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A Theology of Ministerial Practice

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ABSTRACT

Competing agendas and changing culture create a need for churches to consciously determine why they will do what they do the way they do.

This project develops four doctrinal bases for a theology of ministerial practice. It summarizes literature on philosophy of ministry. Research in five Lutheran churches identifies gaps in the way people view ministry. Chapter four provides a comprehensive rationale and definition for a theology of ministerial practice.

One church's experience demonstrates the value of thinking through and developing "guiding principles" that apply a church's theology to its culture in shaping ministerial practice.

A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Most churches have a clearly articulated theology, particularly if their history and denominational affiliation include confessions of faith. Many churches have a mission statement that in some way connects to the Great Commission. Some churches have a vision document that establishes goals toward which ministry over the next few years will be directed. Few churches have established principles of ministerial practice which will guide <u>how</u> the congregation's ministry will be carried out. A few authors have addressed such principles with the term "philosophy of ministry." [1] This project will expand on the work of those authors, examine the key theological issues that underlie ministerial practice, and develop a process by which congregations can create a series of statements that define their ministerial practice.

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[1] Examples include Kent Hunter, <u>Your Church Has Personality</u> (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), pages 25-36; Harold Westing, <u>Create and Celebrate Your Church's Uniqueness</u> (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), pages 22-26 and 39-40; and Robert Logan, <u>Beyond Church Growth</u> (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), pages 59-75.

Definition of "Theology of Ministerial Practice"

The operating definition of "Theology of Ministerial Practice" in this project is: why a church does what it does the way it does. By "what a church does" is meant the programs of ministry it conducts to carry out its mission in areas such as worship, discipleship, evangelism, and fellowship. By "the way it does" is meant the nature of those programs, as well as the emphases, style, and methodology employed within these programs. For example, a church may offer Vacation Bible School or Bible Soccer Camp as a summer program for children. It may focus attention on nurturing member children or reaching out to children without a church. It may employ an academic model of instruction or an experiential learning approach. By "why it does" is meant the underlying reasons for the choices a church makes in ministry program development. Are those reasons theological, traditional, cultural, or random? Are they intentionally determined or unconscious assumptions? What are the priorities expressed in a church's ministry, and how are these determined?

The term "Theology of Ministerial Practice" emphasizes that the way a church carries out its ministry should be rooted in its theology and should clearly express its theology. One important aspect of that theology is the role that differing settings for ministry will play. Chapter four of the project will provide a comprehensive rationale for and definition of a theology of ministerial practice.

Rationale: The Problem or Need

Within denominations there have been controversies over styles of worship, approaches to stewardship, and methods of evangelism. Without clear statements of ministerial practice -- explanations as to why a congregation does what it does the way it does, pastors and church leaders have sometimes made assumptions and judgments about the ministry of others that unnecessarily foster disunity. It is important to distinguish the timeless and unchanging truths of theology from the traditions and forms that change because ministry is carried out in differing places and in different eras by people with different gifts and emphases. It is important to separate biblical truths from personal preferences.

Within congregations there have been conflicts over how the pastor should prioritize his time, whether to launch an early childhood ministry, or how much variety there should be in music. Without clear statements of ministerial practice, explanations as to why this congregation will do what it does the way it does, competing agendas can confuse and alienate people. Sometimes long-term leaders do not comprehend the concerns of members at the margins of the church. Sometimes the perspective of one generation keeps it from understanding another generation in the church. Sometimes newcomers don't appreciate the experience of those who built the church. Sometimes life-long Christians do not realize how different are the unchurched people they hope to win with the Gospel. Too often status quo dictates the way ministry is carried out, and the issues are debated from the vantage point of individual likes and dislikes. It is important to ground a church's practice of ministry in biblical theology, cultural awareness and well-reasoned priorities.

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It can happen that in the attempt to be relevant, a congregation compromises its Christian message. It can also happen that in the attempt to maintain its traditions, a congregation compromises its Christian mission. Clear statements of ministerial practice can help to unite the twin concerns of faithfulness and fruitfulness. Well thought-out statements of ministerial practice can help a congregation determine how it will connect with people who are drifting away or difficult to reach. Consensus-built statements of ministerial practice can allow a congregation to utilize its strengths and complement a sister church down the road.

It does happen that a church's theology fails to direct its ministry practice sufficiently. An example of this would be a church that prizes the theology of justification by grace alone, yet seems to recruit volunteers with a combination of duty and guilt. Or a church that trumpets II Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed," but fails to gather a significant number of members in study of that Scripture, ignoring the next words of that verse: "and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Another case would be a church whose doctrine insists that Jesus is the only Savior of the world, yet it budgets little for world missions and has no strategy of evangelism to reach the neighborhood. Both the process of arriving at statements of ministerial practice and the statements themselves can help to shape the ethos and the programs of a congregation around its theology.

Purpose: Specific Objectives

Based on the rationale just established for identifying a congregations' theology of ministerial practice, this project undertakes to accomplish three objectives or outcomes that will benefit congregations and the church at large.

One objective of this project will be to help pastors and lay leaders, especially in Lutheran churches, understand the factors that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice, so that they can evaluate their current ministry practice and begin to see their ministry with fresh perspective. Three primary factors will be described: theological principles, cultural forces and congregational priorities.

