

"Martin Luther, Pastor"

Dr. Stephen Chambers, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton AB

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

As students begin to think about pastoral ministry and also, more specifically, about *themselves* as pastors, questions arise about their own suitability and "fit." The need for mentors is great. Similarly, pastors already serving in the ministry are often disconnected from each another, for geographical or other reasons. They too crave mentors. Thus, pastors and seminary students alike need to know that they have historical as well as contemporary peers from whom they can draw encouragement, inspiration, and practical help. Martin Luther is an outstanding exemplar of the pastoral calling and life.

OBJECTIVES

This paper's first goal is to show that Luther truly was a pastor, in spite of his call to be a *teacher* in the Church and despite the somewhat unusual process by which he came to hold that position. Its second goal is to show that Luther's preaching, reforms of worship, and care for individuals were clear manifestations of his profoundly pastoral understanding of the pastoral office. Its third goal is to draw some conclusions for ministry today from Luther's conduct in the above-listed areas.

METHODOLOGY

The paper begins by discussing the means by which Luther came to be a teacher in the church, demonstrating that this process was not as irregular in his day as we might suppose. It also notes the pastoral manner in which Luther carried out all of the functions of the ministry which were entrusted to him, stemming from his profoundly pastoral theology, centred on the Gospel.

In its central and longest section, the paper discusses Luther's pastoral approach to three central functions of ministry: preaching, worship, and the care of individuals.

The final section compares this survey of Luther's ministry with a recent document from Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) that outlines a pastor's fundamental habits and responsibilities, and concludes that the Reformer has much to offer by way of example and inspiration to those who hold, or aspire to, the pastoral office today.

DISCUSSION OR RESULTS / OUTLOOK

The process by which Luther entered the ministry differs from the typical process in Lutheran Church-Canada today. Be that as it may, Luther certainly did "teach the gospel and administer the sacraments" (AC V), and in a way that highlighted God's grace for struggling individuals. Each facet of his ministry bore this out.

As a preacher, Luther focused on bringing Christ to His people, and he did so in a popular and expository manner that conveyed the Gospel's power to diverse audiences. His reforms of the church's liturgy and rites, including both their content and the manner in which he made them, further expressed his passionate concern for the well-being of all of Christ's sheep. In his dealings with his family, and with those who sought his counsel from near and far, he showed by word and deed that love and compassion that, again, exemplifies Christ's own care for his flock.

In all of these ways, Luther was faithful to the charge to "feed Christ's sheep" that underlies the pastoral commission. His consistent desire to create and sustain faith in those he served provides a wonderful model for ministry today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (simplified)

- Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*. Transl. James A. Schaaf. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985.
_____. *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532*. Transl. James A. Schaaf. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985.
_____. *Martin Luther: the Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*. Transl. James A. Schaaf. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
Grimm, Harold. *Martin Luther as a Preacher*. Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1929.
Luther, Martin. Various volumes in the American Edition of his works, incl. esp. vols 34-38 ("Word and Sacrament"), 53 ("Liturgy and Hymns"), 54 ("Table Talk").
Meuser, Fred W. *Luther the Preacher*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983.
Oberman, Heiko. "The Preaching of the Word of God in the Reformation." *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 25 (1960), 16.
Tappert, Theodore. *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*. Louisville: WJK, 1955 (repr. 2006).