



2017–18 Circuit Winkel Bible Studies

What Makes a Pastor?

Series Schedule

September 2017

A Practical Disposition of the Soul
*Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil, executive director for
 Spiritual Care, DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center
 for Spiritual Care and Counsel*

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The Precious Nature of the Call
Rev. Bryan Wolfmuehler, Hope, Aurora, Colo.

November 2017

Preaching the Word: It's Still All About Jesus
Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Zion, Mayer, Minn.

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Giving Out the Gifts: Baptism and Catechesis
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May 2018

Leading in a Godly Manner: Working with Your
 People for the Sake of Christ's Mission
Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Zion, Mayer, Minn.

Circuit Winkel Bible Studies

Circuit Winkel Bible Studies, published by the LCMS Praesidium and Council of Presidents, are prepared for pastors to use during their monthly circuit meetings. The Bible studies are designed to help pastors grow in the Word of God and to strengthen relationships within circuits.

The Bible studies are funded by an annual grant of \$200 from each LCMS district. Questions and comments may be directed to the series general editor, the Rev. Mark W. Love.

For the period from September 2017 to May 2018, we review various aspects of pastoral care and practice, with our studies of the sacred Scriptures organized around topics drawn from C.F.W. Walther's *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, a new translation of which has recently become available from Concordia Publishing House. We thank the executive director for Spiritual Care at DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel, and seven of the DOXOLOGY Collegium Fellows, for preparing this year's studies.

Introduction: What Makes a Pastor?

How does one become a pastor? Of course, there is the call of God, first in the sense that a man is moved by the Spirit to prepare for the ministry. This is followed by some form of training and examination through which the church assures itself that the man is "able to teach" and possessing of the character necessary to be a pastor (e.g., 1 Tim. 3:1–7). There follows the specific call of God to a particular ministry, a call mediated through the congregation(s). Essentially, this call of God through a congregation makes the man a pastor. The wider church recognizes and publicly confirms this call through the Rite of Ordination, whereby the man is pledged to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions and consecrated to the ministry by the Word of God and prayer. This is the necessary doctrinal and scriptural answer.

(Continued on next page.)



Ordination and installation of a man into the pastoral office is just the beginning. What follows brings a necessary question: How does a man grow into the office of pastor? Writing in the mid-19th century, C.F.W. Walther, in his *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, called pastoral theology a “God-given, practical disposition of the soul, acquired by certain means, by which a minister is equipped to perform all the tasks that come to him” (Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, David W. Loy, ed., Christian Tiewes, tr., Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2017). It is a “disposition” — not simply facts that one knows, but a quality of the soul. It is “practical,” that is, a way of thinking and acting, the goal of which is leading lost sinners to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and caring for the faithful. As such, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit given by means of the Word of God in the school of experience: prayer, meditation on the Word, as well as testing, tension, struggle, temptations overcome by the Spirit’s power in the Word, and even temptations lost in sin and forgiven through confession and absolution. As the pastor learns and grows throughout his ministry, we pray not only that his confidence in the promises of God increases, but also that his people grow in their confidence in his ministry because they have learned to hear in his voice the voice of their Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

Even though his *Pastoral Theology* was written 145 years ago, Walther’s reflections on the pastoral ministry are quite timeless and often instructive for us today. Some of the issues are different, superficially at least, but the biblical issues remain the same. People continue to be sinners, and they live in need of forgiveness and salvation in Christ. Pastors are divinely appointed to apply God’s saving Word of Law and Gospel that the Spirit might lead some to repentance and faith, to living as the baptized saints of God. You, dear pastor, will want to purchase the book from Concordia Publishing House yourself, if you have not done so already, to facilitate your full participation in these discussions.

We have asked a veteran pastor, the Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil, executive director for Spiritual Care at DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel, and seven of the DOXOLOGY Collegium Fellows, to lead us into the meat of Walther’s pastoral reflections. The nine studies they have prepared are arranged topically, following in general the chapters of Walther’s book. May their work with you be blessed by God so that together we grow pastorally “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

We thank the DOXOLOGY Collegium Fellows for their work on our behalf and commend to you DOXOLOGY as an important source of support and counsel for the pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

+ Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.
First Vice-President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod





September 2017

WHAT MAKES A PASTOR?

A Practical Disposition OF THE Soul

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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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.

DOXOLOGY
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

WHAT MAKES A PASTOR?

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These studies are prepared under the auspices of the Office of the President and published by the Praesidium of the Synod, with the general editorship of Pastor Mark Love of Trinity, Toledo, Ohio. Each district of the Synod pays \$200.00 per year into a fund to support this effort, provided free of charge to all who wish to download them for use in Circuit Winkel meetings. We thank the members of the DOXOLOGY Collegium Fellows for their work on our behalf and commend to you DOXOLOGY as an important source of support and counsel for the pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

+ Herbert Mueller
First Vice-President
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¹ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian Tiewes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 7. You will want to refer to your own copy of this work throughout our study.

A Practical Disposition of the Soul

References in Walther: Articles 1–3, 48–49
[Walther's Titles: Introduction/Definition of Pastoral Theology; The Life of the Preacher]

Leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their

contemporary context. In connection with question 9, point out the link between doctrine and practice: i.e. doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied.

There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. To maximize your study with the brothers, prioritize your questions and inform them in advance of those questions you will be focusing on for your discussion.

PREFACE

Consider the following questions to gain a better understand Walther's book in its 19th-century setting and its application in our contemporary context.

A group review of these questions would be a helpful way to launch your discussion of the first lesson.

1. What were the influences on Walther's theological formation? (xii)
2. What difficulties did Walther and his fellow immigrants face in organizing church life in America in terms of: theology? Church governance? Church institutions? (xiv)
3. What part did media play in the formation of the Synod? (xiv–xv)

4. What new mission challenges were faced in America? (xv)
5. What competing theologies complicated pastoral care and mission on the frontier? (xv)
6. Was Walther a mere "restitution theologian"? Why or why not? (xv)
7. How can Walther's research and extensive citations assist us today? (xvi)
8. What is the purpose of the longer tradition of Lutheran casuistry guidance? (xvii)
9. What similar questions of doctrine and practice do we face today? (xviii)

INTRODUCTION

The pastoral vocation in the chaotic 21st century world is often viewed exclusively in terms of duties, skills and activities. Dr. Walther lived in an environment that faced its own chaos (acculturation of immigrants into a new homeland, competition from false and heretical teachers, a torn and divided political system that would soon break out into a bloody civil war). Yet before he addresses pastoral responsibilities he addresses the person of the pastor. His conviction is that pastoral work is not simply a matter of doing, but of *being*. His is a uniquely *pastoral* concern that translates well into our radically different contemporary setting:

› How is a pastor to BE with His people?

And so we begin at the beginning. In this first study of Walther's monumental text, we explore this foundational question. Together we will look at the pivotal scriptural texts that Walther cites, some of the authorities he quotes and engage in fraternal conversation to grasp more clearly our pastoral identity before we systematically and sequentially review various aspects of pastoral work in the months ahead.

I. WALTHER'S FORMAT

Note that Walther's book is written in thesis/antithesis form. Its 11 chapters are divided into 50 different articles, each of which is introduced by a thesis statement that often includes an implied antithesis. Each statement is evaluated first on the basis of pertinent scripture texts, then pertinent selections from the writings of Martin Luther as well as supporting quotations from the period of Lutheran orthodoxy and, in some cases, the church fathers.

Modern writing and theological discourse does not use this format, and at first you may find it difficult. As you read and discuss, follow this procedure:

1. What is Walther's central point in each article?
2. What implied antithesis is he addressing?
3. How is his argument supported by the scriptural references he provides?
4. What insights do you glean from the secondary sources he cites in his comments?
5. What questions do these comments raise in your mind?

Be sure to highlight questions 3 and 4 in your group discussion.

II. ARTICLE ONE: DEFINITION OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY

"Pastoral theology is the God-given practical disposition of the soul (orig.: *praktische Habitus der Seele*), acquired by certain means"

1. Why does Walther suggest the central definition of "pastoral theology" is a "disposition" (*habitus*) rather than a discipline or book? (Comment 1, 7)
2. What is the practical outcome of this disposition? (Comment 2, 7–8; 2 Tim. 3:17; 2 Cor. 3:5)
3. Why is this disposition more of an art than a science? (2 Tim. 3:16–17)
4. How is this disposition acquired? (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5–6)
5. What do sanctification and pastoral ministry have in common, according to Deyling? (9) How do they differ? What does this mean?

6. How does a pastor's personal faith impact his ministry, according to Luther? (11)
7. Walther comments that the apostles received their disposition (*habitus*) immediately from the Holy Spirit, but a pastor's disposition is given by the Holy Spirit "mediately." What therefore should be a priority in a pastor's life if he is to acquire and maintain a pastoral *habitus*? (12, 1 Tim. 4:13–16)

Leader: Walther's first thesis is central to his whole book; if your group thoroughly digests what he means by "disposition" (*habitus*) it will enrich every succeeding study session. A "practical *habitus*" for ministry is never completely mastered. This "practical disposition" is acquired through a life-long process by which the pastor himself goes on receiving what he brings to others.

III. ARTICLE 2: ORATIO, MEDITATIO, TENTATIO MAKE THE THEOLOGIAN

Read Luther's famous instruction on the making of a theologian (13–15) and reflect on the following questions:

1. Why is prayer for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment the first step in meditation on the Word of God? (13)
2. Describe Luther's method of oral meditation. (14)
3. What is the crucial function of affliction in the Christian life? (14)

4. What happens when human pride disrupts this process? (15; 1 Peter 5:5)

Leader: Note that for Walther, the heart of pastoral theology is not mastery of a myriad of pastoral skills, but the pastor's own spiritual life framed by prayer, meditation and affliction. Point out Luther's practical argument for oral (outward or spoken) prayer and meditation in private devotion: it provides a sure foundation for faith in the external Word.

Reflect on the seamless link in Luther's sequence:
Prayer begins in a receptive posture, asking for the Spirit's guidance for oral mediation on God's Word. When God's Word takes root in the heart, Satan attacks, driving the soul to take refuge in the promises of God. But what Satan intends

for evil, God uses for good. By these assaults we move from mere intellectual comprehension of His grace to very personal and experiential enjoyment of the multifaceted dimensions of God's comforting mercy and love.

IV. ARTICLE 3: LITERATURE ABOUT PASTORAL THEOLOGY

1. How do secondary resources supplement the pastoral epistles of St. Paul as a course of study for pastors, according to Dr. Walther? (17)
2. Where can we find such resources today?
3. How could your Winkel discussions include more beneficial conversation about the care of souls?

Leader: This article, which, in essence, is an extended review of extant pastoral theology literature, does not easily lend itself to group discussion. It may be wise to ask several men in advance to each study a section and then report briefly to the group what Walther found to be the highlights in that text as well as how it may be applied (or adapted) in today's ministry setting.

V. ARTICLE 48: [THE PREACHER AS EXAMPLE]

1. What is surprising about St. Paul's instructions to the pastors at Ephesus (Acts 20:28) and to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:16)?
2. Why do you think contemporary pastors are prone to neglect these instructions?
3. What is meant by a "blameless life" (1 Tim. 3:2) according to Dr. Walther? (453)
4. Review Walther's extensive footnote from the writings of Gerhard regarding reinstatement of pastors who have committed crimes and/or sinned publicly? (455–56)
 - a. How do distinctions between the right- and left-hand kingdoms pertain to this question?
 - b. How are a pastor's repentance and his qualifications for office properly distinguished and applied?
5. A pastor's life and doctrine are a seamless whole; according to Luther how does each apply: To his enemies? To his friends? (456)
6. How does the pastor's life impact his preaching, according to Luther? (456)
7. Discuss Walther's extensive treatment of avoiding the appearance of evil: (458–59)

- a. What is his pastoral concern?
 - b. What are his specific directives?
 - c. Evaluate those directives in our current social milieu:
 - › How many still apply?
 - › How would his pastoral concern apply to the use of the Internet and social media?
8. The preacher's petitionary prayer and family devotions: (460)
 - a. What have you found most helpful in developing habitual personal prayer and meditation?
 - b. What have you found most helpful in developing and maintain family devotions? (note Walther's terminology: *Hausgottesdienst* "household worship" [or Divine Service])

Reflect on the proper connection between a pastor's life and his preaching. George Herbert provided a helpful analogy: the pastor's life as a stained-glass window through which God's Word shines:

*Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
 When they combine and mingle, bring
 A strong regard and awe: but speech alone
 Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
 And in the ear, not conscience ring.²*

² George Herbert, *The Poetical Works of George Herbert* (New York: Appleton, 1857), 84.

Leader: Be sure to spend a fair amount of time with question #1 and the necessity of self-care for pastors. Question #4 deserves careful review; how can Gerhard's insights enhance our ethical, pastoral and professional responsibilities to brothers in office?

Question #8 is central; why is professional use of God's Word (sermon and Bible study prep, etc.) not

the same as personal meditation? Brainstorm some ways in which contemporary pastors can reprioritize their lives to ensure time for both personal prayer and family devotions.

Question #6: What is the proper connection between a pastor's life and his preaching?

VI. ARTICLE 49: THE PREACHER'S DUTY TO CULTIVATE UNITY

1. Note Walther's favorable citation of Basil's dictum: "The right hand is not as necessary to the left as harmony is to the church." (461)
 - a. In your mind, what are the major factors (both social and theological) that breed divisiveness among pastors today?
 - b. What can you do to cultivate unity among colleagues in ministry?
2. In what way does Walther consider the Lutheran schoolteacher to be a "minister of the Church?" (463) How can a pastor build collegial relationships with teachers in his parish school?
3. Walther includes an extensive quote from Johannes Freder, a 16th century Lutheran Superintendent (463–65)
 - a. What important role should pastoral conferences play in equipping pastors for faithful ministry?
 - b. How can we better encourage that role today?
 - c. What is the danger when pastors refuse ongoing professional instruction? (465)
4. Keeping in mind Dr. Walther's pivotal role in the development of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, review his extensive discussion of the congregation and how it relates to a larger church body. (466–72)
 - a. Which is by "divine right"? By "human right"?
 - b. How does Luther view distinctions between clergy? (466–67)
 - c. What role does Luther see for human jurisdictions in the church in terms of visitation? (467)
 - d. What is the relationship of call and ordination according to Seckendorf? (467–68)
 - e. Having cited favorably many authorities stressing the independence of each local congregation, why does Walther label a pastor who wants to keep his congregation independent a "separatist?" (469) What is the spiritual danger he foresees?
 - f. What is the positive purpose of human distinctions among clergy and the evangelical role of "bishops," "superintendents" (presidents) in maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?
 - g. Read the selection from Luther's *Instructions for Visitors*. (471–72) Note the many biblical examples he cites, including our Lord's visit *in utero* to his unborn cousin John.
 - › How can ecclesiastical visitation best be restored (or enhanced) among us today?
 - › What is the danger to both faith and love in the church when visitation is neglected or omitted?
 - h. What are some practical ways we can help our congregations grow in their appreciation for the work of our Synod, and how it positively impacts each local church? (473)

Leader: Walther was no stranger to factions, conflict and theological debate. This Article can best be used as a catalyst for positive discussion on what makes for greater unity within the ministerium and Synod. Before taking up any of the discussion questions, lead the group through Walther's extensive thesis: list all the areas where a pastor can encourage and build constructive unity personally and professionally. Which of these are often neglected today — and why?