A second objective will be to determine whether there are significant differences in the underlying assumptions that tend to drive ministerial practice: from one congregation to another on the basis of ministry setting, between elected leaders and members, and among three generations of members. Empirical evidence may convince church leaders to explore a theology of ministerial practice more fully.

A third objective will be to develop a process that can be used to help a congregation arrive at a series of principles or statements that articulate its theology of ministerial practice. Within a consulting approach to churches, this process will supplement three other phases: ministry analysis, vision setting and the formulation of strategies and action plans.

Process: The Pieces of the Project

In order to accomplish the objectives just presented, this project report is organized into component chapters. These chapters reflect the process that was followed in carrying out the project's library and field research. The component pieces of that process are highlighted as follows:

Chapter Two: Biblical Examples and Theological Issues: A foundational piece of the project will be to apply several key doctrinal issues to a theology of ministerial practice. This chapter will address the project's first objective of helping pastors and lay leaders understand the theological principles that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice. It will be important to distinguish the absolute efficacy of the Means of Grace from the relative effectiveness of methods that communicate the message of grace. It will also be important to clarify the distinct roles of Law and Gospel in the development of a theology of ministerial practice. Basic to this project is the doctrine regarding adiaphora, the twin truths of freedom and responsibility in matters where God's Word has not specifically commanded or forbidden what to do. A fourth theological issue underlying any theology of ministerial practice is one's understanding from Scripture of church and ministry.

Chapter Three: Summary of Literature on the Subject: The next piece of this project will be a review of pertinent literature on the subject. This chapter will address the project's first objective of helping pastors and lay leaders understand what factors other scholars and church consultants have identified as contributing to a congregation's self-understanding and ministerial practice. A

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few authors have used the term "philosophy of ministry" [2] to describe how and why churches differ from one another in the way they carry out their mission. While the term philosophy of ministry is similar to this project's title "theology of ministerial practice," there is a significant difference. Both terms include an appropriate role for theology, culture and values in determining how a congregation's ministry is structured and carried out. However, a philosophy of ministry begins with and emphasizes the differences from one congregation to another that exist as a result of culture and core values. A theology of ministerial practice begins with and emphasizes the biblical basis for any approach to doing ministry. The chapter which reviews current literature on the subject will synthesize the authors' arguments into three categories: what defines a philosophy of ministry, why it is valuable to develop such a philosophy of ministry, and how a congregation might go about doing so. Within this synthesis, the salient arguments of different authors will be highlighted.

Chapter Four: A Comprehensive Rationale for and Definition of a Theology of Ministerial Practice. Another element of the project will be this author's expanded definition of a theology of ministerial practice, together with the critical factors that contribute to it and practical arguments for developing a statement of ministerial practice. This chapter will also address the project's first objective of helping pastors and lay leaders understand factors that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice–specifically theological principles, cultural forces, and congregational priorities. There will be pointed applications of specific passages from Scripture and specific doctrines of the Christian faith (theological principles). There will be concrete examples from the broad culture of North America and the specific culture of a church's

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[2] Ibid.

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community. There will be several ways of arriving at priorities for a congregation, priorities which impact a church's ministry practice. The basis for this chapter of the project will be more than a decade of consulting with churches of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, seminars and workshops offered by other church consultants [3], and the courses that comprised the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. This chapter of the project is envisioned as a teaching tool to help pastors and lay leaders understand a theology of ministerial practice and the value of articulating such a theology of ministerial practice.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Surveys from Five Congregations: The next piece of the project will be an analysis of some 230 surveys, gathered from five Lutheran churches in different ministry settings and situations. This chapter will address the project's second objective of determining whether there are significant differences in the underlying assumptions that tend to drive ministerial practice. There will be an attempt to determine whether the setting and situation color members' responses. There will be a comparison of responses between elected leaders and members. And there will be a comparison of responses among respondents aged 18 - 35, 36 - 50, and 51 and older. The survey includes a theological component that was adapted from a 1998 Lutheran Brotherhood "Survey of Lutheran Beliefs and Practices." [4] Comparison with that larger

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[3] Seminars led by Carl George ("How To Become A Church Consultant:" I., February 2-4, 1988; II., May 3-5, 1988; III., February 28 - March 2, 1989), Lyle Schaller ("Counseling With Congregations," July 10-14, 1989), Roy Oswald ("New Visions for the Long Pastorate," October 23, 1992), Search Institute ("Vision To Action," November 28-30, 1989), and others.

[4] John O'Hara and Kenneth Inskeep, "Survey of Lutheran Beliefs and Practices" (Minneapolis: Lutheran Brotherhood, 1998), Pages 3-19.

survey will, therefore, be possible. The remainder of the survey attempts to isolate several issues

and assumptions with which church members approach the essential factors of a ministry practice.

Chapter Six: A Process for Developing a Theology of Ministerial Practice. This piece in the

study will be a specific process for use by a church and its leaders to develop a statement of

ministry practice. This chapter will address the project's third objective of developing a process

that can be used to help a congregation arrive at a series of principles or statements that articulate

its theology of ministerial practice. A seminar to teach the concepts that underlie a theology of

ministerial practice and challenge members' thinking is one half of the process. A step-by-step

guide for a task force appointed by a congregation is the second half. This guide should result in

a well reasoned series of statements or principles which guide the programs and practices of a

church's ministry. Both the seminar and the guide were implemented in one Lutheran

congregation, and the product of their effort is included in this study.

