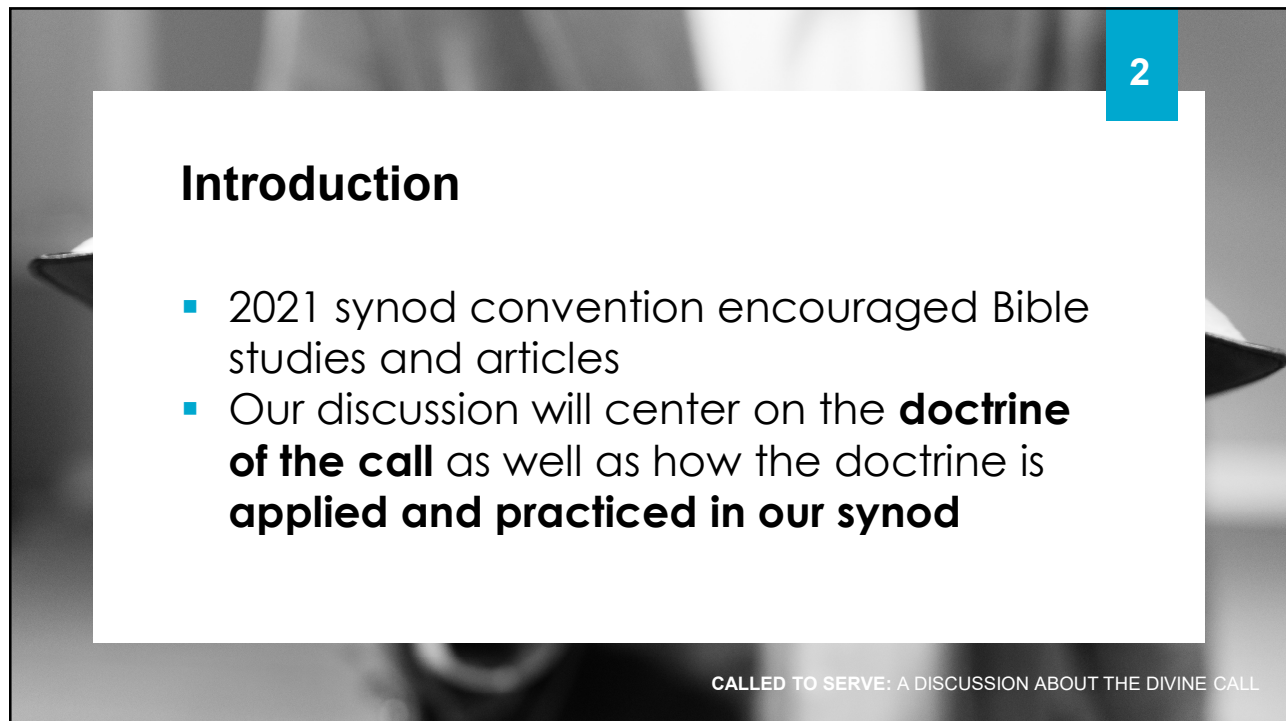




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## Questions for today

- I. What is the public ministry of the gospel?
- II. How does someone become a public minister?
- III. How does the WELS call process work?
- IV. How does someone decide whether to accept or decline a call?
- V. What are things to remember when serving in a call?
- VI. What are the blessings for the called worker and for those who are served?

CALLED TO SERVE: A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL

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There is a clear distinction between the  
**“priesthood of all believers”**  
(sometimes called the “universal priesthood” or  
“personal ministry”) and the  
**“public ministry of the gospel.”**

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## What is the priesthood of all believers?

### Definition:

- All believers have equal access to God through Christ.
- All believers have the privilege of serving the Savior with their lives, including **“declaring the praises of the one who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)**
- All believers have been tasked by Christ to use the means of grace (the gospel in Word and sacrament) to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

**CALLED TO SERVE:** A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL

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## I. What is the public ministry?