Walther's sources shed light on topics still under discussion among us today: the relationship between church and office, call and ordination, congregation and Synod, the role of the District President, etc. As you take up specific questions in this section, encourage collegial conversation, moving beyond generalities to specifics. How concretely can each of us foster genuine harmony by speaking the truth in love?



October 2017

WHAT MAKES A PASTOR?

The Precious Nature of the Call

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LEADER'S GUIDE

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The Precious Nature of the Call

References in Walther: Articles 4–10 (pp. 41–93)

[Walther's Title: *The Call and Entry into the Ministry*]

Participants are encouraged to review the introduction of the book (vii–ix) to better grasp the context in which Dr. Walther wrote, his intent, methodology and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context.

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better

grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied).

There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON: THE CALL

The work of the pastor does not begin with himself, but with the desire of the Lord Jesus to save sinners. To fulfill this desire, our Lord calls sinners to repentance and life in the Gospel. To accomplish this calling of the Gospel, Jesus calls pastors to preach, teach and administer His Sacraments. Walther's discussion of Pastoral Theology rightly begins here, with a discussion of the precious nature of the call to the pastoral office.

We will encounter a lot of Scripture, Luther and orthodox fathers in these seven articles, but before we begin, consider these questions:

1. How often do you reflect on the theology of the call?
2. Is the theology of the call a source of comfort and confidence for you? In what ways?

Leader: As noted in the first study, Walther follows a particular format. Each article begins with a thesis. The parts of the thesis are supported in the comments, first from Scripture and then from the witness of faithful pastors. Reviewing this structure again will help pastors get into the argument of the text and the flow of the book.

ARTICLE 4: NECESSITY OF THE CALL (33–40)

"The first requirement for conducting the ministry in a God-pleasing and blessed manner ... is thus for the preacher to be regularly called and to be certain of it." —Walther

Leader: This first article is the most theologically rich and biblically important. Please consider reading the Scriptures quoted here and making this study a "Bible" study more than a "Walther" study. These Scripture passages are full of comfort and wisdom.

1. Walther leads this discussion with the 14th Article of the Augsburg Confession and the supporting Scriptures. (Read Augsburg 14; Rom. 10:15; Jer. 23:21; James 3:1; and Heb. 5:4–5.) How does the Augsburg Confession confess the Scriptures' teaching about the necessity of the call?
2. **Comment 1**, concerning the "God-pleasing" nature of the call, begins with the testimony of Luther. What did Luther think of those who seek to do a good work without a call?
3. In Greater Galatians, Luther says, "Our Lord God never gives blessing, happiness, and salvation to teachers who come on their own without a well-ordered call and command" (34). How does this apply to the pastor's call? What is the warning in Luther's teaching? Where is the comfort?
4. What three things does Luther indicate that the call serves (35)?

5. Walther is piling up Luther quotations to support his theses. What does Luther say regarding those who endeavored to preach or teach without a call (36)?
6. Consider this Luther quotation: “If you notice a work within you that God is not effecting, kick it with your feet and ask God to destroy everything in you that He Himself does not effect. And even if you could save the whole world with one sermon but do not have the command, let it be, for you will break the rightful Sabbath and God will not be pleased” (37). What is Luther getting at? How might we better follow his wisdom?
7. The witness of Dr. Martin Chemnitz (38–39) is gold. He teaches the necessity of the call under four topics and lists the Scriptures from which the teaching comes. This quotation is well worth the time spent unfolding it.
 - a. Read Luke 1:70; Heb. 1:1; and 2 Cor. 5:20. How do these texts teach that the ministry comes from God? How, then, does the pastor apply these texts to himself: Is. 59:21; 2 Cor. 13:3; Luke 10:16; and John 1:25?
 - b. Read 2 Cor. 3:2 and 1 Tim. 4:14. How do these texts teach that the Lord’s divine protection is needed in the office?
 - c. Read Is. 49:2; Is. 51:16; Luke 1:76; 1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; and John 10:3. How do these texts teach that the Holy Spirit works efficaciously through the ministry?
 - d. How does the necessity and divine origin of the call support the “care, faithfulness, and readiness” of the pastors? How does it encourage “true reverence and obedience” in the hearers of the Word?
8. **Comment 2** concerns the necessity of the call for a blessed administration of the ministry. Luther distinguishes between the person and the office (39). What is this distinction? Why is it important?

ARTICLE 5: THE CALL (41–58)

What makes a valid and legitimate call?

Leader: Reading this article, it might become apparent that we do not think of the call as highly as our Lutheran fathers did. These passages, which are meant to comfort us, might be heard as a rebuke. Rightly and humbly heard, this is a good thing. We can only be blessed by humbly listening to Walther extol the great gift of the call for us, as we find ourselves the unworthy recipients of this great gift. Because it is the Lord who has called us to the pastoral office, we may rightly rejoice and give thanks that the Lord has put us into His preaching office.

1. **Comment 1:** Walther first takes up the validity of the call, and notes that a call “is valid when it is issued by those who have the right and authority from God to do so.” The first witness is the Power and Primacy of the Pope, paragraph 67 (see 41–42) and the Scriptures found there (Eph. 4:8; Matt. 18:20; and 1 Peter 2:9). According to the Lutheran Confessions, who has the authority to issue a valid call?
2. Luther writes, “For it is one thing to exercise a right publicly; another to use it in time of emergency” (42). What is he talking about? How is the distinction between order and emergency helpful to us today? If you ask a hundred congregants what qualifies as a “time of emergency,” you’ll likely get a hundred different answers. What should a pastor rightly consider in determining a “time of emergency”?
3. Note Luther’s discussion about preaching among pagans where no call is needed (43) and the other points of casuistry on Pages 43–47. What helpful points or applicable assertions did you find?
4. **Comment 2:** Walther’s second concern is the *legitimacy* of the call, which concerns the right reception of the call on behalf of the pastor. Concerning the Luther quotation on Pages 47–49, what destroys the legitimacy of the call?
5. Note Luther’s distinction between the two types of calls: “One is done without means by God; the other, through man and also by God.” How is this distinction helpful in teaching about the office of pastor?
6. What do you think about this bold bit of Luther: “Believe me, no one will accomplish anything useful by preaching except he who is commanded and forced to preach and to teach apart from his will and desire” (49)? As you reflect on what Luther has said here, read and temper your thoughts with the Luther quote on the bottom of Page 50.

7. **Comment 3:** Call to repentance to those called illegitimately. What is Walther's instruction to those who find themselves in the office with an illegitimate call?
8. **Comment 4:** Temporary calls. Walther is not too hot on temporary calls. "Such a call is neither valid nor legitimate before God. It is a deplorable custom" (52). "Such a call is absolutely not what God ordained with respect to the holy preaching office but an entirely different matter that has nothing to do with it. It is precisely not a mediate call of God through the Church, but rather a human contract; it is not a lifelong calling, but a temporary function outside the divine order, an ecclesiastical — and thus human — ordinance made contrary to the order of God, or, rather, a dreadful disorder" (52–53). How are Walther's words a rebuke and a comfort to us?
9. **Comment 5:** Rejecting a call. Walther points to the danger of a man rejecting a valid and legitimate call. This is a stunning quotation from Luther regarding Moses' hesitancy to accept his call from God: "If God were as clever as we were He would have begun all things better than actually happened. For here He takes for this difficult, esteemed task one who cannot speak well, as Moses himself admits. Yet God says to him: 'Go and do it well,' which sounds like my saying to a blind man that he should see well... But this is written so that we should know how God thinks. Whatever has value before the world, that He does not regard; He rejects and casts away what others wrestle to themselves; what others love and pick up, that He throws away; and what the devil does not like, that He accepts" (56–57). What wisdom and instruction is here for us? What does Luther's wisdom imply about every pastor's current and ongoing dependence upon the Lord for fulfilling of his calling?

ARTICLE 6: REQUIREMENTS FOR A CONGREGATION BEFORE ITS CALL IS ACCEPTED (59–70)

What is required of a congregation before it can call an evangelical pastor?

Leader: The remaining five articles in this section get deeper into the weeds of Pastoral Theology, and we might find some of the discussion less applicable. Nevertheless, it is good for us to hear Walther on the topics, not only to know what he thinks, but also to understand how he thinks as a biblical and Lutheran theologian. We have here not only his wisdom to learn, but also his pastoral example to follow.

Walther lists seven requirements for a congregation:

1. It desires to be an evangelical Lutheran congregation;
2. It wishes to bind itself to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament;
3. It wishes to bind itself to the symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession);
4. That it wishes to conform to evangelical standards in regard to church ceremonies;
5. That it will use pure church and school books;
6. That the people will announce for communion beforehand; and

7. That it will allow the Scriptures to have free course, and will be subject to the Word of God.

Do you agree with everything on Walther's list? If not, what would you add or delete, and why?

1. **Comment 1:** Walther gives instructions regarding the pastor's response to a call. What wisdom have you heard about handling these situations?
2. **Comment 2:** Regarding mixed congregations, Walther notes that while an orthodox pastor might, without sin, preach in a non-Lutheran congregation, to serve as their pastor would be a sin. Read a few of the passages Walther mentions (2 Cor. 6:14ff; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 16:17; 2 John 10–11; Rom. 4:11). How does the text inform our interaction with heterodox congregations?
3. **Comment 3:** On the name Lutheran. This is a particularly interesting section. How do you normally respond to the claim "I'm not a Lutheran, I'm a Christian"? How did this section help you craft a response?

Don't miss the Luther quotation in Footnote 8. It is not the man Luther that matters, but his teaching. Do you think most people think of the man or the teaching when they hear "Lutheran"? What can we do to associate the name Lutheran with the doctrine?

4. **Comment 4:** The confessional subscription of the congregation. Walther makes the minimum requirement of the congregation a subscription to the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. While most congregation members have a basic familiarity with Luther's Small Catechism, how familiar are the members of your congregation with the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession? What practically could be done to familiarize the members of your congregation with both?
5. **Comment 5:** Adiaphora. Walther, in this section, applies the teaching of the Formula of Concord regarding adiaphora to the discussions. "It is enough for the true unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel is preached in it with unity according to a pure understanding and the Sacraments are administered according to the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that similar traditions, instituted by men, be observed everywhere.' The tenth article of the Formula of Concord says further: 'Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority to change, to diminish, and to increase them' (indifferent matters) 'without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at

any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline and evangelical well-being, and the edification of the Church. Moreover, how we can yield and give way with a good conscience to the weak in faith in such external, indifferent matters Paul teaches (Rom. 14:21) and proves it by his example (Acts 16:3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:19).' It would therefore be thoroughly unevangelical and un-Lutheran if a candidate wanted to accept a call to a congregation only on the condition that it accept all of the ceremonies and institutions that have ever come into use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church." How can we use his wisdom to sort out matters of adiaphora regarding the call in our day?

Consider the Luther quotation on the top of Page 66. What theological truths is Luther using in his thinking? What is the result?

6. **Comment 6:** Regarding pure books, how do we see Walther's concern for true doctrine as an extension of his pastoral concern for the congregation?
7. **Comment 7:** Regarding announcing for communion, what happened to this custom? Are there things we could do to recover a more regular theological conversation between pastors and the members of the congregation?

ARTICLE 7: MATTERS OF COMPENSATION (71–74)

"The Lord, whose servant [the pastor] is, cares for his poor life and that of his family members and that the smaller his reward in this world is, the more beautiful the crown laid up for him there is, if he keeps the faith until the end."

Leader: Worry about finances is the worship of money. We see this worry both in pastors and in congregations. In this section, consider how the Scriptures teach us to consider money, payment and work with a good and godly attitude. Instead of griping and complaining, we should pray.

While matters of compensation can be difficult and even distasteful for us, they are important. The Lord has determined to give out the free Gospel through the mouths of men, who have to eat. The teaching in this section helps balance a number of concerns. Should a pastor be paid? How much? By whom? Should there be fees for pastoral services? Should honoraria be accepted?

1. Consider the Luther quotation in Footnote 2 (72). How does Luther interpret Matt. 10:8? How do we understand the pastor's pay?
2. The vices of the Seventh Commandment are laziness and greed. The virtue is generosity. How does meditating on the Seventh Commandment teach the pastor to think of his work and pay? How does it inform the congregation?
3. Compensation has the potential to be a matter of bitterness and frustration between the pastor and the congregation. Have you experienced this? What help is there for pastors and congregations in this section?

ARTICLE 8: EXAMINATION, ORDINATION, AND INSTALLATION (75–83)

While Walther's emphasis is on the call, he sees the great benefit of the two accompanying practices of examination and ordination. "Therefore, whoever omits one or the other, except in case of necessity, is acting schismatically and reveals that he is one of those whom congregations accumulate for themselves according to their own passions, for how their ears itch (2 Timothy 4:3)" (74).

Leader: Even though most participants in this study will be past their examination, first call and ordination, this section is still a profound call to action. All pastors are always fervent students of God's Word, and we can never exhaust the treasures of the Scriptures, nor can we ever master their application. Consider, as you study through this section, how the Holy Spirit might provide practical ways to grow in our wisdom and knowledge of the Lord's Word.

1. **Comment 1:** Regarding examination, Walther has some particularly important things to say. Read 1 Tim. 3:10 and 2 Tim. 2:2. What does St. Paul teach us about theological competency and the office?

On Pages 76–77, we have Walther quoting Hartmann quoting Tarnov! He has a nice list, drawn from the Pastoral Epistles, regarding fitness of a pastor:

- a. Ability
 - i. Knowledge of doctrine
 - ii. Skill to teach
 - iii. A blameless and irreproachable life
- b. Intention
 - i. A desire to serve the church
 - ii. Perseverance

How does this outline of pastoral fitness match our own practice of examining candidates? How might we better serve one another to attain the requirements of our office?

2. Another list is found on Page 77. The Danish theologian Brochmand lists three theological aptitudes necessary for the pastor:

- a. "The entire Word of God should be thoroughly familiar to a true minister of the divine Word";
- b. The pastor should know "how to apply [the Word of God] to his hearers wisely"; and
- c. He must "give an account of what he teaches ... and silence those who contradict."

Does this describe us? What might we do as pastors, as congregations and as a circuit to continue to grow in our knowledge of the Word of God?

The devil often tempts pastors and people to become bored with the Lord's Word. What are the symptoms of this problem? What is the treatment?

3. **Comment 2:** Ordination. Walther is intent to exalt the importance of ordination while maintaining its status as an adiaphoron. Does he succeed?

Consider the quotation from Johann Fecht on Page 79. What are the three purposes of ordination?