Chapter Seven: Evaluating the Process for Developing a Theology of Ministerial Practice.

The final piece of the study will be an evaluation of this project's effectiveness in helping pastors

and lay leaders understand and shape a theology of ministerial practice. That analysis will be done

by the task force which participated in the seminar and implemented the guide to develop

statements of ministerial practice. Further analysis will be done by the director of Parish

Assistance, a church consulting program of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The

author of this project will draw conclusions for refining and improving the process of developing

statements of ministerial practice and for further study of this subject.

Summary

In order to assist pastors and lay leaders in their role of ministry program development, this project will develop key theological bases for ministerial practice, summarize literature on the subject of philosophy of ministry, and analyze survey responses from five congregations to determine the degree of coherence that exists among leaders and members in their understanding of ministerial practice. A comprehensive rationale for and definition of a theology of ministerial practice and a workshop based on that rationale and definition will be teaching tools to develop an appreciation for creating an intentional theology of ministerial practice. A step-by-step process for developing intentional statements of ministerial practice will be field-tested and evaluated.

One primary question shapes this project: Why does a church do what it does the way it does? The goal of the project is to help pastors and lay leaders develop answers that are theologically consistent, culturally appropriate, and sensitive to the unique characteristics of each congregation.

CHAPTER TWO:

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES AND THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Introduction

This chapter of the project will, first, demonstrate with a brief overview of the early church in Acts that changing circumstances and an ever-expanding mission required differing forms and methods of ministry. The clash of Jewish and Gentile cultures confronted the church with the need for a theology of ministerial practice, though the Bible does not use that term.

At least four major theological issues lie at the heart of a theology of ministerial practice, especially for Lutherans. The second part of this chapter will address those four issues. The first is carefully distinguishing the absolute efficacy of the means of grace from the relative effectiveness of communication methodology, so that sociology doesn't become the master of theology and also that the gospel does not go unheard. The second issue is a clear understanding of the role law and gospel each have in ministry, particularly in the matter of sanctification. The third issue is adiaphora, balancing Christian freedom in the forms ministry takes with loving responsibility for people whose understanding is incomplete. The final issue is the doctrine of church and ministry, within which the organizational structure of ministry must be understood.

This chapter will both articulate a theological position and provide practical examples of its importance.

Historical Insights from the Church of Acts

The church of Acts demonstrates a diverse and rapidly changing ministerial practice. In the examples cited below, the early church shows how changeless truth and mission intersect changing cultures to shape a theology of ministerial practice. The core values of the church, its most treasured truths and goals, as well as the unique gifts and priorities of the apostles help to explain their somewhat differing styles of ministry. Flexibility in forms characterizes the formative years of the church. An early challenge to the church was an unwillingness to uncouple the Gospel from the traditions of Old Testament ceremonial law. Although the ceremonial law in Old Testament days was Yahweh's gift to His people to bring them the forgiveness of sins, that ceremonial law was fulfilled in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Thus kosher food and circumcision were no longer necessary in the New Covenant. Yet some insisted otherwise, placing a burden of legalism on the church. In resolving this conflict with legalism, the apostles set the pattern for a Christian Church capable of responding to the multitude of settings in which missionaries met people for whom Jesus gave his life. Although the pattern of the early church is not prescriptive, it is instructive for the church of today.

When Jesus gave his disciples the mission and vision for His Church in Acts 1:8, they could not have imagined the challenges and changes they would face when "be my witnesses" reached beyond Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. A quick tour of the first half of Acts demonstrates the point.

Acts 2:42 establishes the core values of the early church, what was most important to these first Christians: apostolic teaching and close Christian fellowship centered in the Lord's Supper

and shared prayer. Verses 44 to 46 demonstrate how those core values shaped ministerial practice in the familiar environment of Jerusalem. Daily the apostles taught on the temple grounds, nurturing the faith of the gathered believers and evangelizing devout Jews who came to listen in. The apostles were teaching the theology and applying the methodology they had learned from the Savior. In Jerusalem, this efficient combination of teaching and evangelizing was possible because the apostles were ministering to a culture that shared Old Testament truth and promise, in a venue where the temple mount was the obvious place to conduct ministry. Lacking church buildings, the believers practiced fellowship in the most natural setting of people's homes, where family and friends could share intimate worship. The "Agape Meal" [5] became the context for the sacrament. The love which, Jesus said, identified them as His disciples found expression in sharing material blessings, a practice made more necessary by intensifying persecution. St. Luke seems to identify the fellowship life of the church in Jerusalem with "enjoying the favor of all the people," (Verse 47) confirming what Jesus said in John 13:34, that everyone will recognize Christians as Jesus' disciples by their love for one another.

Acts 8 marks a dramatic turning point in the life of the church. The persecution that broke out becomes an example of how the Lord of the Church uses even Satan's raging to accomplish His mission.[6] The cause celebres was the preaching, not of the twelve, but of Stephen, one of seven new leaders of the church. Persecution drove members of the church out of Jerusalem and into

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[5] A term for the food and fellowship shared by Christians as an expression of the unique love of God that bound them together. Cf. The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), Volume I, pages 80-81. Cf. also The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), pages 289-290.

