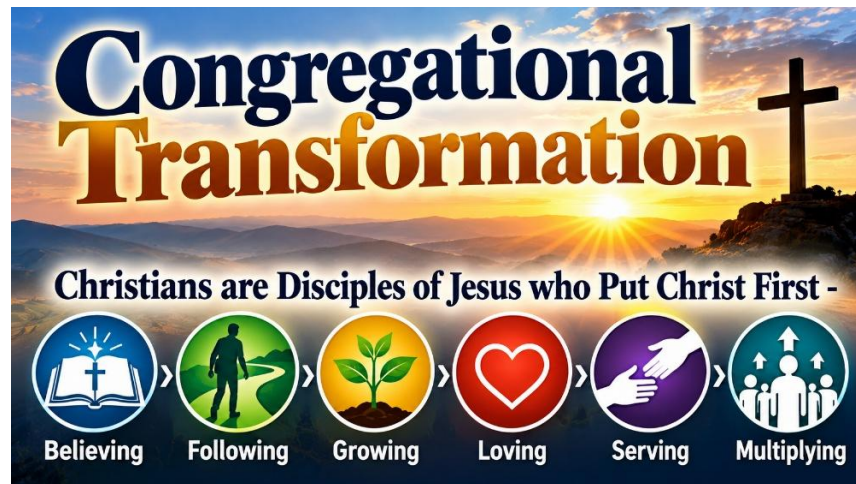


Congregational Transformation



Dear Friends Living on the Continent of Africa: In the past my congregation has given some financial help to some pastors, vicars, and congregations; however, going forward, we are focusing on giving theological help rather than financial help. The theological help includes the contents of this paper, my weekly sermons and studies, and the hundreds of sermons, studies, and topical brochures available on my church website (see the end of this paper for easy access – it’s free).

Have you heard this statement: **Give a fish and a man eats for a day; teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime.** I’m hoping that the teaching content below will benefit you and your congregation until the return of Jesus.

Christians are Disciples of Jesus. John 8:31–32 “...Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine...’” What does it mean to continue in His word? ♦Keep **hearing** it! ♦Keep **learning** it! ♦Keep **believing** it! ♦Keep **living** it!

Christians are saved by grace through faith, but, *as followers of Jesus*, they are also called to live in harmony with God’s Word. That is my goal with the content below—that your church members will ♦be in Christ, ♦grow in God’s Word, and ♦put God’s Word into practice, which include tithing to support their pastors, vicars, and congregations. To many, *tithing sounds radical and impossible*; **however**, to those who step out in faith and follow God’s Word, **He promises great blessings**. Here are two examples:

- **Malachi 3:10** “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”
- **Luke 6:38** “Give [*you give first*], and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

When lives are transformed and people are living as disciples of Jesus, what will be the outcome?

Congregational Transformation – in many ways!

It is my hope and prayer that pastors and vicars, regarding the resources below, will:

- Study, understand, believe, and apply God's Word.
- *Thoroughly teach their members*, so they understand, believe, and apply God's Word.

I Recommend Teaching these Topics in this Order:

1. **The Bible Is True** – *teach through this brochure:*
<https://blc7500.com/Brochures/15180/DownloadText>
2. **An Overview of the Bible** – *teach through these six sermons:*
 - a. Part 1: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49544/DownloadText>
 - b. Part 2: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49545/DownloadText>
 - c. Part 3: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49546/DownloadText>
 - d. Part 4: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49547/DownloadText>
 - e. Part 5: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49548/DownloadText>
 - f. Part 6: <https://blc7500.com/Sermons/49549/DownloadText>
3. **What If You Died Today?** – *teach through this brochure:*
<https://blc7500.com/Brochures/15227/DownloadText>
4. **A Disciple of Jesus** – *teach through this brochure:*
<https://blc7500.com/Brochures/15277/DownloadText>
5. **Tithing** – *teach through this brochure:* <https://blc7500.com/Brochures/48/DownloadText>
6. **A Biblical Theology of Supporting Pastors and Vicars:**
 - a. It has been brought to my attention that many who attend Divine Services – benefitting from Word and Sacrament, do not give at all or give very little to support their pastor / vicar / congregation. The Bible makes it clear that such people are robbing from God and under His curse (see Malachi 3:8-9).
 - b. The Bible presents a clear and consistent pattern of supporting pastors and vicars (see below). So, *regardless of past practice or culture*, **I pray that your church members will understand, believe, repent, and consistently put God's Word into practice.**
 - c. When people know Jesus as Savior and Lord, they will hunger to learn and live the Bible, the LORD will bless them, and the LORD will use them to be a blessing.