Note also the practical discussion of ordination on the top of Page 80. Are there ways we could adjust our practice of ordination to reflect the pastoral concerns raised by Walther here?

4. **Comment 3:** Regarding installation, Walther offers some brief theological and practical points. What surprised you here? What wisdom should help shape our practice?
5. **Comment 4:** The pledge of the pastor to the symbols of the Lutheran church is near to Walther's heart. He writes about it extensively in other places. We see a summary of his thoughts and concerns here. How does Walther discuss being free and bound to a confession?

ARTICLE 9: THE INAUGURAL SERMON (84–87)

“The special purpose of the inaugural sermon is for a newly beginning preacher to gain a hearing with his congregation and to awaken his hearers to love and trust toward his person.”

1. While most pastors are long past their inaugural sermon, there are still a number of things for us to consider here. What are the people’s expectations of their pastor? Are they the right expectations?
2. What are the pastor’s expectations of the people? Are they biblical?
3. Has the pastor learned how his people hear so as to better articulate both the Law and the Gospel for their ears and hearts?
4. Consider the excerpt from the inaugural sermon of Pastor Goeze in Magdeburg (86–87). What does he teach us about the proper distinction between Law and Gospel?

ARTICLE 10: BEGINNING A NEW MINISTRY (88–92)

“Well begun is half done.”

Leader: It might be tempting for experienced pastors to skip this section, but this would be a mistake. There is much pastoral wisdom here. And if nothing else, the older pastors can help new, inexperienced and always overwhelmed pastors to begin their ministry in a place in a blessed way.

1. Walther’s emphasis, when beginning at a new station, focuses on visitation. Consider the Scriptures cited: Acts 20:20; 1 Thess. 2:11; John 10:3; Ezek. 34:16; 1 Tim. 5:1–3; Eph. 4:11; Matt. 25:36; and James 5:14. What do these texts teach us about pastoral visitation?
2. According to Walther, what is the purpose of these inaugural visits? How do we see Walther’s advice as sound pastoral wisdom? What are the best customs for home visitation you use?
3. **Comments 2–3:** Regarding gossip and the temptation to outshine your predecessor, Walther puts his finger on a few of the temptations faced by new pastors. How might we heed these warnings? What other temptations do new pastors face? How could we help new pastors joining our circuit?

FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the theology of the call give us comfort and confidence in our pastoral work?
2. How does Walther teach us to apply our theology to our practice?
3. What opportunities do we have to teach and preach the biblical teaching regarding the Office of the Holy Ministry?



November 2017

PREACHING THE WORD:

It's Still All About Jesus

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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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*.

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PREACHING THE WORD: It's Still All About Jesus

References in Walther: Article 11

[Walther's title: *Requirements and Importance of the Sermon*]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied

Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied).

There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

PREFACE

Consider the quote (below) from Walther and the following questions to help keep perspective on the preaching task today and how it compares to Walther's perspective for his time.

"The most important task in the ministry of every pastor is the public preaching. He should therefore apply the greatest effort to this." —Walther

1. Why is Walther's statement still true for the church today?
2. How would you characterize the state of preaching in our LCMS churches today (faithful to the text, balances Law/Gospel, weak, strong, engaging, full of Good News, bland, boring, instructional, teaches, too long, too short,

etc.)? How would our parishioners characterize the state of our preaching?

3. What do you find most difficult about the preaching task (time to prepare, exegesis, varying your sermon structures or having a sermon structure, delivery, eye contact, etc.)?
4. When you have a chance to hear other preachers, what are you listening for?
5. Do you have any kind of annual process for sermon evaluation and/or critique from other brothers or your elders?

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Seven minutes. That's it. That's all a preacher gets nowadays. After that, hands fidget, minds wander and bodies are restless. Yes, 420 seconds is all that's left of the average attention span. That means seven short minutes is all the time the average person is willing to listen to a sermon.¹ Exceed the given time limit, and preachers are at the mercy of a congregation struggling with a digitally induced attention deficit disorder. Most preachers, however, actually preach longer than seven minutes. A good understanding of how hearers hear, how they are conditioned to hear, and how long they're prone to remain engaged is vital

for good delivery of both the Law and the Gospel to the hearers. While Walther's time was a bit different, hearers then were no less likely to struggle with listening to poorly delivered preaching.

Seven minutes is not very long to proclaim the Law in all of its fury and teach it in all of its fullness. Such a period leaves little time to proclaim the Gospel in all of its greatness and deliver it in all of its satisfying sweetness. But seven minutes isn't even a guarantee, should the preacher himself be a little lackluster that day. (It's been known

¹ Jeff Davidson, *The Complete Guide to Public Speaking* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), p. 102.

to happen, even among the best). Or maybe his delivery skills tend to be more George W. Bush than Barack Obama, or his oration more nervous teenager than fearless titan. If that happens, many hearers are prone to tune out even sooner.

Recognizing the challenge of our hearers today, what is your initial reaction to Walther's summary list of seven "requirements for public sermons" (p. 95)?

Note to discussion leaders: Initially addressing each of these seven requirements could very well become a conversation taking up all the time allotted for study, depending on how this discussion is handled. Therefore, it will be helpful to note how each of these requirements are significantly expanded upon in the following pages under Comments 3–7 (pp. 95–128). Begin with a 10-minute overview of all seven components listed in the opening paragraph of Article 11. Note which of the seven topics are of most interest in the group. Then allocate the remainder of your time on those specific requirements for public preaching, using the corresponding study questions as a springboard

for collegial discussion. Be sure to clearly communicate this ahead of time to the group.

1. That they contain nothing but God's Word — pure and unadulterated (expanded on in Comment 3, pp. 97–98);
2. That God's Word is rightly applied in them (expanded on in Comment 4, pp. 99–109);
3. That the whole counsel of God is proclaimed in them to the hearers for their salvation (expanded on in pp. 109–114);
4. That they correspond to the hearers' specific needs (expanded on in Comment 5, pp. 114–124);
5. That they are contemporary (expanded on in Comment 6, pp. 124–127);
6. That they are well structured (expanded on in Comment 7, pp. 127–128); and
7. That they are not overly long (expanded on in Comment 7, p. 128).

I. PREPARING FOR THE SERMON

Comments 1 and 2 (pp. 95–97)

1. What is Walther's basic pastoral care concern with the whole of his Article 11?
2. Consider how Walther quotes the Apology, Article XXIV on the Mass: "There is nothing that keeps people at church more than good preaching" (p. 95). Just as this was true in the 16th century, Walther was demonstrating how it remained true in his later 19th-century day. Likewise, for our 21st-century day, in what ways does this remain true for us, especially when we live in a digital age of online sermons and deal with members and people church shopping and church hopping?
3. Yet, the question remains: What makes for "good preaching"? And how does that impact your preparation for crafting and delivering a sermon? Discuss both your ideal of time and practice for preparing a sermon, as well as the reality and constraints you face while preparing a sermon.
4. How should Walther's quote from Jer. 48:10 (p. 96) bear upon a pastor's conscience? Also note his list of unacceptable side pursuits. What might pastors be able to add to this list given our digital age and online propensities?
5. What are the most essential steps of preparing a sermon (exegesis, theological, context of congregation/society, structure, delivery practice, etc.)?

II. THE SERMON MUST CONTAIN GOD'S WORD

Comment 3 — The Pure and Unadulterated Word (pp. 97–98)

1. What constitutes faithfulness in preaching?
2. What examples does Walther give of failure to rightly divide the Word of truth, “that is, for Law and Gospel to be properly distinguished” (pp. 97–98)? Which one or two of these failures seem to be common occurrences among Lutheran preachers today?
3. According to Luther, what qualifies one to be called a “doctor of Holy Scripture”?

Note to discussion leaders: Initially addressing each of the five ways (below) to apply God's Word in a sermon could, again, very well be a conversation that takes up all the time allotted for study. Therefore, it will be helpful to note how each application is significantly expanded in the following pages under Comment 4 (pp. 98–109). Allotting a time limit for initial discussion of each of the five ways may be desirable. It may also serve you well to choose one or two of these five ways to specifically focus on after the initial discussion. Again, be sure to clearly communicate this ahead of time to the group.

Comment 4 — The Word Rightly Applied (pp. 98–109)

4. What does it mean that a sermon must rightly apply God's Word? Walther quotes 2 Tim. 3:16–17; how does this help answer the question?
5. Walther asserts God's Word is to be applied *five* ways (in Greek terminology below). Discuss how these five ways can be incorporated, as well as the ease or difficulty of including all five in one sermon:
 - a. For teaching (*didactically*);
 - b. For reproof of false teaching (*elenctically*);
 - c. For correction or chastising of sins (*epenthetically*);
 - d. For discipline, training or admonition (*paedeutically*); and

- e. For comforting (*paraclectically*).

As time allows, discuss the depth and meaning of each application as it relates to our hearers. In other words, why are these applications of the Word important for contemporary hearers? Does incorporating all five applications in every sermon seem reasonable or achievable? (Note Johann Jakob Rambach's advice: “Prudence must therefore dictate whether one should employ more than one use and which in particular to emphasize, which to leave out or to note only briefly.”)

6. Likewise, Rambach notes that a sermon having all five applications should also have “emotion and life in it” (p. 99). What do you suppose this means? Is it a reference to the style of delivery, the Means of Grace conveyed, the proclamation of the Good News, the context in which the preacher is preaching, or something else?

Note to discussion leaders: This section contains some elements that are currently being vigorously debated in several Lutheran circles (preaching good works, sanctification and antinomianism). Be prepared to help facilitate healthy dialogue that affords all voices to be heard and keeps the discussion fraternal and focused objectively on Walther's assertions, as well as the assertions of those he cites.

Reflection

Does a Lutheran sermon simply divide time between Law and Gospel, preaching first the Law then the Gospel? Since the Gospel is the power unto salvation and the life of faith, how can we best keep Gospel proclamation the basis for preaching the new life and the fruit of faith?

Is there any room in Lutheran sermons for exhortation, catechesis and instruction?

What about the third use of the Law? Does that have a place in Lutheran preaching?

Or, as some have questioned, does it truly even exist as a proper homiletical use of the Law?²

² Lutherans Werner Elert and Gerhard Forde are two 20th-century Lutherans accused of denying the third use of the Law. Prior to the most recent debates on the third use of the Law that began in our Synod in the early 2000s, a very thoughtful essay is “Using the Third Use: Formula of Concord VI and the Preacher's Task” by Jonathon G. Lange in *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* (vol. 3, no. 1, January 1994), pp. 19–25. Then Scott Murray's book, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), sparked a recent massive resurgence of interest in the third use of the Law that continues being heavily debated today. An entire symposium was held on the “Law in Holy Scripture” with the essays compiled into book form in *The Law in Holy Scripture*, Charles A. Gieschen ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004). A whole issue of *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (July/October 2005, vol. 69:3–4) was dedicated to essays on the third use of the Law. A formal response by Scott Murray to his critics was eventually also published, “The Third Use of the Law: The Author Responds to His Critics,” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (April 2008, vol. 72:2), pp. 99–118. Ed Engelbrecht then presented works that clarified Luther's use and understanding of the third use of the Law — “Luther's Threefold Use of the Law,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (January/April 2011, vol. 75:1–2), pp. 135–150 — and then put out an entire book on the matter: *Friends of the Law: Luther's Use of the Law for the Christian Life* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011).

What about the power of the Gospel? If we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him (Small Catechism, Third Article), and if the Gospel is the power for our daily and eternal living, should Lutheran preachers not therefore more rightly focus on predominantly preaching the Gospel for sanctified living (Walther's thesis XXV in Law and Gospel)?

Even more, just exactly what is the role of sanctification in preaching? Is it different than the third use of the Law?

Finally, as Lutherans confess the Gospel is truly the power of conversion and the life of faith, shouldn't the Gospel proclamation be the basis for new life and the fruit of faith in believers?

These questions are being discussed, sometimes quite vigorously, in many Lutheran circles today. They were issues that Walther aimed to address in preaching the whole counsel of God, and in so doing he demonstrated that Luther had addressed them as well. Consider the following questions in the spirit of fraternal joy and the bond of peace given through the Holy Spirit and the whole counsel of God's Word.

[Comment] Sermons Must Contain the Whole Counsel of God (pp. 109–114)

7. What does Walther mean by the need to preach the whole counsel of God? If one fails to do this, he says one commits "inexcusable robbery against his hearers" (p. 109). How does the thought of robbing parishioners of God's Word aid your approach toward preaching?
8. Pastors/preachers are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (p. 109). How does that description inform the vocation of pastor/preacher, and how does it call them to conduct their ministry?
9. Discuss the critical difference between diligently preaching the faith (i.e., Christ) and preaching about the faith (i.e., Christ)?
10. How does Walther assert the doctrine of sanctification is to be preached? How does it relate to preaching good works? Is there a difference? Should there be a difference? Where does repentance fall into place in this discussion for Walther (p. 113)?
11. Luther makes the distinction of being "fine Easter preachers, but disgraceful Pentecost preachers." What is he getting at, and how is that helpful in proclaiming the whole counsel of God?

III. THE SERMON MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF HEARERS AND THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

Reflection

Recent studies on the effects of our digital world on the brain are increasingly showing how our high-tech, ever-connected world is fundamentally altering the way our brains think, work and process information, and therefore also changing how we behave, learn and interact, including the reality of shortened attention spans.

The results of our ever-decreasing attention span in the church continue to accumulate: fewer souls are soothed, burdened consciences remain troubled, and biblical instruction is not being retained, which means biblical literacy continues to decline. Worst of all, preachers and churches are becoming awkwardly and increasingly desperate to gain a listening audience.

So, what's a preacher intent on faithfully preaching the Word of God to do? As we've seen, Walther reminds preachers to stand on the truth of God's Word, preaching

the whole counsel of God. Yet, he also reminds preachers to understand the needs of the hearers and the contemporary context in which they live.

Comment 5 — The Needs of the Hearers (pp. 114–124)

1. What are the specific needs of hearers today? Be sure to also distinguish between felt needs and true spiritual needs.
2. Walther says a preacher is to keep in mind the "specific condition of his congregation" as well as the "various situations of men" (p. 114). What might he have in mind with these?
3. Walther quotes Luther extensively in this section. Even though it was 500 years ago, Luther's advice seems quite appropriate for today regarding preachers who

preach over the heads of their people; aim simply to impress them; constantly sprinkle Greek, Hebrew and Latin in their sermons; and who are pretentious in their preaching. Among other things, Luther calls such preachers “frivolous spirits, who never know where they ought to stop” (p. 117). What simple preaching does he encourage in the face of all this? (Hint: He considered them to be three chief parts — cf. p. 119.)

4. How did Walther consider the refutation of false doctrine a need of a congregation (p. 119ff)? Does this still apply today? If so, give some examples and discuss how to do this without causing harm to the congregation, as Luther warns.
5. How does Walther see encouragement fitting into the needs of a congregation (p. 123)? How does this still apply today? What might be some specific examples of preaching encouragement?