[6] Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), page 152.

Judea and Samaria, where they could more readily earn a living and take care of their families. Luke uses the Greek word that transliterates to "evangelize" for the proclamation of the Gospel by scattered believers to their new acquaintances (Acts 8:4). Philip, another of the seven new leaders, is singled out by Luke for his intentional "church planting" efforts among the half-breed and heretical Samaritans. Later in chapter 8 the Lord sends Philip to a proselyte from Ethiopia, building a bigger cross-cultural bridge. In Acts 8 and 9 we see the ministry of Peter and John changing significantly. Now they are itinerant "bishops," teachers who follow up the witness of the scattered church and confirm new faith. (Cf. Acts 8:14 and 9:32)[7]

Acts 11:19-22 quietly describes another monumental shift in mission and ministry. Scattered believers begin their witness outside the promised land with expatriate Jews, but launch real multicultural ministry in Antioch among people who have no background in Judaism. The heterogeneous mix of members at Antioch[8] is the setting in which the Holy Spirit calls Paul and Barnabas to a "world mission" in Acts 13:1-3. The rest of Acts demonstrates dramatic changes in

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[7] F. F. Bruce says: "It appears that he engaged about this time in an itinerant ministry of visitation among the dispersed Christian communities of Judea." F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), page 210.

[8] Marshall (op. cit., pages 198-199) asserts that it was Hellenistic converts from Judaism to Christianity who were scattered in Acts 8 and made their way to Antioch, where they witnessed to Gentiles. Bruce (op. cit., page 238) describes Antioch as the third largest city in the world at that time, a metropolitan center attracting people from across the empire. Richard Longenecker says: "With the merging of cultures and blurring of distinctives that was taking place in Antioch generally, perhaps even Judaism faced some problems in drawing a sharp line between Gentiles who had some minimal relationship with the synagogue and those who were considered near-proseltytes." Richard Longenecker, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), page 401.

ministry methods, as St. Paul brings an unchanging message to the Gentile world.[9] He moves

from the synagogue to the <u>agora</u>. (Acts 13:46 with Acts 17:17) He witnesses to people at the

waterfront (Acts 16:13) and in the tent-making trade. (Acts 18:2-3) He uses apologetics with the

intellectuals in Athens (Acts 17:18-34) and miracles with the superstitious in Lystra (Acts 14:8-

18) as introductions to the Gospel. In Ephesus he adopts an academic model for ministry in the

lecture hall of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:9-10) In Philippi (Acts 16:22-34) and later in Rome (Acts

28:30-31; Philippians 1:12-14) the apostle turned prison into a platform for preaching. His own

ministerial practice in the matter of compensation was 180 degrees diverse from the principle he

lays down that "those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel," (I

Corinthians 9: 14-15) no doubt because his passion to "preach the gospel where Christ was not

known" (Romans 15:20) created both practical and cultural reasons for doing so.[10] Paul defines

his theology of ministerial practice: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible

means I might save some." (I Corinthians 9:22)

The first generation of church history demonstrates not only dramatic changes in methodology

as Christianity confronted changing culture and challenging opportunity. The forms of ministry

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[9] Longenecker (op. cit., page 420) says: "The conversion of Sergius Paulus was a turning point in Paul's whole ministry and inaugurated a new policy in the mission to the Gentiles - viz., the legitimacy of a direct approach to and full acceptance of Gentiles apart from any distinctive Jewish stance. This is what Luke clearly sets forth as the great innovative development of the first missionary journey."

[10] F. W. Grosheide says: "For by preaching without receiving an honorarium Paul guarded himself against suspicion." F. W. Grosheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), page 209. The suspicion of which he speaks may be on the part of the Corinthians members (some of whom challenged Paul's authority, as the two epistles to Corinth demonstrate), but in a larger setting of Roman suspicion toward eastern religion. Cf. M. Cary and H. H. Scullard, A History of Rome (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), pages 311-312.

changed as well.[11] Acts 1:15-26 describes the first church meeting's agenda as replacing Judas.

Apparently, it was important that there be twelve apostles who had been with Jesus during his

earthly ministry, just as there had been twelve tribes to whom God entrusted the promise of a

Savior. When rapid growth and persecution confronted the twelve with need-meeting urgencies

that got in the way of ministry necessities, the second church meeting chronicled in Scripture

addresses the problem. Reaffirming the mission and core values Jesus had entrusted to them, the

apostles ask for additional staffing. Acts 6:1-6 records the qualifications of the seven chosen, but

not their title or position description. Verse 6 describes their installation, with the laying on of

hands and prayer, to indicate that this is a significant role in the church's ministry. Acts 6:8-15

and 8:5-7 demonstrate that these men were entrusted with a lot more ministry than visiting shut-

ins with care packages. Was this a second "tier" of ministry beyond the twelve? Or did the

urgent mission of the church simply render the tradition of twelve and the qualification of "being

with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts 1:21) no longer

significant?[12]

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[11] Longenecker (op. cit., page 331) observes: "The early church seems to have been
prepared to adjust its procedures, alter its organizational structure, and develop new posts of
responsibility in response to existing needs and for the sake of the ongoing proclamation of the
Word of God. . . Luke's narrative here (Acts 6:1-6) suggests that to be fully biblical is to be
consistently engaged in adapting traditional methods and structures to meet existing situations."

