



To be read on Sunday January 25, 2009

It is an honour to greet you this morning and to thank your pastor and congregation for your participation in our church's *It's Your Call* programme.

There is a traditional African proverb which suggests that it takes a village to raise a child. We have always appreciated this adage because it acknowledges that none of us can legitimately claim to be self-made people. We are who we are, both for good and ill, because we have been nurtured and formed by the contexts in which we were raised.

If it takes a village to raise a child, we would like to offer a parallel axiom: it also takes a church to raise a pastor.

There is no doubt that the decision to become a pastor or diaconal minister is intensely personal. Those making such a decision seldom do so without significant vocational struggle and spiritual wrestling. It is through this process that a hypothetical call genuinely becomes **your call**.

However, this can never be taken to suggest that the process of vocational discernment is solely private or individualistic. As Lutherans, we believe that it is God who calls each one of us. While all are called to lives of faithful service, some individuals are specifically called to serve in a church vocation. In either case, this process is Spirit-driven. As such, any call to ministry is really **God's call**.

But that call is seldom heard in isolation. In fact, those who experience a call to rostered ministry will often hear that call's first whispers in the context of congregational life. The call to ministry is often first murmured by a pastor, teacher, friend or parent. Furthermore, it is only after one's inner sense of call has been tested, confirmed by the wider church, and assured in the issuance of a specific letter of call, that ordination is able to take place. As such, any call to rostered ministry is also the **Church's call**.

Our church's *It's Your Call* program seeks to emphasize all three dimensions of this process. In doing so, we would like to invite you to join us in identifying and nurturing the future leaders of this church. How can you help?

- By regularly praying that God would raise up the leaders that we need at this time in our life,
- by identifying and encouraging appropriately gifted persons in your congregation to consider a vocation in ordained or lay diaconal ministry, and
- by seriously considering the possibility that God might be inviting you to consider a call to rostered ministry.

It takes a church to raise up a pastor! Thank you for participating in this important emphasis within the life of our church. But perhaps even more important, thank you for your year-round commitment in praying and working to identify and support new candidates for our church's rostered ministries.

With all our best wishes,

Bishop Michael J Pryse, Eastern Synod  
Bishop Elaine Sauer, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod  
Bishop Cindy Halmarson, Saskatchewan Synod  
Bishop Ron Mayan, Synod of Alberta and the Territories  
Bishop Gerhard Preibisch, British Columbia Synod