this divinely instituted this office? How has the Holy Spirit worked through all these works of your pastor in the ministry of the Word to create, nourish, and sustain your saving faith in Christ Jesus?

- a. Answers may include sermons; pastoral care at the birth of a child, tragedy, sickness, death of a loved one, through a life struggle, etc.; pastoral leadership with the elders, church council, committee meeting; baptizing your children; preparing your child for marriage; teaching Bible study; confirmation instruction in Word; encouragement; connecting faith and life in conversations; Christ-centered; etc.

**NOTE** this excellent summary of the Holy Ministry in the *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*:

The Office of the Holy Ministry has been instituted by Christ Himself as a gift to His Church (JOHN 20:19–23; EPH. 4:11–16). Through the Christian congregation, as the holder of all churchly authority, God calls qualified men to fill this divinely established office and sends them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command, with accountability to God and to the Church (MATT. 10:1–5; 28:18–20; ROM. 10:14–15; 1 COR. 11:23–25; 1 TIM. 2:1–12). According to apostolic usage, ordination is the solemn, public confirmation of that call (1 TIM. 4:14–16; TITUS 1:5–9; Tractate 70). (*LSB Agenda*, 155)

**ANOTHER NOTE:** Martin Luther includes a Table of Duties in the *Small Catechism*. The Table of Duties is made up of “certain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities.” The Table of Duties gives examples of all Christians living out their godly vocations, i.e., their baptismal faith and life in Christ Jesus. In all these godly vocations, God’s people can, do, and must speak God’s Word to another. Parents teach the Word at home, co-workers witness their faith at work, Lutheran school teachers teach the Word in the classroom, etc.

Where do God’s people learn God’s Word, as it is rightly understood Christologically, that they, in turn, speak it to their neighbor? It is from the called and ordained servants of God, i.e., their pastor. Pastors are given the duty and the responsibility to teach God’s Word to God’s people (2 TIM. 4:1–5; TITUS 1:9; HEB. 13:17).

The Augsburg Confession was presented to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, on June 25, 1530, “as a statement of biblical truth and a proposal for true unity in the Christian faith.”<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of God, original sin, the Son of God, and justification are the first four articles. Article IV states, “Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (ROM. 3:21–26; 4:5).”

It’s no coincidence that Article V, “The Ministry,” follows the topic of justification in Article IV.

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given (JOHN 20:22). He works faith, when and where it pleases God (JOHN 3:8), in those who hear the good news, that God justified those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ’s sake.

12 Why did Philip Melancthon, Luther, and the drafters of the Augsburg Confession begin this article with “So that we may obtain this faith?”

a. *God established the Office of the Holy Ministry for this set purpose — to preach and teach Christ crucified through whom the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes, and sustains saving faith.*

13 The original German word for “teaching” is *predigtamt*, which means “preaching office.” Why is this significant?

a. *It is pastors who are called into this preaching office, who stand in the stead and command of Christ to publicly forgive sin, preach God’s Word, and administer His holy Sacraments.*

**SEE ALSO** Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession:

Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach [predigen, preach] in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call.

What is a “rightly ordered call?” The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod takes the call of the pastor very seriously. The definition of a “rightly ordered call,” or “proper call,” was confirmed at the 66th Regular Convention of the LCMS in 2016 under three biblical and confessional mandates: examination, call, and ordination. (See the 2016 Convention Proceedings, p. 166–168.)

14 Examination (1 TIM. 3:1–7; 2 TIM. 2:24–26; TITUS 1:5–9; 1 PET. 5:1–4).

a. *The faculties of our seminaries have been called to teach the Scriptures and the Confessions to the pastoral candidates and to form their minds and hearts and skills to the pastoral task. The faculties are also called to examine the confession and life of each of the candidates for the office. By this examination the Synod assures itself of the confessional commitment and the personal and theological fitness of its candidates for call and ordination. (2016 Res. 6-02: 166–167).*

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<sup>1</sup> *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 25.

**15** Call (JOHN 20:21, ROM. 10:15)

- a. God Himself calls a man into the Office of the Holy Ministry through the church, whose right to call and ordain ministers stems from her possession of the Keys, on account of Christ's institution (6-02:167).*

**16** Ordination (The Power and Primacy of the Pope, 70)

- a. The rite of ordination, the laying on of hands, is an ancient and laudable practice in the church, but not commanded by God. But when ordination is understood as the whole church's confirmation of the call, it is an inherent component of transcongregational church fellowship and a part of the "proper call" confessed in AC XIV.*

# SEVEN LCMS COMMISSIONED VOCATIONS

### QUICK REVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ACTS 1–5

- ❶ Review the headings of Acts 1–5 in your Bible. Briefly summarize the life of the Christian church:
  - Acts 1:1–11  
*The Ascension of Christ.*
  - Acts 1:12–26  
*Replacing Judas with the apostle Matthias. May call attention to Eph. 2:20 and the Nicene Creed, “And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church” and Eph. 2:20.*
  - Acts 2:1–41  
*Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*
  - Acts 2:42–47  
*The life of the post-Ascension Christians, including devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, which they learned from Jesus.*
  - Acts 3  
*The apostles carrying on the preaching and ministry of the Christ.*
  - Acts 4  
*Persecution, boldness, and life together of the church. Peter says, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*
  - Acts 5  
*The life and confession of the church. Peter says, “We must obey God rather than men. The god of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree. God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things” (Acts 5:29–31).*

### READ ACTS 6:1–6

- ❷ “And the twelve [apostles] summoned the full number of the disciples.” What is the primary work of the apostles?
  - a. *To preach the Word of God (λόγον θεοῦ). We’ve established the importance of preaching above.*
- ❸ What did the Early Church do to support the work of the apostles? Did the apostles see this auxiliary work as unimportant or menial?
  - a. *They chose six among them who were appointed to the duty of “the daily distribution of food” and “waiting on tables.”*
  - b. *They did not see this auxiliary work as unimportant or menial. They were very selective of whom they chose — men of good repute, full of the Spirit (men immersed in the Word), and wisdom. After they were selected, they prayed over these seven men and laid their hands on them, consecrating them for their service to the Lord and His church.*



Acts 6 is not a prooftext for the current seven commissioned church work vocations in the LCMS. It does, however, describe what the Early Church did to select individuals who would support or assist the apostles in the work and life of the church.