[12] Commentators do not seem to address this question directly. Marshall (op. cit., page
127) says, "The whole story is reminiscent of that of the choice of Matthias;" but he does not take
the comparison further. Bruce (op. cit., page 131) suggests that the seven may have been or
become leaders among the Hellenistic Christians, but he doesn't take up the question of the
relationship of the offices of ministry. Longenecker (op. cit., page 331) says: "That is evidently
what the laying on of hands was meant to symbolize here, with the apostles delegating their
authority to the seven selected by the church." He continues: "The ministry to which the seven
were appointed was functionally equivalent to what Paul covered in the title 'deacon' -- which is
but to affirm that in the New Testament ministry was a function long before it became an office."

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It is uncertain what the seven were called (the title "deacon" has been suggested, without clear textual basis)[13]; and there is no explanation for the apparent offices of "prophet" and "teacher" in the church at Antioch. (Acts 13:1) While it is clear that Paul and Barnabas are called by the Holy Spirit through the church at Antioch, we're given no title for these "missionaries." Acts 14:23 describes another ministry title, "elder," and a solemn induction into the office (fasting and prayer parallel to the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas). In Acts 20:28 Paul describes the elders at Ephesus with another title, "Overseer" or "Bishop," with no apparent concern for ecclesiastical polity.[14] Even the method by which men assume these offices of ministry appears flexible. In Acts 6:2-6 and 13:1-3, it is the church which selects them in a calling process the Holy Spirit hasn't chosen to detail. In Acts 14:23 it appears that Paul and Barnabas appoint elders with

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John R. W. Stott, in The Message of Acts (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990) comments on page 122: "It is surely deliberate that the work of the Twelve and the work of the Seven are alike called *diakonia*, 'ministry' or 'service.' the former is 'the ministry of the Word' or pastoral work, the latter 'the ministry of tables' or social work. Neither ministry is superior to the other. On the contrary, both are Christian ministries, that is, ways of serving God and his people. Both require spiritual people, 'full of the Spirit,' to exercise them. And both can be full-time ministries. The only difference between them lies in the form the ministry takes, requiring different gifts and different calllings."

[13] Marshall (op. cit., pages 126) says: "Although the verb 'serve' comes from the same root as the noun which is rendered into English as 'deacon,' it is noteworthy that Luke does not refer to the seven as deacons; their task had no formal name."

[14] Longenecker (op. cit., page 438) says on Acts 14:23: "In the early Gentile churches, the terms 'elder' and 'bishops' were used somewhat interchangeably and functionally rather than as titles." Bruce (op. cit., page 415), in commentary on Acts 20:28, adds: "There was in apostolic times no distinction between elders and bishops such as we find from the second century onwards; the leaders of the Ephesian church are indiscriminately described as elders, bishops and shepherds."

apostolic authority. A maxim of J. P. Koehler, a theologian of the Wisconsin Evangelical

Lutheran Synod, says: "The Gospel creates its own forms of ministry." [15]

There is a third church meeting described in Acts 15. It demonstrates how important it is for

the church to have a clear theology of ministerial practice. There were obvious differences in

form and style of ministry between the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch. That the

former developed amid the culture and tradition of Judaism and the latter in a Hellenistic and

pluralistic setting explains the differences. However, a group of self-appointed inspectors of

orthodoxy from Jerusalem charged that the practice of the Antiochine church was deficient

because it failed to observe the Old Testament ceremonial law. The Lord had prepared Peter for

this controversy with the vision in Joppa (Acts 10:9-17). The resolution arrived at in the "Council

of Jerusalem" described in Acts 15:6-29 distinguished the changeless will of God from the fulfilled

ceremonies of Moses; and it taught the principle of freedom with love which St. Paul would later

amplify in I Corinthians 10:23-33 and Romans 14:1-23.[16] Already in its first generation a

theology of ministerial practice guided the Church through twin dangers. On one extreme is the

compromise of divinely revealed truth in order to make ministry more acceptable to culture. On

the other extreme is legalism, the insistence on non-biblical traditions of one culture at the

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[15] J. P. Koehler, Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, page 712. The quotation is translated in the Ph. D. dissertation of Leigh Donald Jordahl, "The Wauwatosa Theology, John Philip Koehler and the Theological Tradition of Midwestern American Lutheranism, 1900 to 1930." (University of Iowa, 1964), page 245.

[16] Longenecker (op. cit., page 448) observes that the council distinguished between a "theological necessity" (the rejection of circumcision and Jewish law for salvation) and a "practical necessity" (Jewish - Gentile fellowship). He then says: "The major work of the council had to do with the vindication of Gentile freedom, while a secondary matter was concerned with the expression of that freedom in regard to the scruples of others."

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expense of Christian freedom and the free course of the Gospel in ministry to different cultures.

A theology of ministerial practice has always addressed this nexus of doctrine and culture.

