

188 How [Amish] ministers are chosen [by lot]

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When being baptized, all Amish men take a vow that they will accept the responsibility of ministry if so chosen. When a new minister needs to be chosen (typically when a church district divides, or if a minister moves away or dies), all male members are eligible to be nominated.

Female Amish are not eligible, however they have the right to nominate a male member. Members take turns nominating in secret, and each member which surpasses a certain threshold of votes (usually two or three) becomes a candidate.

In the next round of selection, candidates select from an assortment of songbooks, one of which has had a slip of paper containing a Scripture verse. The bishop then inspects the book to find out which man “the lot” has fallen on. The chosen one is ordained on the spot, and begins his new life as a minister in the Amish church.

The basis for drawing lots is found in Acts 1:23-26, in which Matthias was selected by lot to replace Judas among the apostles. Selection of a minister is often an emotional event, as church members realize the weight of responsibility that has fallen on the man’s shoulders.

Comment: Gateker in his 1621 treatise ‘On the nature and uses of lots’ is adamant that invoking the judgement of God is wicked. It may have been alright in the special circumstances of Biblical times, but not now.

Tell that to the god-fearing Amish, and also the Coptic Christians in Egypt! (see example 152, below)