I believe the Holy Spirit can use the contents of this document to transform individual lives, which will result in ***transformed congregations!*** It is essential for pastors / vicars to set the proper example for their congregations.

A Biblical Theology of Supporting Pastors and Vicars

I. God Established the Principle Before the New Testament

The Levites were supported by God's people:

- **Numbers 18:20-21** "The LORD said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land... I am your portion and your inheritance... To the sons of Levi... I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform.'"
- **Key Principle:**
 - Those devoted to God's public ministry were freed from ordinary occupations.
 - God provided for them through the offerings of His people.
 - The support ultimately came from God, though delivered through the congregation.
- **Deuteronomy 18:1-5:** The priests and Levites received portions of the sacrifices and firstfruits.
- **Principle:** God Himself arranged for His ministers to be supported.

II. Jesus Established the Same Principle

Jesus sent out the Twelve:

- **Matthew 10:9-10** "The worker is worthy of his support." (compare also Luke 10:7)
Jesus instructed His disciples:
 - do not accumulate wealth
 - accept hospitality
 - receive support
 - devote themselves to preaching
- **Key Principle:** Those preaching Christ should ordinarily be supported by those benefiting from their ministry.

III. Jesus Himself Was Supported

- **Luke 8:1-3** Women including: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna "...were contributing to their support out of their private means."
- **Principle:** Even Jesus accepted financial support for His earthly ministry.

IV. Paul Taught That Ministers Have the Right to Support

This is the clearest Biblical section:

1 Corinthians 9:3-14 Paul builds several arguments.

- **Argument 1:** A soldier does not serve at his own expense (v.7).
- **Argument 2:** A farmer eats from his vineyard (v.7).
- **Argument 3:** A shepherd drinks the milk (v.7).
- **Argument 4:** The Law of Moses (vv.8-10). "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." Paul explained that this principle applies to Gospel workers.
- **Argument 5:** Spiritual blessings are greater than material blessings (v.11). "If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"
- **Argument 6:** Temple priests received support (v.13).
- **Argument 7:** Jesus commanded it (v.14). "So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."

Observations:

- the Lord commanded it
- ministers have the right
- this is not merely Paul's opinion

V. Paul Sometimes Refused That Right

Paul explained: **1 Corinthians 9:15** “I have used none of these things.” Why? To remove obstacles to the Gospel.

In places where false teachers charged money or where his motives might be questioned, Paul voluntarily supported himself. That was:

- voluntary
- exceptional
- not presented as the normal model

VI. Churches Shared Financially with Paul

- **Philippians 4:14-18** The church repeatedly sent gifts. Paul called them:
 - a fragrant aroma
 - an acceptable sacrifice
 - pleasing to GodSupporting ministry became worship.
- **2 Corinthians 11:8-9** Paul said: “I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.” The point: Other congregations supported Paul's ministry elsewhere.

VII. Those Taught Should Support Their Teachers

Galatians 6:6 “The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.” That is perhaps the simplest statement in Scripture:

- Teacher
- Learner
- Material sharing

VIII. Elders Who Preach Should Receive Compensation

1 Timothy 5:17-18 “The elders [*pastors*] who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Paul then quoted: “You shall not muzzle the ox...” and “The laborer

is worthy of his wages.” Most conservative commentators understand that to include:

- respect
- financial support

IX. The Church Has Responsibility Toward Its Ministers

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they may do this with joy, not groaning; for this would be unhelpful for you.”

- The congregation is instructed to obey and support faithful spiritual leaders.
- Although financial support is not explicitly mentioned, the entire context assumes ongoing pastoral ministry that requires the church's care.

X. Peter's Balance

1 Peter 5:1-3 Therefore, I urge elders among you, as your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and one who is also a fellow partaker of the glory that is to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not with greed but with eagerness; nor yet as domineering over those assigned to your care, but by proving to be examples to the flock.

- Pastors are not to serve “for sordid gain.”
- Two truths exist together:
 - Pastors – should not seek ministry to become wealthy.
 - Congregations – should willingly support faithful pastors.

XI. The Biblical Purposes of Congregational Support

Support allows pastors to:

- devote themselves to prayer
- devote themselves to preaching
- teach God's Word
- visit the sick
- evangelize
- disciple believers
- administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- shepherd the flock

That echoes the priorities described here in [Acts 6:4](#) where the apostles devoted themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

XII. What About Vicars?

The Bible does not mention the modern office of "vicar" as understood in many Lutheran churches. A vicar is a pastoral intern or apprentice rather than a separate biblical office. Nevertheless, biblical principles support providing for those who are preparing for and actively participating in Gospel ministry.