Theological Issues Central To A Theology of Ministerial Practice

While every doctrine ultimately has a bearing on a church's theology of ministerial practice,

there are four doctrinal issues especially that will be addressed in order to establish a theological

foundation for ministerial practice. The "Scylla" of denying the power of the Gospel to convert

and renew people is matched by the "Charybdis" of rendering a well-trained and well-aimed

ministry unimportant. Steering a course between these rocks that would shipwreck the church is

the intent of a section entitled "The Absolute Efficacy of the Means of Grace and the Relative

Effectiveness of Methods of Communicating Grace." A host of problems, from a "happiness

gospel" [17] to legalistic forms of motivation, are resolved by a proper distinction of Law and

Gospel. Understanding the role of each is central to any theology of ministerial practice. The

biblical principle of adiaphora, that Christians and their churches are free to use whatever God has

not forbidden and to refuse what he has not commanded, is basic to a ministerial practice that

takes into account its setting; and this principle is critical to an understanding of New Testament

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[17] The term refers to promises of temporal or material well-being which supercede the promise of forgiveness and everlasting life in Jesus Christ. These temporal promises may also lack any biblical basis. Art Lindsley in The Agony of Deceit, edited by Michael Horton, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990) says on page 57, "One of the things characterizing the 'Health and Wealth' evangelist is quick, easy solutions to complex problems. They tend to reduce the Christian life to knowing the right technique or formula, or following the prescribed steps to achieve prosperity."

ministry. At the same time, responsible love must govern the use of Christian freedom if a ministry is to be faithful to the Head of the Church. The final theological issue addressed in this chapter builds ministerial practice on an understanding of church and ministry.

The purpose of these biblical examples and theological review is to provide a foundation on which pastors and lay leaders can build the practical elements of a ministry practice.

The Absolute Efficacy Of The Means Of Grace And
The Relative Effectiveness Of Methods Of Communicating Grace[18]

In Isaiah 55: 10-11 the Lord says: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." God's Word is "efficacious," that is, it produces an effect in the mind and heart of those who hear it. It accomplishes God's purpose, whether his saving purpose of convincing and converting or his judicial purpose of rendering without excuse those who deny his grace.

People are brought to faith and nurtured in the faith alone by the Gospel in Word and sacrament. In John 6:44 Jesus says: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." St. Paul, in Romans 10:17 explains how people are drawn to God in faith: "Faith

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[18] By "absolute" is meant complete, exclusive and universal efficacy, for nothing beyond the Means of Grace is needed and only the Means of Grace can work faith. "Absolute" does *not* mean "irresistable," for Scripture teaches that human beings can and do refuse God's grace.

comes from hearing the message." In I Thessalonians 2:13 he adds: "When you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." Passages such as Titus 3:5, Colossians 2:12 and John 3:5 demonstrate that the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel in baptism, as well as in proclamation, to bring people to faith and confirm them in faith.

This biblical truth is affirmed in the Augsburg Confession, Article V: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. . . Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel." [19] Similarly, the Formula of Concord, The Epitome, Article II, argues: ". . . the will of man has been changed and renewed *solely by God's power and activity*. . . Prior to man's conversion there are only two efficient causes, namely, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the Holy Spirit's instrument whereby he effects conversion. Man should hear this Word, though he cannot give it credence and accept it by his own powers but solely by the grace and operation of God the Holy Spirit." [20]

An important corollary of this truth is that there is nothing any human being can do to make the Word of God more or less efficacious. The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article

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[19] Theodore Tappert, <u>The Book Of Concord</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), page 31.

[20] Ibid., page 472.

II, paragraph 48 uses that term "efficacious" to make the point.[21] St. Paul makes this clear in I Corinthians 1:10-17 by rejecting "personality cults" within the church and in chapter two, verses 1-5, by emphasizing that not human wisdom but the Spirit's power characterized his message. In Philippians 1:15-18 he argues that neither the character nor the motives of the preacher condition the power of the message. (See also the Augsburg Confession, Article VIII, paragraph two.[22]) Not the brilliance and charismatic personality of a preacher nor the conviction and logic of a Christian witness can add a thing to the power of the Gospel. No psychology or sociology can augment the Gospel to improve the percentages of conversion. No evangelism methodology or discipleship strategy can enhance the ability of God's Word to create faith and strengthen faith. It is equally true that the humblest servant of Christ, simple in his faith and unsophisticated in his world-view, does nothing to subtract from the efficacy of the Gospel when he presents it in its truth and purity. In fact, the power of the Gospel is undiminished by the unfaithful life or theology of its messenger.[23]

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[21] Ibid., page 530. "We shall now set forth from the Word of God how man is converted to God, how and by what means -- namely, the oral Word and the holy sacraments -- the Holy Spirit wills to be *efficacious* (emphasis mine) in us by giving and working true repentance, faith and new spiritual power."

[22] Ibid., page 33. "Our churches condemn the Donatists and others like them who have denied that the ministry of evil men may be used in the church and who have thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and without effect."

[23] Carl Gaertner says as much in the article, "The Means of Grace In An Effective Church Program," The Abiding Word, Volume Three (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), pages 402-403.