Comment 6 — Contemporary Sermons (pp. 124–127)

6. What does Walther mean and what does he not mean by preaching sermons that are contemporary?
7. What direction, if any, might this give for preaching to hearers with seven-minute attention spans, who are living in a digital age and accustomed to being constantly entertained?
8. Ever the *Seelsorger*, Walther observes that every era “suffers from certain unique spiritual diseases that require corresponding care.” What spiritual diseases can be diagnosed in our culture (idolatry of sports, worship of sex, consumerism, materialism, rejection of the Sabbath — rejecting both a day of rest and open schedule as well as despising God’s Word, etc.)? Compare what you identify to Walther’s assessment at the top of Page 126. What is the remedy for these maladies, and how should it be preached?

IV. SERMON STRUCTURES

Reflection

There are numerous different sermon structures for preachers to consider using today. Some were derived from the Old Homiletic based on deductive sermons, and others are based on the New Homiletic based on inductive sermons. Regardless, those sermon structures include: 1) Text driven, 2) Propositional, 3) Narrative, 4) Phenomenological move, 5) Image driven and, more recently, 6) Contextualization. Within each structure or method, there are multiple corresponding and often subtle variations (expository preaching, Lowery’s loop, Goal Malady Means, declarative preaching, etc.). As you consider what Walther has to say about sermon structures, keep in mind your personal go-to sermon structure and how that may or may not fit with what Walther has to say.

Comment 7 — Structure and Length (pp. 127–128)

1. Walther highlights the following quote, which offers preachers a warning about putting too much emphasis upon a sermon structure: “[T]hose who are concerned only with the proper form of the sermon are like those ‘who practice only at sewing the shoes but forget

to purchase the leather, and then have to use paper” (p. 127). What is his overall point?

2. At the same time, Walther is very direct about preaching the Word of God “in its wonderful order and in its living coherence,” or perhaps in living color, for the benefit and edification of the congregation. How might a sermon structure assist preaching God’s Word in living color/living coherence?³
3. Walther notes that a sermon should “pursue a specific goal” and “treat one main truth” (p. 128). What examples does he give? What examples can you give?
4. Walther is adamant that a sermon not be too long. Consider how his quote from Luther can help preachers evaluate the length of their sermons today: “It is the office and mark of a good speaker that he stops when people enjoy hearing him the most and think he is just beginning to speak” (p. 128).

³ For further thoughts about faithful preaching to today’s hearers, see “In Living Color: Narrative Rhetoric for a Lutheran Homiletic in the Digital Age” (*Logia*, vol. XXIV 3, August 14, 2015).

Comment 8 — Heart and Conscience (pp. 128–129)

5. Walther adds a final comment, noting that a good sermon should “affect the heart and conscience of the

hearers” (p. 128). What does he believe should happen to a hearer as a result of the sermon? What, therefore, is the most important part of a preacher’s sermon preparation and delivery, according to Walther?

V. CITATIONS

1. Walther cites Luther, the Confessions and other 16th-century authors throughout his treatment of these seven requirements for public sermons. Which quotes were the most helpful or insightful for you? Did his use of Luther and others demonstrate how the challenges of preaching in the 16th and 19th centuries still have parallels to preaching in the 21st century? What can

we learn about 21st-century preaching by observing how Walther applied Luther and others from previous centuries to help with the unique challenges of preaching in the 19th century?

2. What did you consider Walther’s most important citations on preaching?



December 2017

GIVING OUT THE GIFTS:

Baptism and Catechesis

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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DOXOLOGY
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

References in Walther: Articles 12–14, 27–29
[Walther's Titles: Baptism and Confirmation]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: The two themes of this two-part study are clearly connected by our Lord Himself in Matt. 28:18–20. They are also connected in the liturgical rites of the Church and in the pastoral care offered by the servants of the Word.

You are encouraged to affirm the complimentary relationship of Holy Baptism and catechesis/confirmation in the care of souls. This may mean

moving from 'Part One' to 'Part Two' of this study and back again.

Even though Walther addresses the “what” and the “how” of the baptismal service at length, you are also encouraged to guide the conversation and discussion so that the ultimate focus is on the “why” of God’s gracious action by simple water and strong Word.

There is more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these theses and/or questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest joys of a Lutheran pastor is to stand at the font to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. As I write this, in the 8:00 Divine Service yesterday at the congregation in which I serve, two children received God’s gifts by simple water and strong Word and the people of God spoke their “Amen!” This was the family’s joyful response to our Lord’s invitation and promise after I had spent significant time in conversation and Bible study re-catechizing the father and the grandmother of these nine- and four- year olds.

The over-arching theme of these circuit winkel studies is “What makes a pastor?” As that question is approached and pondered in your conversation, may it lead your gathering of brothers in more than discussion about your role

in baptizing infants and children, youth and adults. My prayer is that you will discover or re-discover that one of the first answers to the question, “What makes a pastor?” is an affirmation of the work of our gracious God in calling each one of you His beloved son in the cleansing water of Holy Baptism. May this be a strong and certain anchor in the ministry you are called to bring to people by “Receiving and Sharing the Gift of the Holy Bath.”

Using C.F.W. Walther’s outline, there are three concerns for pastors — in 1872 and in the early years of the 21st century — to consider. They are: 1) how to baptize; 2) who to baptize; and 3) how to decide regarding what baptismal customs to follow.

I. ARTICLE 12 — THE RITE OF BAPTISM

It may seem rather odd that the first issue addressed in the pastoral theology concerns the correct baptismal formula. With this beginning, Walther offers assurance that certain changes in the baptismal formula do not make a Baptism invalid.

1. Why was this a comfort to both pastor and people then?
2. Why is this a comfort to both pastor and people now?

However, Walther asserts, “the formula using the first-person (“I baptize you ...”) that is customary in our church is

without doubt more fitting, and it alone corresponds fully to Matthew 28:19 and 3:11.” (Comment 1, 133)

He also quotes Salomon Deyling (quoting Johannes Fecht) who cautions, “it is not fitting that we should want to be more clever than Christ, our Master.” (Comment 1, 133)

3. How can brothers in ministry encourage each other to resist the temptation to “be (more) clever?”

Walther continues in his guidance of his contemporaries with these words from Luther regarding the validity of a

Baptism using something other than Christ's own "Words of Institution": "... there is great comfort and a mighty aid to faith in the knowledge that one has been baptized, not by man, but by the Triune God Himself through a man acting among us in His name." (Comment 1, 134)

4. How does this both challenge you as a pastor and comfort the souls you serve?

The ancient maxim *Lex Orandi / Lex Credendi* ("The Law of Praying is the Law of Believing") certainly applies to the words and actions of the pastor at the font. While "certain differences in the form do not absolutely make Baptism invalid" (136), the preacher should not "act in this matter according to his own caprice." (136)

5. How do our words and actions in the baptismal liturgy convey what Scripture declares and what we believe is actually happening?
6. How can (and should) the brothers in your circuit(s) assist and support each other to speak and act faithfully — in accordance with Scripture — at the font?
7. How might you guide each other in consistent practice(s) for the sake of common witness?
8. How can (and should) this be approached and discussed to keep from incorrectly judging each other?

Leader: To keep the focus on the Word and not — only or simply — on the words of one of our Lutheran fathers, the following sections should be given certain priority in your mutual conversation.

It is not only in our time that theologians and pastors debate the wording of the baptismal formula. What does Scripture say regarding Baptism "in the name" or "into the name" of the Triune God?

- › See for the first: Matt. 28:19 and 1 Cor. 1:13
 - › See for the second: Acts 2:38, 10:48 and 1 Cor. 12:13
9. Why is a consistent custom in the formula important? (137)

While there may be no dispute in our circles about the required physical element for a Baptism (Luther: "as long as he... does not use wine, beer, lye, or any other thing, but water along with the Word of God") [Comment 2, 137, footnote 9], pastors are compelled to practice and teach that

this sacrament is "a washing with water." (See Eph. 5:26, John 3:5, Acts 8:36; 10:47.)

10. Discuss Deyling's observation: "For it is no more permissible to fabricate a Baptism without water than the Lord's Supper without bread and wine." (Comment 2, 138)

Walther uses the rich descriptors of the Word to emphasize the images of how God is doing His work in Baptism.

11. What do each of the Scriptures say concerning the effect of Baptism?
- a. Romans 6:3–4
 - b. Acts 23:16
 - c. Titus 3:5–6
 - d. Hebrews 10:22

Walther also observes: "... immersion is not to be rejected" "... likewise pouring and continual sprinkling are also not to be rejected." (Comment 3, 139)

12. How might (or should) a pastor respond to a request for a Baptism by immersion?
13. How does a pastor speak to an individual or family of a Baptist or Church of Christ background who asks: "Can a Baptism by pouring be as valid as by immersion?"
14. Consider also the words of Cyprian (d. 258) who (in a letter to Magnus) wrote concerning "those who come to God's grace in sickness and lingering illness" and were not able to be washed "with the salutary water" (i.e. immersion): "When need is pressing and God grants His forgiveness, this *divine shortcut* [emphasis mine] ... gives the believer the whole." (Comment 3, 142)

Leader: There was, in the past generation, an assumption that everyone had received Baptism. Clearly, that wasn't true then. Certainly, that is not true now. You may wish to spark this portion of your conversation with a story from your pastoral experience of a young or not-so-young adult who came to you, having discovered that he or she had never been baptized.

II. ARTICLE 13 — WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED

Certain Lutheran pastors to whom Walther wrote were on the “frontier.” They were striving to serve people not yet connected to congregations. Other pastors in 1872 cared for the souls of people in their congregations. And yet, all were striving to share the Gospel with the unbelievers and the unchurched around them.

The situation is no different today. Some pastors are seeking to gather present and new Christians into congregations where they can be matured on the faith. Some pastors serve established congregations. And still, all are focused on sharing the Gospel with the unbelieving and the unchurched around them.

Walther’s counsel regarding who should be baptized is as relevant now as it was relevant to American-Lutheran pastors in the post-Civil War years. Discuss the contemporary implications of his advice to 19th century pastors:

1. What responsibility does a pastor have to discover if a person (an adult, a youth, or a child) has already received Holy Baptism? How can this “investigation” happen?
2. Why might someone conceal his/her (or his/her child’s) emergency Baptism? How should a pastor catechize and comfort regarding the efficacy and validity of such a Baptism due in accordance with Christ’s command?
3. What of those who were baptized by heretics? How is the distinction made between a heretical preacher and the Calvinist churches and the Papists? (Comment 2, 146)

Consider these words from the seventy-eighth letter of Basil: “We must be baptized in the same way as we have received it [from Christ’s institution]; but also believe in the same way as we have been baptized: but also praise whom we believed, namely, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” To this Paul Tarnov adds: “For Baptism belongs to the Church, not to the minister.” (Comment 2, 146–147)

4. What must we do when someone comes to our church from a public doctrinal confession which denies or confuses the doctrine of the Trinity (e.g. Sabellians and Socinians of earlier times; Jehovah’s Witnesses, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints of current times) yet claiming to have been baptized?
5. On this point Deyling states: “He must still receive *the holy bath*.” [emphasis mine] (Comment 2, 147)

Walther also addresses “uncertain” Baptisms in Comment 2. While this may have been more of an issue when both record-keeping and communication were more challenging, it is still a situation any pastor may face today. (A good friend of mine, a fellow-LCMS pastor, discovered in searching for his baptismal date while he was at seminary, that there was no record of his Baptism in church or family archives. He received Holy Baptism during his vicarage!)

6. What does Luther offer as counsel and as a pastoral practice in the situation of a mother baptizing her own child born prematurely? (148)
7. Why does Luther reject the conditional Baptism of “the papists?” (148–149)

Comment 3: Parental Authority and Baptism

Once again, in his presentation of pastoral theology regarding the question of who has authority to bring a child to Baptism (Comment 3, 149–151), Walther may seem to be addressing a point that is no longer pertinent. I suggest that just the opposite is true. As many in our society move frequently from place to place, and as many families are broken and then blended, many children (even children in adulthood) are separated from those who should have spiritual authority over them.

1. How do the following texts provide some perspective on this issue and on our pastoral practice?
 - a. Mark 10:13–16 — Who are “they” in this account? Though this is not specifically about Baptism, this passage is always read in the Divine Service when the Sacrament involves an infant or a young child.
 - b. Acts 2:37–39 — The response to Peter’s proclamation on Pentecost
 - c. Acts 16:25–34 — The conversion of the jailer at Philippi and “his entire household”

Walther quotes Johann Hartmann as he discusses under what circumstances a pastor might (and should) baptize the child of unbelievers and of heretics. Discuss the implications of these two points for your pastoral practice:

2. If children of unbelievers are still living with their parents, they may not be baptized against the parents’ will. (149)

3. When children of unbelieving parents are baptized into the Christian faith they “become in a way member(s) and property of the believers under whose cure (as their new parents) they stand.” (149)

Pastor Walther also addresses the issue of baptizing the children of an apostate “still living in the parish” (the geographic area) and the children of one excommunicated from the congregation. (151)

4. How would you (how have you) dealt with such a situation?

At this point in his challenging but helpful article on Baptism, Walther raises the question of baptizing Jewish children who desire to be baptized in the Body of Christ. Already in 1623, the theological faculty of Wittenberg offered this opinion: “... if the children came themselves and desire instruction in the Christian faith, even though their parents object to it, we should still receive them, instruct them, and make every effort to see them brought to Holy Baptism.” (Comment 3, 151)

5. Would this same principle apply to children of other non-Christian religions?

At the risk of distracting your thoughtful conversation about the care of souls and Holy Baptism, you may choose to consider Walther’s comment/advice regarding deformed babies.

6. “Living, deformed infants should also be baptized if they have a human head; conjoined children, twice.” (Comment 4)

Finally, Walther asks: “Up to what age should children be baptized?” (Comment 5, 152) His own words clarify the question: “... it is especially important to answer the question of what age a child may reach *and still be baptized without prior, complete instruction* [emphasis mine] as is necessary for adults” (152)

7. How does Walther answer his own question?

8. How have you answered this question in your pastoral practice?

Leader: The following section may elicit strong convictions or viewpoints regarding the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the customs of any pastor or congregation. Be pastor to the other pastors in listening and in helping them listen to each other in this discussion. (See the note to all after #9 below.)

II. ARTICLE 14 — BAPTISMAL CUSTOMS

As you approach this portion of Walther’s pastoral theology, I suggest that you ponder this: as edifying, even valuable, as these customs might be, and as meaningful as certain ones may have become for you, they are not essential in the command or for the efficacy and validity of Holy Baptism. Therefore, be careful that you:

- › Do not over-emphasize them;
- › Properly teach and explain them;
- › Do not judge your brother pastors who omit one or some of these customs or do them differently than you do.

Johann Gerhard offers helpful clarity regarding baptismal customs. (Comment 1, 155)

1. What do you find most insightful in his three divisions and in the “rules,” which Gerhard asserts should be followed? (155–156)

In total, Walther lists thirteen customs which may be included in the liturgy for Holy Baptism.