### Definition:

Administering the means of grace (the gospel in Word and sacrament) on behalf of and in the name of Christ and of other Christians in a public, representative way.

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- The **public** ministry of the gospel
  - **God himself** has established the public ministry of the gospel: ***“It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)***

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- The **public** ministry of the gospel
  - God calls people to serve in the public ministry of the gospel. ***“No one takes this honor [of the public ministry] on himself; he must be called by God.” (Hebrews 5:4)*** No one is to take this ministry on himself or “pursue” a specific call.

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- The **public** ministry of the gospel
  - God alone gives someone the **right and privilege** to serve in the public ministry. ***“No one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called.” (Augsburg Confession XIV)***

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## I. What *exactly* is the public ministry?

- The **public** ministry of the gospel
  - God alone gives **the message**: ***“When I [Paul] came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2)***

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- God established the public ministry, but . . .
  - He allows his church to define the **scope and function** of the ministry: pastor, administrator, principal, teacher, staff minister
  - Full-time public ministers
  - Part-time public ministers (such as semi-retired pastors or vacancy pastors)
  - Informal or occasional public ministers (such as Sunday school teachers, elders who assist with Communion)

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- The **public** ministry of the gospel
  - God establishes the personal **qualifications**: ***“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well.” (1 Timothy 3:1-10)***

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## I. What is the public ministry?

- The church establishes the **standards** for skills and training. WELS training . . .
  - For pastors
  - For teachers
  - For staff ministers
  - For part-time, occasional, or informally called workers

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## II. How does someone become a public minister?

- In the past, God called people **directly (immediately)** into the public ministry: Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the disciples, Paul.
- Today, God calls people **indirectly (mediately) through the church:** seven deacons, Matthias, Paul and Barnabas.

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## II. How does someone become a public minister?

In the church in Jerusalem, God called people to serve through his believers, the church.

*Note how Acts 1:21-26 describes how God called someone to replace Judas as an apostle: Peter said, "It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us . . . For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also called Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.*

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## II. How does someone become a public minister?

- The church in Jerusalem established the qualifications (Acts 1:21-22).
- The church proposed candidates (Acts 1:23).
- The church prayed for guidance and with trust (Acts 1:24-25).
- The church selected the workers (through casting lots or voting) (Acts 1:26).

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## II. How does someone become a public minister?

- Today God extends his call to individuals through fallible and flawed human beings (the church).
- Responsibility for calling belongs to the church; the church may delegate that responsibility to a smaller group (voters' assembly or board of education, for example).
- Despite the involvement of human beings and human judgment, the call is in every way a **divine call**, a call from God.

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## III. How does the WELS call process work?

- The assignment of candidates
- Calls to synodical or district positions
  - Elections (full time and part time)
  - Synodical schools
  - Administrative positions
- The call process for congregations

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### III. How does the WELS call process work?

- The call process for congregations
  - A vacancy occurs (death or retirement of a called worker; called worker accepts call to another location; new position created)
  - Congregation contacts the district president
  - Congregation evaluates needs and plans
  - Congregation meets with the district president to share needs

**CALLED TO SERVE:** A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL

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### III. How does the WELS call process work?

- The call process for congregations
  - District president takes information provided by the congregation and researches for candidates who meet the congregation's needs and who are eligible for a call
  - Call meeting is scheduled in which district president or his designee (district vice president, circuit pastor) presents a list of candidates
  - District president provides biographical and personal information (including interests and strengths) on each candidate
  - Calling body (usually the voters' assembly) discusses each candidate and votes; once voting identifies the person called, a motion is made to make the call unanimous

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### III. How does the WELS call process work?

- The call process for congregations is not a hiring process
  - No interviews of candidates
  - No "audition" sermons
  - No extensive résumé
  - TRUST in the Lord and that he is working through the district president's judgment that any person on the list is qualified for this particular call.
  - TRUST in the Lord that he is at work guiding this process, including the called person's decision

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### III. How does the WELS call process work?

