



Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The months of October and November present us with important observances. In October we recall our heritage in the **Reformation**. In November we remember many other blessings in the celebration of **Thanksgiving**. At Reformation time we recall with joy the blessing God granted the Church through the work of Dr. Martin Luther. The foundation of the Reformation principles rests solidly on the beautiful truths of Ephesians 2:8-10. We are saved...by **grace**...through **faith**, as known through **Scripture**. We are able to function as Christians in the blessed land in which we live at this time in God's history. These observances highlight two freedoms. First, we are free in Christ to serve Him and, secondly,

to do so in joyous thanksgiving! These celebrations provide an appropriate transition to the continuing series on calling a pastor. We praise God for preachers of the Gospel and thank Him for the freedom to express Christ.

In the last issue, the focus on calling a pastor ended with discussion of call list preparation. Now we turn to actually **EXTENDING THE CALL** to a pastor on the list. The call list is shared with the congregation by the call committee. The call committee, with the invaluable assistance of the Circuit Counselor, will spend significant time in **studying the information** on each of the pastors and will gather additional information. Additional information can be gleaned from questionnaires developed by the calling congregation. These can be mailed to the candidates on the list offering them the opportunity to respond. Another commonly used method is the telephone interview. Representatives of the committee or the entire committee can conduct the telephone interview. Through these and other methods, the goal is to find the candidate(s) that best match the congregation's desired pastoral experiences, gifts and abilities. The call committee will **keep the congregation informed** of the status of the process. This is a very critical aspect. The congregation needs to be regularly informed to feel a part of the process. Thus they can arrive at the call meeting informed and ready to discuss and vote.

When all the information has been gathered and the call committee is ready, a **call meeting** of the congregation is scheduled. Ordinarily the Circuit Counselor chairs the portion of the call meeting in which the call is extended. The work of the call committee is shared and the congregation has the opportunity to discuss the candidates. Before the voting begins, time is spent together in prayer. The call process is a deeply spiritual experience within the congregation. God is at work throughout this

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process, guiding and leading the congregation toward that man He has in mind as pastor. The Voter's Assembly proceeds, confident that God has heard and is responding to their prayer.

The voting process will continue until a candidate receives a **majority vote**. The voters will then move to make it a **unanimous vote** for the call of the pastor. This is a time for churchmanship of the highest degree among the voters. It is very important that the pastor being called be assured of the unanimity of the congregation in calling him. It is certainly understood by any pastor called that in earlier votes, members may have voted for other pastoral candidates.

But after the will of the majority has been made known, a unanimous vote is very affirming to the candidate. This enables thorough consideration of the call and if the call is accepted, an excellent foundation upon which to begin ministry.

The call documents and additional information are sent as soon as possible to the pastor. It is also a fine evidence of churchmanship for the calling congregation to **send a letter** to the pastor-elect's congregation, informing them that the call has been issued and inviting them to join together in prayer that God's will be done. Thus, even as anticipation toward the call meeting had been building, now after the call meeting, anticipation builds as the congregation awaits the decision of the pastor-elect. His decision making process generally includes a congregation visit. Generally, the pastor-elect reaches a decision within a month. His decision will suggest the next step for the congregation.

In all our congregational life, may God continue to grant all of us, congregations blessed with a pastor as well as vacant congregations awaiting acceptance of a call, the gift of those who preach Christ and the truth that makes us free, John 8:36. We have reason to celebrate and anticipate a continuing "Reformation Thanksgiving" now and for eternity.

In Him with you,
C. William Hoesman