2. Is it “good, right, and salutary” to call these “customs?”
3. How does this help pastors (and the people we serve) to understand and assert what is the very heart of Baptism: applying water while speaking the Triune Name of God?

Walther expresses a concern that these customs can — and should only be — abolished and changed with the command and consent of the church. (Comment 14, 156)

4. Why does he say this?
5. How would this happen among us?
6. What happens when Walther’s words are not heeded among us?

Conversation with brother pastors about these customs could be informative and instructive. Such conversation also has the potential to be either edifying and encouraging or disappointing and divisive. Please listen to one another carefully and discuss these customs collegially in light of the prompts which follow each:

7. The sign of the cross

Rather than debate the nuances of how this gesture might be made, consider this insight from Gerhard: the signing with the cross is a demonstration that the one baptized is born anew into the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3–5) but it also witnesses “that he will be subject to the cross in this life.” (158)

8. The blessing (Ps. 121:8)

The use of this verse is attested to in almost every baptismal liturgy from a very early time. However, its placement has varied (witness the orders in LCMS agendas and hymnals). Walther quotes Andreas Rudelbach in placing these words of Scripture at the threshold between the narthex and the nave. For, as he states: “We must admit that this is the only appropriate point at which this blessing can be included, but it is also at exactly the right place, where the church opens itself up with the baptismal covenant to the baptismal candidate ...” (Comment 4, 158)

9. The exorcism and/or renunciation

A single or a triple renunciation of “the devil and all his works and all his ways” precedes the Confession of the Apostolic Creed in our contemporary rite for Holy Baptism. Discuss its theological and practical

importance, considering Scriptural teaching and the increasing influence of paganism in western society. (Comments 5 and 7)

10. Posture for the renunciation

In a lengthy quotation from Rudelbach we learn of a practice of the early Church in which baptismal candidates “first turned toward the west during the renunciation and then, after they had renounced and come to the confession, turned toward the east — the former a sign of the prince of darkness; the latter, of the Son of Righteousness.” Discuss how this custom could enhance or detract from the meaning of Baptism among Christians today. (Comment 7, 166)

Leader: This is the conclusion of ‘Part One’ of this study — directly focused on Holy Baptism according to the command of Christ. Below is ‘Part Two,’ dealing with a custom followed by many within the Christian Church (i.e. Confirmation). However, this point must be made: Catechesis is not an option. It is included in the Great Commission and part of our Lord’s desire for His Church. The section following Question 1 may help all of you affirm this — and so, to be better prepared to serve your people by helping them to receive catechesis as youth and adults.

III. ARTICLE 27 — CONFIRMATION

Walther begins this portion of his pastoral teaching with this single and strong statement: “...So-called confirmation is an adiaphoron.” But, he continues, “nevertheless [it is] the kind of ecclesiastical institution that, if used rightly, can be accompanied by great blessing.” (Article 27, 303)

Quoting Deyling, pastor Walther notes that this ancient tradition “was customarily given immediately after Baptism ...” and that Tertullian (in the late second or early third century) wrote, “Having come out of Baptism, we receive the holy anointing.” (Comment 1, 303)

1. Consider this interesting and insightful comment (a quotation from Heinrich Guericke) found in a footnote: “...the neophytes were anointed immediately after the Baptism with consecrated oil of chrism as a symbol of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians.” (303)

But, before considering at greater length this “ecclesiastical institution” and ancient tradition of confirmation, I encourage you to reflect on the Scriptures which provide the framework for a valuable practice which is,

none-the-less, an adiaphoron. Within your “band of brothers” ponder these portions of God’s Word and discuss how they relate to confirmation.

- › Deuteronomy 6:6–9
- › Matthew 28:19–20
- › 2 Peter 3:18a
- › John 6:68–69
- › John 21:15–16
- › Psalm 119:97–99
- › John 8:51
- › Luke 11:28
- › Colossians 3:16
- › Luke 10:38–42

Leader: You may wish to send out and assign these Scriptures before your circuit conference.

Walther argues that, as the Roman Catholic Church elevated confirmation to a sacrament (hence, a conferring

of divine grace), this effectively devalued Baptism for, as Deyling observes, it is then, “in a certain respect greater than the grace of Baptism.” (Comment 1, 304)

The reformers spoke clearly when, in reply to the Colloquy of Regensburg (1541), they wrote: “Concerning confirmation and anointing there is neither divine command nor promise ...” (304–305)

Note also the denunciation of Martin Luther in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* as well as his language in a Christmas season sermon. He calls papal confirmation “monkey business” and “deceitful mumbo-jumbo.” (304)

2. How can Lutheran pastors help people — and, in particular, Christian parents — see the value of both catechesis and confirmation?

The truth is, as Walther honestly admits, that there was an ambivalent and inconsistent attitude towards the practice of confirmation in the churches and regions of the Reformation. (305) Though many Reformers “wished for

the catechism to be used faithfully... [and for] prayer to be said over the children after they are [taught and] examined and confess their faith,” confirmation was not embraced or practiced universally.

3. Discuss why this ambivalence may have been a healthy attitude.
4. How and why have uncertain and even contradictory attitudes toward catechesis and confirmation developed in the modern Lutheran church in America?

Walther quotes Johann Quistorp who addressed “the confirmation of catechumens” in 1659. He stated, “If this thoroughly laudable church discipline were still practiced today, then...the unity of faith in Christendom would increase, and...not as many would be easily seduced by false teaching.” (Comment 1, 305)

5. How could strong catechesis and a positive practice of confirmation reduce “easy seduction” in your congregation, in your circuit, and in our Synod?

IV. ARTICLE 28 — CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION AND THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

In Article 28, pastor Walther offers practical advice on the content of catechesis and the purpose of confirmation, the length of time devoted to instruction, the age of catechumens, the placement of the Rite of Confirmation within the Church Year, and — among other matters — the decision to not confirm “notoriously wicked children.” (307–309)

1. Which of these matters most resonates with your ministry of catechesis, and with how members of your congregation (the active and the inactive) perceive confirmation?

It should come as no surprise that Walther addresses the care of a pastor for the youth — these young souls under his care — after instruction, examination and confirmation. This, after all, is the man whose name was chosen as the moniker for the “Walther League,” the youth ministry of the LCMS for many years!

Walther is a pastor, and a pastor is a shepherd. He knows, by experience, that some youth will be inclined to “evade the oversight of their pastor after confirmation” ... and may flee the church and “become the world’s prey.” (311) Therefore, he must “concern himself especially seriously with this flock of Christ’s sheep.” (Article 29, 310)

Leader: You may be leading or participating in this study long before “confirmation season.” I encourage you to pause for a corporate prayer for all involved in the catechesis of each pastor’s parish represented in your gathering: parents, children, baptismal sponsors, pastors, DCEs, Sunday school teachers, etc.

2. Even though (as every pastor knows and grieves) many youth disappear after the white robe and the red carnation — and the promises! — how can we pastors encourage each other to continue to have a “special fatherly interest” in these young disciples?
3. Discuss what this “fatherly interest” can look like as you continue to support youth (and their parents) on their journey of faith.
4. How does a pastoral role and responsibility toward the confirmed youth differ from a director of Christian Education, a youth worker, a Sunday school teacher or an elder?
5. How does a pastor maintain — and help others maintain — the primary role of Christian parents to be teachers of the faith?

Comment 3 — CHURCH EXAMINATIONS

Walther is concerned that the pastor-catechist is well-prepared for his task and that he can carry out this duty with (borrowing from Christoph Seidel) “pleasure and delight.” (Comment 3, 315)

6. How does catechesis/examination relate to the faithful care of souls?
7. How can pastors encourage each other as they approach the important work of instructing youth in the Christian faith and in Lutheran doctrine?
8. Why does it often seem to be easier and a greater “pleasure and delight” to teach and catechize adults?
9. What have you found most effective in the instruction of children and teens?



January 2018

GIVING OUT THE GIFTS:

Christ's Gifts in His Supper

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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DOXOLOGY
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

References in Walther:

Articles 15, 17–18 (pp. 171–183, 199–232)

[Walther's Titles: *The Lord's Supper*]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive

quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied). There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

In this study, we will look at three articles that explain the theological and practical reasoning for the announcement, administration and admittance to the Lord's Supper. A dominant theme in these articles is the necessity and care with which the pastor examines those who desire to commune. Pastors are entrusted as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1) and take up this task of the administration of Christ's gifts with a keen eye and ear toward the care of souls. As Walther, Luther, Gerhard, Chrysostom, Chemnitz and others emphasize time and again, Christ's gifts in His Supper are meant to be delivered with pastoral integrity in great confidence for the benefit of the faithful.

Note to leaders: It's not difficult to get sidetracked from the aim before you. A group of pastors could easily talk around any of these theses for hours on end, rather than address the topic directly and collegially. Use this study as an opportunity to discuss areas of theology and practice that differ among your group. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly as Walther, Gerhard, the Wittenberg faculty and other Lutheran fathers teach and admonish you according to the Holy Scriptures.

ARTICLE 15: ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER (PP. 171–183)

"Because a preacher should be not only a teacher but also a shepherd, bishop, and watchman; ... he therefore has the holy obligation to require that those who wish to receive the Holy Supper announce personally beforehand and to use [the announcement] faithfully and wisely for an examination."

—Walther

Note to leaders: Communion practice across our beloved Synod seems to vary as much as the landscape. Though Walther stresses the harm of the mixed confession of open communion practices among other Protestants, he emphasizes the necessity and benefit of pastoral examination prior to communing to a greater degree. Don't let your discussion devolve to an "us versus them" tiff, but keep the focus on the best form of care for souls. In this article, Walther give much salutary advice on how to be a faithful caretaker of souls.

1. The parsonage I now live in was designed with a private foyer and office right off the main entrance. I was told that it was designed this way so that members could come on Saturday to the parsonage and announce for Holy Communion. Many older churches and parsonages have similar places that made accommodations for private announcement for the Lord's Supper. What factors have contributed to us moving away from this form of announcement for the Lord's Supper?
2. **Comment 1:** Chrysostom's epigram preceding this essay is laudable. Never was he one to mince words or to speak in vagaries. His preaching was straightforward and plainly from Scripture. In a pluralistic society with the influence of many differing spiritualities, he held high the benefits of the Supper as well as its potential spiritual

harm. What might Chrysostom say to the preacher who uses the “Holy Supper as bait” (172)?

3. In this essay from *Der Lutheraner*, Walther states, “For it is certainly true: there is hardly anything in all of pastoral care that causes more trouble for a faithful minister of the Church than wanting to deal conscientiously with admission to the Holy Supper” (172). How does a pastor deal conscientiously with this matter, and what are the factors leading him to be less than conscientious?
4. Is a preacher doing the right thing in this if he would rather endure everything — in fact, even give up his ministry — than admit someone to the Holy Supper without examination (172)?
5. The divine Word is preached not only to keep the soul in the faith but also to bring about repentance of sin. The Holy Supper keeps, preserves and nurtures the Christian faith. When is the Supper received to the detriment of the one who receives? Does the worthy or

unworthy reception of the participant have an effect upon the one administering the Sacrament?

6. What does Walther assert that examination should consist of for the one announcing for the Supper?
7. The faculty of theology at Wittenberg wrote that there are three main reasons to retain the institution of announcement (179). What is the aim of their rationale?
8. **Comment 2:** It would be hard to argue that Walther would agree with a member doing self-examination from a five-point communion statement in a bulletin and that such self-examination would be sufficient for admittance to the Supper. If the member won’t come to the pastor for examination, it must not irritate the pastor to go and visit them personally (180). What are some things the pastor should *not* do when visiting with a member who is announcing for communion?
9. **Comment 4:** Congregation members will sin against one another, and disputes will arise. What can be learned from how the faculty of theology at Wittenberg dealt with the case described (181–182)?

ARTICLE 17: ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER (PP. 199–221)

“Valid administration of the Holy Supper consists of the blessing (consecration), distribution, and reception of bread and wine.” —Walther

Note to leaders: A key overtone in this article to the validity of the Holy Supper is the certainty with which it is received. Mentioned here are questions that encroach upon the line where the Holy Supper becomes invalid, and these are serious questions. At the base is the question, “Is Christ for me, or not?” Any action, behavior or confession that begins to strip away the certainty with which Christ is received in the Holy Supper is detrimental to the soul, and great care should be taken to avoid such dilution.

1. **Comment 2:** Stewards are under authority and are granted authority to act in certain times and places. For instance, a steward on an airplane has great authority to ensure that the occupants are kept safe and, in an emergency, ushered to safety. However, their authority to act decisively in an emergency situation is not their usual work. Usually they instruct, speak to and serve with much grace the needs and concerns of the travelers on the plane. The steward on the plane cannot devise his own protocol for conduct and service, but must follow proper

procedure. So it is with the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). The pastor acts with authority under the authority of Christ by the Word of Christ. As a steward, he is not free to do and act as he wishes, but must serve and keep safe that which has been entrusted to him. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the steward who deals carelessly with the mysteries of God?

2. Article VII of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord states, “And just as the declaration [Gen.1:28] ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,’ was spoken only once but is ever efficacious in nature, so that it is fruitful and multiplies, so also this declaration (‘This is My body,’ etc.) was spoken once, but even to this day and to His return is efficacious and works, that in the Supper of the Church His true Body and Blood are present” (202). At what point might a pastor make the Lord’s Supper impotent by his careless or deliberate actions?
3. **Comment 4:** At the heart of this comment is not, “Who can administer the Holy Supper?” but rather, “When does man erode the *certainty* of the Holy Supper?” This debate arises out of the doctrine of the call and the priesthood of all believers for the sake of good order

and the assurance of grace given. In what emergency situation might a layman administer the Holy Supper? What legitimate spiritual reason might one have for declaring an “emergency” administration of the Holy Supper? Where do vicars fit into this discussion? How quickly the exception in the case of an emergency can become the rule through the means of man in pursuit of his own devices!

4. **Comment 5:** Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession confirms the validity of the Holy Supper even when the one administering it is heterodox. However, when both false teachers and their congregations by their public confession give the Words of Institution a different meaning, they nullify the essence of the Supper and distribute only bread and wine (212). Again, the issue at hand is the certainty with which Christ’s gifts are given. Which has greater importance: the orthodoxy of the celebrant or the confession of the congregation?
5. **Comment 7:** One can see why our Lutheran forefathers went to jail and emigrated to America for freedom of religion. The Prussian Union and its imposed regulations made uncertain that which our Lord most certainly gave — His Holy Supper for the forgiveness of sins. If it is unacceptable to qualify the distribution formula by saying, “*Christ says, ‘This is my body...’*” why is it acceptable to say, “*This is the true body...*” (214–215)?
6. **Comments 8, 9 and 12:** These are the common-sense comments. The advice on what to do if a “possibly venomous” spider were to drop down into the chalice is priceless (216). Likewise, the common-sense approach

to make use of the Holy Supper is also priceless as exemplified in footnote 34 (217).