In the LCMS, the *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* is the approved resource that contains the occasional rites and services for her congregations. “The rites in the [*LSB Agenda*] are built upon the confessional and theological foundation of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and draw upon the history and practice of both the Evangelical Lutheran Church the Church catholic [universal]” (*LSB Agenda*, viii).

The *LSB Agenda* gives an excellent summary of the LCMS auxiliary offices. The people serving in these auxiliary offices are commissioned.

God moves people to serve Him in many ways. From the earliest days of the Christian Church, people have been selected to work in support of the Office of the Holy Ministry (Acts 6:1–7). Some people are called or appointed to full-time or part-time positions of service in the Church that require special training and recognition. When the Church calls or appoints a person who has received training for such an office, and that person has been certified as being well-equipped and competent to carry out such work, that person is to be properly installed into that position in the congregation or institution in which such service is to be performed. (*LSB Agenda*, 203)



## ACTIVITY

### Match the description of these seven LCMS commissioned vocations:

- |                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Lutheran School Teachers        | e. Directors of Family Life Ministry |
| b. Director of Christian Education | f. Directors of Parish Music         |
| c. Deaconesses                     | g. Directors of Church Ministries    |
| d. Director of Christian Outreach  |                                      |
- 

- 1) **f. Director of Parish Music** Fosters and edifies the church's worship with their biblical and confessional musical leadership and direction, supporting their pastors by assisting with worship planning, providing musical education, and directing choirs, ensembles and musicians for services in God's house.
- 2) **b. Director of Christian Education** Serves as lifespan ("cradle to grave") Christian educators, typically working within congregations and their ministries. Through their leadership and service, they assist and support pastors as they teach the faith to children, youth, and adults.
- 3) **a. Lutheran School Teacher** Provides an education rooted in God's Word to the children in their care. They support the work of the pastors by assisting Christian fathers and mothers in their God-given responsibility to bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord.
- 4) **d. Director of Christian Outreach** Focus on witness and outreach. Through their expertise and leadership, they support their pastors by helping congregations witness to those outside of the church and share the Gospel in a relational and evangelical way so that people may have saving faith through Jesus Christ. They also study various cultures and contexts in order to help churches spread the Gospel and reach out to people from various backgrounds and people of all ages.
- 5) **g. Director of Church Ministries** Serve congregations and support their pastors by providing leadership and assistance with the various operations and ministries of a congregation. They serve congregations and support their pastors by leading various ministries in a congregation, such as Bible studies and community outreach. Many function as the youth director at their congregation.
- 6) **c. Deaconess** Women who support pastors as they share the Gospel and serve God's people through works of mercy, spiritual care, and teaching the Christian faith. They often work with women, children, and God's people with special needs. They may provide end-of-life care, emergency care, or counseling. They serve in congregations, schools, hospitals, welfare institutions, pregnancy centers, college campuses, on the international mission field, and more.
- 7) **e. Director of Family Life Ministry** They work to nurture the church's families and family life according to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. They are trained in family life studies, which include the biblical theology of marriage, sexuality, ethics, and parenting. They support pastors by working within congregations to strengthen and equip Christian homes to live and serve God and their neighbors.

## READ MATTHEW 9:35–38

- ④ What was the primary work of Jesus during His earthly ministry?
- a. Teaching and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom of Christ*
- ⑤ Why would God come to earth in the flesh simply to teach and proclaim?
- a. His desire is that all people be saved — rescued from sin, death, and the devil — and have eternal salvation.*
  - b. Through the teaching and proclaiming of Christ into our ears, the Holy Spirit speaks the death and resurrection of Jesus into our ears, lives, and souls, through which He creates, nourishes, and sustains saving faith in His people.*
- ⑥ When Jesus saw the crowds, how did He react?
- a. He had compassion on them — they were like sheep without a shepherd.*
  - b. This is more than pity on the human condition. They needed a Savior to deliver them from their sin, this evil world, and the accusations and attacks of the devil. In His divine love, He is the Shepherd they need, who lays down His life for the sheep to deliver them into His eternal kingdom (John 10:14–18).*
- ⑦ What is the “harvest?”
- a. Delivering God’s people from sin, death, and the devil that they may have eternal salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ.*
- ⑧ Who are the “laborers” Jesus describes as few?
- a. Within the context of Matthew 9 and 10, he is talking about pastors, or under-shepherds, called by Him to preach His life-giving Word and deliver His life-giving Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.*
  - b. In love, the LCMS established the current seven commissioned vocations to support the Office of the Holy Ministry.*
- ⑨ What is involved in “praying earnestly” to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest?
- a. We ask God to move the hearts of our youth and second-career adults to consider full-time church work*
  - b. As “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), that is, the baptized and redeemed in Christ, we are active, intentional participants in the forming and recruiting of full-time workers for the church.*
  - c. We acknowledge and participate in praying for, encouraging, and supporting full-time workers for the church, who will preach, teach, share the Word of Christ for the salvation of all who will hear and believe.*

## PRAYER

Lord of the harvest, as You bid Your disciples to pray for harvest laborers, so we ask You to continue to send workers of Your Word. Raise up, we pray, servants of Your Word that Your Church may proclaim Your saving cross until You come in glory, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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