Just as Lutheran theology leaves unresolved the tension between the absolute efficacy of the Word of God and the total responsibility of human beings who reject that Word of God[24], so also must our theology honestly present another paradox. In II Corinthians 5:11, St. Paul says: "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men." (Emphasis mine) Much of this epistle is a defense of Paul's ministry, sometimes in comparison with the less faithful or less productive ministry of others. In I Corinthians 3:10-15 the apostle uses the analogy of construction to make the point that while the foundation of every true ministry is Jesus Christ, the quality of a man's ministry may vary. He may be more or less effective. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) Jesus recognizes that differing abilities and efforts bring different results. The way in which we communicate the Gospel DOES have an impact on conversion and discipleship.

Edward A. Koehler makes the distinction this way: "The Gospel is always efficacious. . . The Gospel is not always effective." [25] By "efficacious" is meant the inherent, complete and sole power to accomplish its purpose. The Gospel is, as St. Paul describes it in Romans 1:16, "the POWER of God for salvation." In Romans 3:3-4 the apostle adds that a person's unbelief does not negate the promise of God to save in the Gospel. *Nothing* beyond the Gospel is necessary to bring a person to faith, nothing in the person brought to faith and nothing in the person who proclaims the Gospel. "Efficacious" is an absolute term. "Effective," on the other hand, is a

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[24] John P. Meyer, Dogmatics Notes, Volume II (Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Printing Company, 1942), page 62, says: "God's call is serious, efficacious, and universal. Yet it is a fact that not all of those who are called are saved; but the fault is their own resistance."

[25] Edward Koehler, A Summary Of Christian Doctrine (distributed by the Rev. Alfred W. Koehler of Oakland, California, 1952), page 193.

relative term. Koehler makes the obvious observation that not everyone who hears the Gospel believes it.[26] He uses the term "effective" to describe the results that occur when the Gospel is preached.[27] "Effective" may also describe how well a Christian witness gains an audience for his evangelism, how well a preacher organizes and delivers his message, how well a church follows up on an initial presentation of the Gospel to reinforce the message. In what follows, the term "efficacious" is reserved for the Gospel, while the term "effective" is applied to the individuals or institutions that proclaim the Gospel.

In the journal article "No Longer Dinosaurs: Relating Lutheran Homiletics and Communication Practice," Dr. Glenn Nielsen distinguishes the means of grace from the *use* of the means of grace. Among six propositions posited are these: "2. Efficacy in matters spiritual is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, not communication skills." and 5. "While the ultimate responsibility for spiritual change is through the gospel by the Holy Spirit, the preacher has penultimate responsibility for the use of the means of grace, so that the sermon is heard, experienced and remembered." [28] Nielsen argues that the role of the pastor is "to use the Word in ways that are both faithful to the truth of the Word and effective in its communication."[29]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Glenn Nielsen, "No Longer Dinosaurs," Concordia Journal, Volume 25, Number 1, page 27.

[29] Ibid., page 20.

If the preacher's lack of preparation results in a garbled sermon, the <u>effectiveness</u> of his message has been damaged even though the <u>efficacy</u> of the Means of Grace has not. If a church member's life so contradicts the love and truth of God that others reject his efforts at witnessing, the effectiveness of his evangelism is severely curtailed even though the efficacy of the Gospel is not. If a congregation's insensitivity to the culture of its neighborhood keeps the unchurched from participating in its programs of ministry, that congregation's mission has been rendered ineffective even if its theology is orthodox. When language changes, when the way people listen or come together is altered, when the assumptions and concerns of a generation are different from those of previous generations, the effectiveness of a church's ministry methods is affected even though its message of Law and Gospel remains unchanged.

The efficacy of the Means of Grace dare not become an excuse for ineffectual ministry. Nielsen, in a footnote to the article cited above, writes:

> "I appreciate Nafzger's conclusion in which the first cautions against falling into the temptation that 'it is our techniques, our planning, our winsome ways, our persuasive ability, our good intentions, our strategizing which makes the difference, which makes the church grow.' That would be intruding into the efficacy of the means of grace. His second caution is equally important. 'On the other hand, we Lutherans are also -- perhaps I should say especially -- confronted by the equally insidious temptation to play the use of the means of grace against the means of grace. Just as soon as it is stated that the growth of the church takes place solely through the means of grace in Word and Sacrament, the devil quickly whispers to us: Relax, take it easy. Since salvation is by grace alone, then why trouble yourself with such things as techniques and strategies, with planning and programs for getting the Gospel out? Why give any thought to meet people where they are? The Holy Spirit does it all, working through Word and Sacrament. Therefore, do nothing. Or do it the easy way or the way we have always done it. Indulge grace!'" [30]

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[30] Ibid., page 19. The footnote references Samuel Nafzger, "The Growth of the Church: The Means of Grace and the Use of the Means of Grace" (<u>Issues</u>, Winter, 1995).