7. **Comment 11:** It is hard to read this comment without the distortion of feminism in our minds. Think theologically: Why would the eighth article in the Saxon General Articles prescribe “that first the men and bachelors are to line up in an orderly fashion for Communion, and then the virgins, but after them the women” (218)?
8. **Comment 13:** In regard to those who attend the Divine Service but do not commune, Deyling writes, “Those who do not receive the Sacrament with their mouths should still take it by faith, spiritually partake of the body and blood of Christ, praise God with hymns, and not leave the church until the worship service has ended and the Thanksgiving, where the blessing of the people is done” (220). Some churches have a mass exodus before and after the service of the Sacrament. How can a pastor winsomely admonish people to stay and receive these spiritual blessings?
9. **Comment 14:** What to do with the leftovers? Sacred things should be cared for in a sacred manner. There is a range of honorable care for the consecrated elements that remain so long as care is taken to keep separate that which is holy from the common. Great care is to be taken so as not to give the appearance of evil or cause offense. Which is easier: to fall toward the Roman Catholic understanding and treat the consecrated elements as the Sacrament even apart from their actual use, or to fall toward the casual Protestant side and treat the consecrated wine and bread crumbs as common leftovers in a kitchen?

ARTICLE 18:

WHO SHOULD BE ADMITTED TO THE LORD’S SUPPER (PP. 222–232)

As far as communicants are concerned, only those should be admitted to the Holy Supper:

1. *Who are already baptized;*
2. *Are able to examine themselves;*
3. *Cannot be proven to be non-Christians or heterodox believers, who would therefore be taking the Sacrament unworthily; and, finally, of whom*
4. *There is no reason to believe that they need to reconcile with someone or to provide restitution beforehand.*

Note to leaders: It is likely that within this article you will have the most intense discussion on communion practices. Don’t shy away, and use your wisdom to keep emotions in check. Note in particular the advice given for communion of the dying, the demented and the one the pastor is suspect of. The advice and reasoning might surprise some in your group.

Open communion practices within many Protestant denominations and, most contentiously, within Lutheran denominations cause much unnecessary strife. The Holy

Supper is not necessary for salvation, but it does impart many salutary gifts to the one who receives it worthily. Whenever it is withheld, it is always to be done from the position of love. To receive it worthily is to receive it for the great benefit of the forgiveness of sins, strengthening of faith and the strengthening of the common confession expressed at that altar and pulpit. To receive it unworthily is to ingest toxic medication upon the soul. The latter is to be avoided at all costs.

1. **Comment 2:** This comment discusses communing those who may or may not be able to examine themselves and discern the body and blood of the Lord. Included here are the sleeping, unconscious, those in the throes of death, the insane, deaf-mute, young children, memory patients and the like. What and where is the line when a person cannot rightly examine or discern the body and blood of our Lord and therefore should not commune?
2. **Comment 3:** I have heard that the “Judas excuse” has been argued for open communion. The rationale is that Jesus communed Judas, and he obviously wasn’t a true believer, so what right does a local pastor then have to refuse the Holy Supper to a person who believes something a little differently? However, they are missing the fact of the outward confession that Judas made before his betrayal and the public confession of faith made by a person who believes Scripture differently, as attested by their differing church membership. What did Jesus do to warn Judas of the danger of his plans, and how is a pastor to warn those he suspects may take the Holy Supper to their harm?
3. **Comment 4:** Differences matter, and agreeing to disagree just doesn’t cut it. The postmodern maxim that truth is relative to the individual is rubbish. What does Muling write concerning the offense of erroneous doctrine and practice (225–226)?

4. **Comment 5:** Reconciliation is necessary for reception of the Holy Supper. What happens when a pastor, over time, continually admits souls who have not reconciled or have no desire to reconcile with their brother? What about those who have divorced?
5. **Comment 8:** Luther states, “Let him distribute the Sacrament both to *himself* and to the people while the *Agnus Dei* is sung” (*Werke* 10:2760) (230). But the later Lutheran theologians, like Gerhard, are far from declaring that self-communion by the preacher to be the normal manner of distribution. What was Gerhard’s rationale for preferring another pastor to commune the pastor and permitting self-communion only out of dire necessity? How did it become wide practice for an elder to commune the pastor before the whole congregation? What would Walther say of our communion practices today? Would he commune with the LCMS in 2018? Why or why not?

Note to leaders: Pray: Almighty and gracious God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to pray that You would send forth laborers into Your harvest. Of Your infinite mercy, give us true teachers and ministers of Your Word who truly fulfill Your command to preach nothing contrary to Your Holy Word. Grant that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted and strengthened by Your Holy Word, may do those things which are well pleasing to You and profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



February 2018

The Privilege of Pastoral Care

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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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*.

DOXOLOGY
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

The Privilege of Pastoral Care

References in Walther:

Articles 16, 30–38 [*Walther's Titles: Confession and Absolution; Pastoral Care*]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context.

Please guide the discussion to each article by asking, "How can I better care for the individual souls in

my congregation?" The topics can naturally lead to discussions that easily lose the main thrust of Walther's desire to be a curate of souls. One example is with Article 16 concerning confession. Instead of overemphasizing why it has been a lost art form in the Lutheran church today, evaluate ways by which we can uplift the benefits and implement simple ideas into the life of the church.

There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Each person in our parish is a soul that needs daily spiritual care. When the saints gather on Sunday morning, we have the honor of nourishing them with His Word and giving His forgiveness in Christ. Once the Benediction has been given, the saints leave the hallowed walls of the church and are thrown back into their daily vocations.

Every day, they are bombarded with temptations of the flesh, stress, insecurity, fear and brokenness. The privilege we have as pastors is to apply Law and Gospel throughout the week to each person as our time and energy allow. This is no easy task and is probably one of the biggest challenges in ministry. We ask ourselves, "Am I doing enough? How do I care for each soul while still being a faithful husband, father, grandfather, citizen and neighbor?" Walther helps answer these questions by directing our focus to the care

of each soul beyond the weekly Divine Service with these precious insights.

While caring for each soul, it is critical that the pastor is mindful of the fact that he, too, is daily bombarded with temptations of the flesh, stress, insecurities, fear and brokenness. The care of the pastor's soul is essential to any care he offers to the souls of others. While the pastor has the privilege of applying the Law and the Gospel, he also has the blessed privilege of having it apply to himself as well. What a blessed comfort it is that the pastor serves under the full absolution he proclaims on the sins of others. Thanks be to God that he, too, is wondrously nourished on the same grace of God in the body and blood of Christ that he serves to his flock.

ARTICLE 16: CONCERNING CONFESSION

Note to leaders: Private confession and absolution is one of the great challenges of the church. Make sure to emphasize the benefits that Walther highlights. Also make sure to provide time to allow the pastors to think through how they can find a father confessor for their own spiritual well-being.

1. The Augsburg Confession clearly testifies that private confession and absolution should be retained in the churches (Article XI). What are some factors today that hinder the implementation of this practice?
2. What are the benefits of private confession that Luther highlights after Karlstadt attempted to abolish the practice (p. 185)?

3. Why is it important that private confession be done in Christian freedom and not be forced upon the people (p. 188)?
4. Where is an appropriate place to have private confession? What other sensitivities do we need to exhibit when hearing confession (pp. 188–189)?
5. Why is it important to avoid asking questions of the penitents that attempt to examine secret sins? Consider Luther's Small Catechism: "...but before the pastor we should only confess those sins which we know and feel in our hearts" (Comment 4, pp. 189–191).
6. According to Walther, why is it important that our absolution always be unconditional (p. 194)?
7. Discuss the importance of keeping the confessional seal (pp. 194–196).
8. What are the benefits of the preacher going to confession before the Holy Supper? What are things that make this difficult?

ARTICLE 30: INDIVIDUAL PASTORAL CARE

"A pastor may not imagine that he does his ministry justice by public preaching alone. Individual pastoral care and the home visits that become necessary of it are also an obligation which he may not shirk if he wishes to be regarded as a faithful steward" (p. 319).

Note to leaders: Walther shows a deep desire to care for the lost sheep. Make sure to keep the discussion centered on trusting the Holy Spirit to bring people back to faith, while encouraging everyone to ask for God's guidance on how to engage and serve their community.

1. Why does Walther advocate for individual pastoral care and home visits (p. 319)?
2. Read Eph. 4:11; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7–8; and Is. 52:8. How is our calling as shepherds described?
3. What are the current challenges we face concerning home visits? What are effective ways to visit people in today's social context?
4. What boundaries are we to put in place when scheduling visits (p. 322)?
5. Read Ezek. 34:11–16. Who are the individuals we should be seeking to engage for pastoral care? What are the difficulties in this work?

ARTICLE 31: THE PREACHER'S DUTY TO VISIT THE SICK AND DYING

Note to leaders: Pastoral care of the sick and dying is a major portion of our individual pastoral care. Take time to reflect over these next few articles to receive insights from brother pastors concerning the use of Scripture and "bedside manner." Specifically, I would ask, "When is the best time to visit someone in the hospital, being mindful of their need for privacy and to protect your own personal boundaries?"

1. What are the various ways you are typically informed of a member being ill? What frustrations do you experience as a result?
2. Read James 5:14–15. What are ways we can encourage our members to contact us when they are sick (p. 324)?
3. Why is it important to bring goodwill to the sick even if they do not desire a visit? Read 1 Thess. 5:14 and 2 Cor. 1:4.
4. What does Walther encourage pastors to do when a member has a contagious disease (p. 329)?

ARTICLE 32A–E: RULES FOR PASTORAL VISITS TO THE SICK (FIVE RULES WHEN VISITING THE SICK)

Note to leaders: Be sure to highlight Comment 2 and the four questions Walther encourages pastors to ask when entering the room.

1. Why is it important to begin pastoral care for the sick with a proclamation of Matt. 10:30 (p. 331)?
2. Evaluate the four questions Walther is encouraging us to ask when visiting the sick (Comment 2, p. 333).
3. What are the difficulties when evaluating what is the most necessary need in a pastoral visit (view of Scripture, grace of God, impatience, restlessness) (p. 335)?
4. How is a “spiritual conversation” distinct from a sermon? What are some common Scripture passages that you use when guiding a spiritual conversation (pp. 336–337)?
5. Walther encourages us to remind people of the reality of death while sick. How is this done lovingly and pastorally while giving people hope (p. 339)?

ARTICLE 33: COMMUNING THE SICK

Note to leaders: Share stories of people’s reactions to receiving the Lord’s Supper while in the hospital, senior community or home.

1. Walther gives a very basic format for bringing the body and blood of Christ to the sick (Confession and Absolution, consecration, distribution, collect, blessing and the Lord’s Prayer). What are the basic formats you have used? How does the pastor prepare himself prior to the visit (p. 341)?
2. What are the benefits of wearing a clerical collar while making a visit to the sick (p. 342)?

ARTICLE 34: PASTORAL VISITS TO THE DISTRESSED AND POSSESSED

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

Note to leaders: This section will be particularly difficult. There are varying views on who can be possessed by the devil, what is the way in which one becomes possessed, and the role of mental illness. Keep the discussion centered on the truth of God’s Word and the power of Christ and Him crucified. Reference the books *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare* and *Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare in America* by the Rev. Dr. Robert Bennett and *My First Exorcism: What the Devil Taught a Lutheran Pastor about Counter-cultural Spirituality* by the Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau.

1. Demonic affliction and possession is quite popular in pop culture. What are some dangerous presuppositions of our culture based on movies and books (“Paranormal Activity,” “The Exorcist,” “The Conjuring,” “Annabelle,” etc.)?
2. Read Ps. 91:11–12 and Luke 10:17–20. What promise of God should give comfort to the pastor who is about to visit someone afflicted by demons?
3. Walther indicates nine hallmarks of demon possession. Have any of you experienced these hallmarks in your pastoral care (p. 344)?
4. What are the weapons that a pastor is to use when battling someone possessed or afflicted by the devil (pp. 344–345)?
5. What other professionals should the pastor seek wisdom and assistance from when confronting a pastoral care situation of the demon possessed and/or afflicted (p. 346)?

ARTICLE 35: CARING FOR THE PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

Note to leaders: Reference the booklet “Theology for Mercy” by the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison. He encompasses Walther’s words from this article with this quote, “Love, care and concern for those in need (diakonic mercy/ love) are actions motivated by the Gospel, when faith (fides qua creditur/the faith by which we believe) apprehends the righteousness of Christ and His merits (Augsburg Confession IV, VI) unto eternal life. The Gospel thus laid hold of produces love. Love seeks and serves the neighbor” (“Theology for Mercy,” p. 4).

1. Read Gal. 2:9–10 and Acts 6:1–7. What does God desire for us in the church to do for the physical well-being of our congregation members?

2. What concerns does Walther present when the church allows secret societies and the government to take over mercy care of our members (pp. 348–349)?
3. Read Johann Gerhard’s seven functions or duties of a minister (Comment 2, p. 350). How much of an emphasis is placed on the care of the poor in the normal ministry routine?
4. What kinds of mercy ministries are available to the local congregation, and what ways can the church assure that we are serving the household of faith (Gal. 6:10)?

ARTICLE 36: PASTORAL CARE OF THE DYING

“If a preacher is called to a dying person, then, while he should certainly also remind him of his sins, yet above all point him to Christ” (p. 355).

Note to leaders: Make sure to highlight the challenge of proclaiming both Law and Gospel with a limited timetable when visiting the dying. Share different passages that seem to apply often in these contexts and encourage the pastors to memorize key passages when coming into an emergency.

1. Why is good Law and Gospel preaching important at all stages of life, not just when someone is on their death bed (p. 356)?
2. What is the only way a dying person can still be saved (p. 356)?
3. The four rules Walther provides place the pastor in a very close relationship with an inmate on death row. What are the challenges of visiting someone who needs this kind of pastoral care (remembering Matt. 25:36) (p. 357)?

ARTICLE 37: THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE PREACHER REGARDING BURIAL

Note to leaders: This article has many discussion points and will bring up many emotional stories of family members who were denied a funeral due to a suicide or a denial of the Christian faith. Keep the questions centered on the challenges of having an “honorable funeral” and on preaching the hope we have in Christ’s resurrection.

1. How is a funeral done in an honorable and decent way (p. 358)?
2. Discuss the traditions and customs that surround a funeral at your parish.
3. What constitutes an honorable funeral according to Walther (p. 359)?
4. What would constitute an honorable funeral today?
5. What pastoral care questions does a pastor need to ask when presented with many requests to conduct a funeral? What are the downfalls of granting every request? What opportunities come when presiding at a funeral of a non-member (p. 361)?
6. Walther warns preachers not to have a lightweight mind when preaching the Gospel at a funeral. In what ways can we have a lightweight mind when we preach at numerous funerals?