- Newly called worker normally takes 2-4 weeks to make a decision
- For pastoral vacancies, average of 7 calls issued; vacancy of 6-12 months

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### III. How does the WELS call process work?

- When your congregation has a vacancy
  - Challenges and blessings of a vacancy
  - **TRUST** that the Lord of the Church will provide
  - "All things work together for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28)
  - "Our times are in his hands." (Psalm 31:15)
  - "Pray for workers." (Matthew 9:38)

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### IV. The decision process

- Two divine calls: which one?
  - A pastor receives a call; he now has two. And he has a decision to make.
  - Discussion with congregational leaders
  - Input from trusted people
  - Discussion with wife and family
  - Much prayer

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## IV. The decision process

- Your pastor or teacher receives a call to another congregation. You have a responsibility to provide honest and loving input.
  - Pray for the called worker as he or she struggles
  - Encourage the called worker
  - Ask questions about the kinds of things that the worker may be considering

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## IV. The decision process

- Three types of considerations when deciding
  - Factors that **must not** influence the deliberation and decision
  - Factors that **may** play some part in the deliberation but don't determine the decision
  - Two central questions that **must** determine the decision . . .

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## IV. The decision process

- The two deciding questions:
  - Where will the talents God has given me do the most good for God's kingdom?
  - Where will my faults and limitations do the least harm?

CALLED TO SERVE: A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL

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## How should a called worker regard the call in which he or she serves?

- Not “my call”; **God's** call, **church's** call
- Not my right, but my **privilege**; it's nothing I deserve, but it's all grace all the time
- Not a job or career, but a **calling** from God; not 9-5 but as needed
- Not lord and master, but a **servant**

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## V. What will called workers always want to remember?

**One thing required of those entrusted with the call from God: "They must prove faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2)**

- Faithful to the Word: not your message, but God's
- Faithful to your people: love them, serve them, pray for them, nothing "beneath" you
- Faithful to the work and the mission: work hard, set priorities, use talents to the best of your ability, develop skills

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## Practical advice for those who serve

- **Be in the Word**, personally, not just professionally
- **Pray for a servant's heart**
- **Pray for your people**
- **Love your people** even when they are not lovable
- **Be involved** in the life of the congregation outside of the duties of the call
- **Be yourself**; be genuine

**CALLED TO SERVE: A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL**

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## Practical advice for those who serve

- **Be an example** of Christian living
- **Trust in God's promises** to bless his Word; efficacy of the Word
- Proper **balance** between call, vocation as husband/father or wife/mother
- **Support and respect** your fellow called workers

**CALLED TO SERVE:** A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL

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## VI. Blessings given and received by the called worker

- Hearing a little child confess "Jesus loves me" because of what you taught
- Giving guidance to a teenager who is confused and discouraged
- Seeing someone you served entering ministry because of your example
- "Pastor, thank you for your sermon." "Teacher, you were a great influence and inspiration."

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## Blessings given and received by the called worker

- Hearing someone say, "I am praying for you."
- Seeing God heal broken relationships through the Word
- Seeing the look in the eyes of the adult you are instructing who grasps the gospel for the first time
- Experiencing the privilege of assuring sinners of their full forgiveness in Christ
- Bringing resurrection comfort to someone and to the family of someone who is dying
- Knowing that you have been given the world's greatest privilege—serving God and his people with the gospel, being his instrument to bring people to heaven

**CALLED TO SERVE: A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL**

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## Advice to those who are served

- Recognize called workers as gifts of God who serve because God has called them.
- Be involved in congregational ministry.
- Remember that no called worker is perfect.
- Provide encouragement and thanks for service.
- If you have a problem, talk to the worker, not to others.
- Provide for their physical needs: "The worker is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:18)
- Pray for those who serve!

**CALLED TO SERVE: A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DIVINE CALL**

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