Relevant passages include:

- [2 Timothy 2:2](#) — training faithful men who will teach others.
- [Acts 16:1-3](#) — Timothy accompanies Paul in ministry.
- [Philippians 2:19-22](#) — Timothy serves alongside Paul like “a son with his father.”

Since vicars assist in preaching, teaching, visiting, evangelism, and pastoral care while receiving practical training, it is fitting for congregations to support them according to the same principles that apply to those engaged in Gospel ministry.

XIII. Biblical Safeguards

The New Testament establishes safeguards.

Pastors should:

- not love money ([1 Timothy 3:3](#)).

- not serve for dishonest gain ([Titus 1:7](#)).
- not exploit the flock ([1 Peter 5:2-3](#)).
- be examples to the flock.

Congregations should:

- willingly support faithful ministers.
- not neglect those who labor in preaching and teaching.
- recognize that supporting Gospel ministry is part of Christian stewardship.

XIV. Summary of the Biblical Teaching

The Bible consistently teaches the following:

1. God established the principle of supporting His ministers in the Old Testament ([Numbers 18](#); [Deuteronomy 18](#)).
2. Jesus affirmed that “the worker is worthy of his wages” and directed those who proclaim the Gospel to receive their living from it ([Matthew 10](#); [Luke 10](#)).
3. Jesus Himself accepted material support during His ministry ([Luke 8:1-3](#)).
4. Paul strongly defended the right of Gospel ministers to receive financial support, even though he sometimes chose to forgo that right for the sake of the Gospel ([1 Corinthians 9](#)).
5. Congregations are instructed to share materially with those who teach them ([Galatians 6:6](#)) and to provide “double honor” to elders who labor in preaching and teaching ([1 Timothy 5:17-18](#)).
6. Ministers must never view the ministry as a means of personal enrichment, but congregations should regard supporting faithful ministers as an act of worship, stewardship, and partnership in the Gospel ([Philippians 4:14-18](#); [1 Peter 5:1-3](#)).

Taken together, the passages on supporting pastors and vicars present a coherent biblical theology:

- Christ has ordained that those who devote themselves to the ministry of His Word ordinarily receive their material support from the Church, so that they may give themselves fully to preaching, teaching, prayer, and shepherding God's people.
- This support is not payment for the Gospel itself—which is freely given—but the Church's faithful provision for those whom God has called to serve in that ministry.

Conclusions:

Over the years it has come to my attention that many Lutheran Christians on the continent of Africa:

- Are in great financial need.
- Give little to support their pastor / vicar / congregation.
- Do not become self-sufficient but continue to request assistance.
- Need growth in understanding:
 - The reliability of the Bible
 - The contents of the Bible
 - The assurance of salvation
 - What it means to be a follower of Jesus
 - The importance of being doers of the Bible(Note: Many in the USA are also in desperate need of growth in knowing and living the Bible.)

I'm concerned in many ways:

- If there is no confidence in the Bible being true, there will be little interest in learning it, believing it, and living it.
- If the saving truth is not understood, some could be trusting in their own works and lacking God's gift of eternal life.

- If discipleship is not understood and practiced, people may be missing the primary ways we are called to follow Jesus.
- If tithing is not understood and practiced, people are robbing from God and missing out on benefitting from His amazing promises.

It has become increasingly difficult for my congregation to give financial assistance.

- However, if the contents of this document are understood, believed, and applied, *the LORD could bring great transformation to the pastors, vicars, and congregations.*
- Therefore, I urge you again to ♦study this document to thoroughly understand it, ♦teach it among your people, ♦be an example to them, and ♦urge them to put God's Word into practice in their lives.
His promises will never fail!

These are ways to connect with the teaching ministry of Bethlehem Parma:

- **Website – sermons, studies, topical brochures:** www.BLC7500.com
- **YouTube Channel – sermon videos:** <https://www.youtube.com/@benefitfromthebible/videos>
- **Facebook Page – sermon videos:** <https://www.facebook.com/bethlehempa/arma/>
- **Podcast – sermon audio:** <https://apple.co/34e03jk>
- **Email – easy access links to the latest sermons, studies, and brochures:** <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/e7lmyZ8>

Sincerely,

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PS: Please use the contents of this paper and share them with anyone who is serious about God and His Word!