ARTICLE 38: THE PREACHER MAY NOT OFFICIATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE OTHER PARISHES

Note to leaders: We talk about *Synod* meaning “walking together.” Discuss how best to communicate when members begin visiting other parishes. This discussion is vital for the sake of showing Christian love for one another and the uplifting of the Body of Christ. Perhaps you can close this study with a prayer seeking unity in the Church of Christ:

Merciful God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit to unify under the cross of Christ, that Your Word may be faithfully preached and the Gospel received by sinners. Gather Your Holy Church as one body in service to You and in love toward others; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

1. What is the proper communication between the pastor and the church where the person holds membership? Why is it important that there is communication even if from a heterodox church (p. 365)?
2. When is it never appropriate to receive a member of another church (p. 366)? Reflect on any stories concerning a member trying to join another church without proper communication and/or after being excommunicated.
3. Walther reminds us that we are able to accept members from heterodox parishes when they desire absolution and are repentant. What church bodies would we consider heterodox today?



March 2018

God's Gift of Marriage

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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DOXOLOGY
The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

God's Gift of Marriage

References in Walther:

Articles 19–26 [Walther's title: Marriage and Divorce]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help

the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied). There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

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

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

At first blush, one might be tempted to see much of Walther's counsel on marriage as antiquated, as so much has changed in society to the detriment of marriage. Yet perhaps the loss of certain practices signals that we have lost appreciation for some aspects of marriage; if that is

true, then perhaps their review will help us appreciate what marriage is intended to be. Much remains relevant, and the following study is thus offered to sharpen the pastor's practical disposition with regard to his care in matters of marriage.

ARTICLE 19: THE PREACHER HAS A THREEFOLD OBLIGATION WITH RESPECT TO THE MARRIAGE OF CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

As Walther begins his discussion of marriage, he establishes the pastor's role.

1. What is the threefold obligation of the pastor with regard to marriage?
2. According to Walther, what is the one reason why a preacher becomes involved in marital issues (p. 236)? In contrast, what are popular perceptions of pastoral involvement in marital issues that he should avoid?
3. Going back to the threefold obligation, how does each of these relate to the one reason for the pastor's involvement?

To the leader: The reason for the pastor's involvement is the conscience. The pastor is about the care of souls. He is not a marriage counselor or an arbitrator, but he is a *Seelsorger* who correctly applies the Word of truth to individual souls. To put it another way, his goal is not to save the marriage, but to ensure that husband and wife stand

repentant and righteous before God (which may very well bring healing to the marriage).

Properly understood, the minister's threefold obligation is about maintaining a clean conscience. He will join in marriage "only those whose marital union does not conflict with any human (i.e., civil) or divine law," lest individuals suffer a bad conscience because their most intimate human relationship makes them guilty of violating the law. He will carry out the ceremony in a proper way, lest consciences are wounded by doubt about the legitimacy or sanctity of the marriage. Finally, he will "watch that the marital bond is not dissolved contrary to God," for the devastations of divorce often leave souls in a wasteland of guilt and shame, convinced that they are forsaken by God.

ARTICLE 20: A PREACHER MUST OBSERVE CIVIL MARRIAGE LAWS

This is a straightforward note that the preacher should know the laws of the state and “act in accord with them insofar as they do not oppose the Word of God” (238). For Walther, it was the “Test Oath” of Missouri (see 238, footnote 2); today, there looms the possibility that pastors might soon be legally required to perform marriages for same-sex couples. Thus, we come to a rather pragmatic question for discussion:

1. If the state should mandate that all pastors and congregations conduct same-sex marriages, are you and your congregation prepared? Do you have plans and policies in place?

2. Is there a point when pastors and congregations may refuse to conduct and host *any* wedding, offering only the blessing of a civil marriage performed by the state?

To the leader: The real possibility of such a mandate makes it imperative to prepare now. As pressure from state and society grows on the church, decisions and practices will vary as Christians seek to honor God in a hostile world. Where Scripture is not clear, Christians should act in a way that preserves a good conscience, confident of God’s favor in Christ, regardless of the suffering imposed by the world.

ARTICLE 21: DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP THAT FORBID MARRIAGE

Article 21 may seem like a quaint relic for curing insomnia in our present day. However, there is some helpful stuff to be mined here. While society’s greatest concern with incestuous relationships today appears to be the genetic well-being of offspring, Article 21 gives other reasons for maintaining degrees of separation between husband and wife.

1. What are the reasons for maintaining these degrees of separation (241–246 *passim*), and how might they help people better understand marriage today?

To the leader: Reasons include:

- A recognition of natural law (241): The fact that all “civilized peoples” object to incestuous marriage is a testimony that there is a God whose law is for all, a law recognized by many nations. We should regard the current deconstruction of marriage not only as an attack on marriage, but upon God’s order and law. Marriage is the estate given by God as the foundation of society before the fall into sin. Where it is rejected, it will lead to more than mere widespread immorality: It will place society on a self-destructive trajectory, one that will also oppose the Lord and His Church.
 - A recognition that marital love is different from friendship (241): Though Crusius (quoted by Walther) is writing to a different point, marriage has been reduced in our present time, in the words of one federal judge, to “the name that society gives to the relationship that matters most between two adults.”¹ When the marital bond, sealed and strengthened by sexual union, is confused with the *philia* love of friendship, the uniqueness of each is devalued. Rather than distinct relationships, they are seen as the same thing, differing only in intensity. In that case, the meaning of both friendship and marriage is lost.
 - The common good of society (242), because marriage unites different families. This is a salient point in our romantic, individualized age where marriage is thought to be only about two people. In marriage, *a couple pledges their fidelity to one another for the sake of their children, their respective families, their congregation and the community. They do not just maintain their marriage for personal happiness, but for the common good.* This service to the common good is included in the phrase, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (243).
 - The preservation of order and authority (242, 246): Because God has established order and authority in the family, the institution of marriage ought not conflict with this order. Rather, one’s conduct in marriage and family should honor God’s ordering for both.
2. Because of the practice of a widower marrying his deceased wife’s sister, Walther counsels pastors that “it is very important for a preacher to give his congregation in good time thorough instruction about the degrees of relationship that forbid marriage” (249). Today, instruction about divorce is similarly necessary. Why might pastors be afraid to address the topic, and how might one approach it constructively?

¹ *Perry v. Brown*, 671 F.3d 1052, February 7, 2011, 36. Quoted in Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 65.

To the leader: Pastors are tempted to avoid this topic because so many parishioners have divorced and remarried, and the prospect of conflict is daunting. It is wisest for a pastor to remember that he is not there as an adjudicator, but as a curate of souls. Thus, for example, he might

preface his remarks by acknowledging that this is a delicate topic because the pain and failure of divorce leads to a bad conscience (which is why it is a touchy subject), and that he desires to speak of it in order to restore troubled consciences to the confidence of God's favor in Christ.

ARTICLE 22: ENGAGEMENT AND SPECIAL CASES RELATED TO MARRIAGE

As romanticism has gained its hold on the culture, engagement is left to the couple alone, and the requirement of parental consent is now regarded as a peculiar custom of a bygone era. The meaning of engagement has been weakened. Where Walther calls it “the efficient cause of marriage” (261), it is now more of a declaration of intent to marry.

1. How might discussing parental consent help instruct a couple in the solemn responsibilities of marriage, and about honoring parents/in-laws after the wedding?

To the leader: The requirement of parental consent demonstrated that marriage was related to the greater family, not just the man and woman “in love” with each other. Premarital pastoral care should still include a discussion of parents' attitudes toward the upcoming

marriage, as well as the relationship of the couple to parents and in-laws following the wedding. Again, the pastor's ultimate concern is not harmony, but the conscience of husband and wife. Ongoing tension and trouble within the greater family is fertile ground for sin, guilt and shame.

2. Discuss: A couple requests that you perform their wedding, but one or both sets of parents oppose the union. How do you address the matter pastorally?

To the leader: Answers will vary; but again, the pastor will seek to apply the Word to each party, seeking reconciliation and consciences that are right with God. The parents' reasons may be legitimate, although Walther also concedes that parents may object unreasonably (270).

ARTICLE 23: THE BANNS FOR THE ENGAGED

Banns have all but disappeared from church practice, and Walther notes that they are not a divine requirement. However, the practice yields some helpful teaching about marriage. What were the purposes of the banns?

To the leader: Although obviously an opportunity to register objections, the banns allowed a congregation

to rejoice in the couple's chastity and fortitude as they resisted premarital sexual activity. Thus, banns served as a reinforcement of the sanctity of marriage for all. Banns also gave the congregation an opportunity to pray for the couple, reinforcing that the couple was part of a greater community.

ARTICLE 24: THE WEDDING OF YOUNG COUPLES

Article 24 provides fodder for a discussion of the place of weddings among other church rites and ceremonies.

1. For instance, it is not of absolute necessity that a marriage be blessed in the church (in order to be a marriage), yet such a blessing is necessary for Christians (276). Why?
2. Likewise, what is the reason for the subordination of the wedding date to the liturgical calendar (277), or

the omission of honorific titles during ecclesiastical acts (279)?

To the leader: Everything created by God is sanctified by His Word and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4–5). The blessing of a civil wedding both acknowledges that it is God's gift and assures the couple that their union has God's blessing. The blessing also properly orders the marriage in God's design, for it was not originally intended to be an institution apart from His Church. Likewise, the subordination

of wedding dates to the liturgical calendar, though not a divine command, teaches that marriage is a gift for this life, subordinate to Christ and His grace. The omission of honorifics likewise teaches that all are equal before

God, no matter their station here. In our present age, the enforcement of such practices may well not be a hill on which to die, but recalling them helps illustrate the relationship of marriage to redemption in God's order.

ARTICLE 25: DIVORCE ON ACCOUNT OF ADULTERY

Article 25 is surprisingly brief, with Walther reserving objections and complications for Article 26.

1. Even when one party is clearly guilty of adultery, how is the pastor supposed to present himself to both (280)?
2. Should a pastor ever approve of divorce? Rather than approval, what words might he use when speaking of a divorce that follows the sin of adultery?

To the leader: Seidel advises that the pastor never “play the judge,” for then he has aligned himself with one party against the other. He is a pastor, and his goal is to care for the souls of both the sinner and the one sinned against. A pastor should not express approval of divorce — in doing so, not only does he take on the role of judge, but he is perceived as speaking in the stead of Christ. Rather, he acknowledges that divorce happens and seeks to apply God's Word so as to reconcile consciences to God.

ARTICLE 26: DIVORCE ON ACCOUNT OF MALICIOUS DESERTION

In contrast to Walther's (and Luther's) time, the state no longer has an interest in investigating accusations of adultery or malicious desertion. Too often, the roles of judge, lawyer and therapist are all expected of (applied to) the pastor, with the expectation that he can divine the perfect ruling for a given situation.

Within Walther's comments, it is clear that situations are often murky. Even Luther makes exceptions, once allowing that an adulterer may remarry if he cannot remain continent (45:33); and while Luther permits divorce because of violence (291), Gerhard seems to disagree (293). What comments in Article 26 provide helpful counsel for pastors who are addressing the messiness of divorce? For example, what is the distinction made in Comment 1 (283) that may be helpful? What is the reason for the wife separating if her faith is in danger (291)? What distinction does Baier make (296), and is this helpful for pastoral care? What is König's reason for dissolving an incestuous marriage entered by ignorance (299)? What final counsel does Luther offer in Comment 16 (300)?

To the leader: As Walther and his cited experts seek to navigate difficult waters, it is clear that they seek both to honor the estate of marriage and to care for the sinners within it. The distinction between *getting* a divorce and *suffering* a divorce (283) may be helpful in caring for a troubled soul, and the distinction between tolerance and dispensation (296) may be helpful for a pastor's reasoning. Some practices are better than others, and some evils are less evil. The pastor will do his best to uphold the institution of marriage for the sake of all, even as he cares for the consciences of individuals in need (290). The benefit of consultation with other pastors (300) cannot be emphasized enough.



April 2018

Loving Enough to Discipline

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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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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*.

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Loving Enough to Discipline

References in Walther:

Articles 39–43 [*Church Discipline, Brotherly Admonition, Why Public Church Repentance Is Necessary, Who Can and Cannot Be Excommunicated, and Readmitting People Who Have Been Excommunicated*]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther’s

intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied). There is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. You may wish to indicate in advance which of these questions will be prioritized for your discussion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Church discipline probably doesn’t strike us as an exciting topic in our day, but Walther exhibits here a true love for the souls entrusted to a pastor’s care. Such love has always been difficult — a cross that comes with the vocation of pastor and baptized believer — but it is love devoted to the well-being of the soul in peril and the health of all the flock.

Walther notes that church discipline is not a mark of the church. It is enough for the church’s unity to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments according to our Lord’s Word. But church discipline is helpful to the

well-being of a congregation, and it is of great benefit. As with most things, there are ditches on both sides of the road that call for intentional care and wisdom. Being too eager to discipline can be destructive of both the soul in peril and the congregation, yet failing to discipline also harms both the soul in peril and the congregation.

May the Lord bless us with wisdom and true love for our neighbor as we study church discipline and serve the flock purchased with the blood of Christ Jesus.

ARTICLE 39: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

“The preacher has the duty not only to dispense the means of grace to his congregation as a teacher but also, as watchman, bishop, shepherd, overseer, etc. of the congregation, to see to it that the Word of God is obeyed in everything and thus that the Christian discipline commanded in God’s Word is exercised with it” (p. 373).

Walther offers passages from six New Testament books to support his thesis, listing first Matt. 18:15–17. Read Matt. 17:22–18:35. Note the context of our Lord’s teaching here to understand our Lord’s intent in giving us church discipline. In Matt. 17:22–23, Jesus gives His second Passion prediction. He teaches that He does not need to pay the temple tax, but does anyway so as not to offend. Then the disciples ask who is the greatest in Christ’s reign; at every Passion prediction, there are strange reactions like this one from Jesus’ followers. Our Lord’s answer is to place a child before them as the greatest. We’re all to become little

children. A child is greatest because a child is needy. He can only receive. Jesus’ teaching about greatness continues with other needy ones: the one lost sheep, the brother who sins “against” you and the brother who repents. He concludes this section with the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant as a clear warning that the goal is always the restoration of sinners.

Jesus mentions “little ones” three times in Matthew 18. “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [be scandalized], it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (vv. 5–6). “See that you do not despise one of these little ones” (v. 10). “So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (v. 14). It is evident that the goal in discipline is never the destruction of a little one, but

preventing scandalizing, providing true care and seeking to keep little ones from perishing.

If the greatest is the neediest, that is, the child, the lost sheep and the one who has sinned against you, then what does this tell us about the work of seeking after the lost sheep and the trapped sinner?

Walther warns about both overzealous introduction of discipline and indifference toward church discipline.

Comment 1: The Duty of the Preacher with Regard to Introducing Church Discipline

In his first comment, Walther urges caution.

1. Why is fully implemented church discipline not a necessary mark of the true Church? What are the marks of the Church (374)?
2. Read the Luther quote in the middle of Page 374. What ban does he, Jonas, Bugenhagen and Melancthon use? How would this apply today?
3. Read Luther's letter to the Hessian theologians on Pages 374–375. What is Luther's warning? What is Luther's advice on how to move forward?
4. Read the first full paragraph on Page 375. What is the highest law? What is essential for a congregation? What dangers are there in compelling congregations into church discipline? How does a pastor prepare a congregation for the proper exercise of church

discipline? When would it be wisest to prepare a congregation?

To the leader: Just as we prepare for a fire or storm when there isn't a fire or storm, the wisest time to prepare a congregation is when there isn't a major case before the congregation so that the teaching can be clear and objective.

Comment 2: The Necessity of Church Discipline

In his second comment, Walther argues that church discipline is not an indifferent matter.

1. Read the quotes from both the Apology of the Augsburg Confession and the Smalcald Articles in the middle of Page 376. What do our Confessions say that we will do? What are the challenges today in using the "minor, that is, the true Christian ban"?
2. Luther makes a helpful distinction between *life* and *doctrine* (that is, teaching). Why is the ban for sins of doctrine of such importance to Luther? What do we lose if we lose the ban over doctrine (376–377)?
3. Dannhauer offers an analogy between failing to maintain a home and failing to practice church discipline (378). Does this seem like a rather modern observation? What are the dangers of both extremes: overzealously implementing discipline or doing nothing? How has your congregation or another congregation you know of benefited from or been handicapped by discipline or the lack of it?

ARTICLE 40: BROTHERLY ADMONITION

"The necessary foundation for true Christian church discipline is for the order of brotherly admonition prescribed by Christ in Matt. 18:15–17 not to be violated in any way, neither by the individual members of the congregation nor the congregation as a whole nor even by the preacher himself" (379).

Comment 1

Walther ends the first comment on brotherly admonition with wise advice: "If a preacher wants to introduce Christian church discipline in his congregation in accordance with the prescription of Christ, then he must begin by introducing Christian, brotherly admonition" (381). What are some ways to introduce brotherly admonition in a congregation?

1. Luther urges each Christian to admonish and warn his neighbor trapped in sin (379). What's the benefit of such warning? Why do we avoid warning our neighbor according to Luther (379)? Is Luther correct?
2. Luther's teaching on the Eighth Commandment from the Large Catechism is quoted on Page 380. What are you to do if your brother sins? What are you to do if another tells you of someone else's sin? What are you called to do if the brother will not repent?

Comment 2: The Preacher Cannot Excommunicate Unilaterally

1. In 1 Cor. 5:1–2, 13, St. Paul addresses the congregation at Corinth to excommunicate the man who has his father's

wife. Walther observes several points here: To whom does Paul write about the matter? Does Paul directly excommunicate the man? Who is to excommunicate the man? Why is he to be delivered to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5–6)?

2. “It brings disgrace upon the preacher if he gives an open ear to gossip” (381). Comment on Walther’s observation.
3. What is the role of the congregation and the role of the pastor in excommunicating (384)?

Comment 3: Manifest Sins Should Not Necessarily Be Admonished Privately First

1. While it is true that sins manifest to everyone may be rebuked publicly, as did St. Paul in correcting Peter (Gal. 2:13–14), and there may be unusual cases in which it is necessary to go directly to public admonition, Walther still urges caution: “As always, so here, too, love is nevertheless the highest law. If, therefore, love for a person who has fallen demands first admonishing him in private despite the fact that his case is public, then immediately making use of the right to rebuke publicly the one who has fallen publicly would be a serious injustice” (385). How might a public admonition push one caught in sin into greater trouble? How might a public admonition help an individual or a congregation?

2. Discuss Hartmann’s counsel and how it applies in our contemporary congregations (the last quote under Comment 3).

Comment 4: The Correct Manner for Brotherly Admonition

1. Walther presents Hartmann’s 18 rules for brotherly admonition. Do these seem useful and down-to-earth for our day? Why or why not?
2. Numbers 8–12, 15, 17 and 18 demonstrate that there is an art to Christian brotherly admonition. What have you learned through your experience that applies to these rules? With whom could you consult to get insight on how best to handle a particular admonition? Would you be willing to help counsel brother pastors or members?
3. Does rule 13 give us the freedom to report, for example, child abuse to law enforcement without first giving brotherly admonition?
4. In Article 1, the character of the pastor is essential; here in brotherly admonition the character of the admonition is also vital. What could be added or subtracted from Dannhauer’s list (387–388)?

ARTICLE 41: WHY PUBLIC CHURCH REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY

“Those who, after a public, serious fall into sin or error, appear repentant — either immediately or even after experiencing the final admonition by the congregation — should not be excommunicated. However, they should remove the offense they have given as much as possible through a public apology or so-called church repentance and thus reconcile themselves with the congregation which they have offended (Matthew 18:15; 5:23–24; Luke 17:3–4)” (389).

Comment 1: Public Church Repentance Is Not a Punishment

First, it’s important to note carefully that this is about *public* repentance for public sins, not private or unknown sins.

Second, the goal of public repentance is to restore “the relationship of trust with his brothers which was disturbed by the fall into sin” and to avoid giving the impression that “the members can live in sins and disgraces without repentance but still remain members” (389–390). As St. Paul teaches in 1 Tim. 5:20, “As for those who persist in

sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”

Walther lists three parts of Public Church Repentance: 1) a public confession of sins; 2) an incidental public punishment of sins (which appears to mean the shame of having to confess publicly); and 3) a public apology to the offended church.

Reflection:

I can think of only three cases of public apology that I either directly or indirectly observed. In all three cases, the apology was voluntary and was extremely helpful to the congregation and — somewhat surprisingly — to the penitent and the penitent’s family. One example that Dr. Ken Korby told was of a young woman who was pregnant while not married. Before the congregation knew of her pregnancy, she had privately confessed and received absolution from Dr. Korby. He then suggested that he publicly announce that she was forgiven of all her sins and then tell the congregation the good news that a baby was on the way.

She agreed. He did so, and the congregation welcomed her with open arms and rallied behind her and her mother.

Do you know of any cases of public repentance? How do current social customs complicate or facilitate the sensitive implementation of public repentance?

Comment 2: From Whom Public Church Repentance Should Be Required

1. Walther advises that not all public sins, but only some, should require public confession. Which sins are these? What's the goal of the public repentance (391–392)?
2. He gives particular attention “to engaged couples who have lived with each other in a marital fashion.” It is important to note that engagement then was something quite different than it is now. (See 255–259 and 260–263.) Note the distinction Gerhard makes between cohabitation of “betrothed couples” and fornication. How does that inform our care of cohabiting couples to restore their relationship with the Lord, the Church and each other? Why can we not just ignore cohabitation? (See Ezek. 3:18–20.)

Comment 3: Those Who Apologize Publicly Should Not Be Suspended from Communion

Our concern is for the conscience of the penitent and so those who repent should be absolved and received immediately as Nathan did with David and Paul urged the Corinthians. Why could a delay of absolution and reception be of great danger to the penitent?

ARTICLE 42: WHO CAN AND CANNOT BE EXCOMMUNICATED

See the list of six qualifications for excommunication and the nine reasons why someone may not be excommunicated.

To the leader: It might be helpful to carefully read aloud the six qualifications for excommunication and then the nine reasons for not excommunicating and reflect on these. At first, it might seem obvious that one shouldn't excommunicate a dead person, but such errors have arisen in the church's history. Such intentionality and clarity can be helpful as a reference during a time of crisis.

Comment 4: No Church Repentance for Sins Committed Elsewhere

In our day, when many things become public through social media, this becomes complicated. But Walther is opposed to requiring a public apology in a different community from where the public sin occurred. He does quote Benedict Carpzov regarding an offense that was committed elsewhere but has become known: “Then my advice would be for the people only to be assured publicly from the pulpit, without a public apology by the guilty person, that he has repented and to be warned that they may not take offense” (394). What would be the dangers and benefits of such public assurance in cases when the sin is known?

Comment 5: The Form of Public Apology

Walther advises that three things determine the form of the apology: 1) the severity of the offense; 2) the character of the one who has fallen; and 3) the level of knowledge of the congregation. Discuss how these three principles could inform responsible pastoral practice today.

He also urges caution against two possible errors: First, “that those who have fallen do not regard so-called church repentance as something that replaces true repentance of the heart, even though the former should only be external evidence of the presence of the latter and without it is an empty illusion. [Second] Everything that could give the idea that church repentance is a *punishment that expiates* guilt should be all the more carefully separated from it to the extent possible” (397).

Comment 1: Who Is Subject to Church Discipline

1. Every brother — the lowest as well as the highest.
2. A brother who is insane.
3. A brother who is a member of the visible church.
4. A brother who is alive.
5. A brother who is an impenitent sinner.

Comment 2: Which Sins Are Subject to Church Discipline

Sins either *against you* or *in front of you* — that is, sins that are evident with public proof. Walther quotes Dannhauer with a list of such sins.

Comment 3: Procedure if Excommunication Is Contested

1. If there is one member blocking an excommunication, without reason or merely to object to God's Law, he is to be corrected and perhaps excommunicated. But under no circumstances is an excommunication to be carried out without the unanimous agreement of the congregation.

One can imagine quite a heated meeting if one member objects without reason or is simply rejecting the clear Word of the Lord. What attitude would the pastor and congregation want to have in meeting with this objector?

2. Matters of Excommunication Should Not Be Handled According to Moral Conviction

If some members cannot be persuaded that the sinner deserves excommunication by God's Word, then this proves that excommunication cannot occur.

How would you advise a brother pastor if such a thing occurs at his congregation?

Comment 4: Procedure in Unclear Church Discipline Cases

Walther advises consulting with “neighboring or otherwise experienced ministers of the Church.” Pastors today tend to want to go it alone, but we need each other and the wisdom of our brothers. Who would you recommend consulting? How can you encourage brother pastors to ask your advice?

Comment 5: Excommunication Is to Be Imposed by the Entire Congregation

Johann Gerhard writes, “The most serious actions in the church may not be undertaken without the consent of the entire ecclesiastical body But what can be more serious and what pertains more to the Body of the church than to cut off a member from the Body” (410)?

Comment 6: Announcement of Excommunication

Even the announcement of excommunication that Walther cites prays, “May the almighty, merciful God bring him (or her) to recognition of his (or her) sin, create true contrition in him (or her) and prompt the improvement of [his or her] life” (412).

To the leader: It would be helpful at this point to read and consider “Excommunication from the Holy Christian Church” from Page 35 of the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*.

Comment 7: Conduct Toward One Who Has Been Excommunicated

Walther quotes Balduin: “Yet one should not lay aside goodwill toward them, but have sympathy with their suffering, admonish and (as circumstances dictate) comfort them, and pray for their conversion and therefore show in everything that we desire for them to be saved” (412).

How might you suggest that we “show in everything that we desire for them to be saved”?

Comment 8: Precise Minutes Should Be Taken of Excommunication Proceedings

This is so that the congregation can prove to other congregations that they ought to respect the excommunication, which again, is so that an unrepentant sinner cannot manipulate the system and avoid repenting.

ARTICLE 43: READMITTING PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN EXCOMMUNICATED

If a person who has been excommunicated asks the preacher for absolution and *reinstatement* into the congregation, then the preacher should notify the latter of this request. If the congregation then unanimously declares that it is satisfied and fully conciliated by the repentant confession and conduct of the one returning, then the preacher is to carry out the resulting reinstatement through a *public* notification of the return and reconciliation which have occurred,

or through absolution in the public worship gathering and by communing the one who had been excommunicated (2 Cor. 2:6–11).

Comment 1

Martin Chemnitz proves, as follows from 2 Cor. 2:6–11, that this all used to be done this way in the apostolic congregations.

1. Read 2 Cor. 2:6–11.
Read also the second full paragraph on Page 415.
2. How, do you imagine, would that vote have gone? How has it gone for you when someone you have admonished has repented?

Comment 2: Formula for Readmitting Penitent Excommunicated Persons

Walther gives here the Saxon General Articles reinstatement. Notice the encouragement to the whole congregation to pray for the penitent.

To the leader: It would be helpful at this point to read and consider “Restoration to the Holy Christian Church” from Page 37 of the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*.

Comment 3: Penitent Excommunicated Persons Are Not to Be Punished

Comment 4: Procedures with Excommunicated Persons

Look especially at the citation from earlier in Walther’s *Pastoral Theology* that gives practical advice on how to care for an excommunicated person who is severely ill. See the second paragraph on Page 229.

IN CONCLUSION

Reflect together on how this text still applies in the exercise of pastoral care and church discipline — in terms of the attitude, approach, motivation and methodology by which pastors approach congregants and Christians approach one another:

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1–2).



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).

LEADER'S GUIDE

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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*]

To the circuit visitor or discussion leader: Please impress on the pastors the necessity of reviewing the introduction to the book (vii–ix) in advance. Your discussion will be more fruitful if the group has a better grasp of the original setting of the book, Dr. Walther's intent and methodology, and how his extensive quotations illustrated how earlier generations applied Lutheran doctrine in their contemporary context. Help the pastors see the link between doctrine and practice (i.e., doctrine implies pastoral practice and practice is doctrine pastorally applied).

Congregational administration is a practical and perpetual topic of discussion for pastors, which often provides ample opportunities to collaborate and, at times, to commiserate. Likewise, discussions on the nature of the call and decisions to accept a new one, stay where one is or resign from a call due to various circumstances are also deeply important and emotionally taxing for pastors. The mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren regarding these vital matters is valuable and salutary. However, there is likely more material in this study than can be reasonably covered in the average circuit meeting. Thus, to maximize your study with the brothers, prioritize your questions and inform them in advance of those questions you will be focusing on for your discussion.

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*¹ to that of primarily a leader or CEO. However, since Walther calls for an additional 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.)

THE PASTORAL OFFICE AND AUXILIARY OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

To the leader:

*Depending on the makeup of the circuit brothers, there may be various theological opinions on the questions regarding the Office of the Ministry and auxiliary offices like the office of overseer. It will likely be helpful for you to be familiar with the 1981 CTCR document *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*. Another helpful article that addresses potential questions about the ordination of deacons in Acts 6 is “The Twelve and the Seven in Acts 6 and the Needy” by Norman Nagel (Concordia Journal 31, no. 2 [April 2005]: 113–126), which is available at deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/DownloadTrackPreview/csl-public.1572099114.01572099121.1572586415.pdf.*

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

¹ *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

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

To the leader: See Article 45: Congregational Assemblies, Article 46: Reception of New Members into the Congregation and Article 47: The Congregational Constitution (pp.432–450), as well as Article 49: The Preacher's Duty to Cultivate Unity (pp. 461–473).

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.

To the leader: For this section, you may want to ask each pastor to bring a copy of his congregation's constitution and bylaws to add to this discussion. Again, there will likely be more material and questions than can be covered.

Therefore, you may want to highlight ahead of time what questions and corresponding readings you want the brothers to be sure to address.

“[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

To the leader: This section may be rather timely for some circuits, as at any time there may be a number of brothers considering another call or dealing with such difficult and unruly members that he is considering resigning his call. If you choose to cover this part of the study, be sure to note that ahead of time so that brothers can adequately prepare both mentally and emotionally for these questions.

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).

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?

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).

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?

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: 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.