Faithfulness to the Word of God cannot make faithfulness with the Word of God unimportant. Lutheran theology does not turn the Gospel into a talisman or those who proclaim the Gospel into shamans. The God who created us as rational and emotional beings, communicates to us in rational and emotive language; and he has chosen to make his saving purpose for our world dependent on his people's proclamation of his message. Charles Arand, in his overview of Luther's catechisms, says: "The First Article (of the Apostles Creed) lays an important foundation for the Second and Third Articles. It demonstrates that in all three articles God works through creaturely means in order to accomplish his work. It also means that we are not to look outside the creaturely for his presence and work." [31]

While Christians cannot condition the efficacy of the Means of Grace in the heart of a hearer, they can and do condition how people hear the Means of Grace, by both the frequency and the way with which they present the Gospel.[32] While churches cannot make the Gospel more or less believable, they can and do make it more or less hearable. While evangelism methods do not make the Word of God more or less powerful, they can make the Word of God more or less understandable. They can turn people off before they've really heard the truth, or they can build bridges which provide multiple opportunities to present the truth. While church programs that address human needs such as food, medical care, education, child care or emotional support do not of themselves accomplish the Savior's mission for his church, they create relationships and

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[31] Charles Arand, That I May Be His Own (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), page 161.

[32] Nielsen, op. cit., page 25. "If the communication of the message shows little commitment or character, the crucial nature of the message may well be negated by such a presentation style."

forums in which the Gospel is shared with people who would not otherwise give that church the opportunity for witness. And churches that have no method of connecting with the lost, let alone little intention to do so, have severely restricted their effectiveness in Christ's mission without at all diminishing the efficacy of the Means of Grace.

When German Lutheran churches in the first quarter of the twentieth century were confronted with the twin challenges of greatly diminished German immigration and opprobrium attached to German culture by World War I, they adapted their methods of ministry without changing their message. They continued German-language worship and devotional visits because English was a barrier to many members' understanding.[33] The Gospel was not less efficacious in English; but ministry was less effective in English. They began English-language worship and instruction because, however efficacious the Gospel was in German, that language and its culture were a barrier both to neighbors' interest and their ability to understand. And the children of German immigrants had become acculturated, less able and willing to learn the truth in the language and culture of their parents. Two generations later Lutheran churches confronted a similar issue within English language and culture. The King James Version was replaced by contemporary translations because God's truth didn't communicate clearly any longer in "the king's English." In the Wisconsin Synod a new hymnal and a revised catechism followed, seemingly inevitably.

It may be more difficult to recognize significant cultural shifts when they are less ethnic or linguistic in nature. But there are marked differences in the way the so-called "Builder" generation (often coupled with the "Silent" generation to include people born before 1946) sees

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[33] M. Lehninger, editor, Continuing In His Word (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1951), pages 118-119.

ministry from the way "Boomers" (born between 1946 and 1964) and "Busters" (born between 1964 and 1982) respond. [34] In a post-literate world, people are more likely to perceive things through images and experiences than through logical propositions. Their attention spans are different, as is their way of processing information. Their values are different. [35] In a postmodern culture, people's assumptions about truth and life are different. They think synthetically rather than in black-and-white contrasts. Their goals are different. [36] In a post-Christian society, many are unfamiliar with basic Bible stories and theological truths. They no longer see "going to church" as important to their life. They may be turned off by "institutional" expressions of the church. God's Word is no less efficacious in this rapidly changing culture. But the church's methods of communicating that Word, the church's ways of reaching people, may become less effective. [37]

When Lutheran church bodies sent missionaries to Africa, they did so recognizing that there would be language barriers to overcome. They discovered that there were also cultural barriers to

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[34] For a summary of generational differences, see George Barna, Boiling Point (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), pages57-67.

[35] For an elaboration of the characteristics of a post-literate society, see Os Guinness, Fit Bodies, Fat Minds (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), pages 72 and 78-80.

[36] For an exposition of the "postmodern mind," see Stanley Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pages 5-56.

[37] For a description of our post-Christian society, see George Barna, op. cit., pages 77-94 and 184-202

overcome. (In fact, some of the language barriers were cultural barriers.)[38] Whatever their

experience and training in a state-side congregation, missionaries would have to learn new

methods of ministry and new ways to reach people. And they would have to learn from the

people they were trying to reach. Some learned better than others. This writer's experience of

Lutheran worship in West Africa demonstrates culture clash.[39] Worshipers dutifully follow page

five in The Lutheran Hymnal because the missionaries who introduced them to Jesus brought that

liturgical form with them. The mood is subdued, the participation less than enthusiastic. Then the

choir sings, and everything changes as the rhythms and forms of African culture allow people to

respond to their gracious God with a more culturally appropriate musical style. The Pentecostal

Church next door has more worshipers, not because a theologically distorted message is more

powerful but because a style more attuned to the culture makes the message more "accessible."

Or may it be that the theological distortion is a culturally induced attempt to make the message

more palatable to human nature?

In this question the twin dangers that a theology of ministerial practice must confront are

illustrated. One danger is to condition God's message with the sociology of a new culture, while

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[38] For example, "One must be aware of possible cultural differences in the area of emotive expression, during acts of religious communication. Upon hearing that 'David danced before the Lord with all his might' (II Samuel 6:14), a Tonga audience would immediately identify with the situation, for that is exactly what their traditional religious leader does when approaching the ancestral spirits at a local *malende* rain shrine." Philip Stine and Ernst Wendland, editors, Bridging the Gap: African Traditional Religion and Bible Translation (N.Y.: United Bible Societies, 1990), page 67.

[39] In Accra, Ghana, July of 1998.

the other danger is to imprison God's message in the traditions of an old culture.[40] While cultural

insensitivity can diminish the effectiveness of ministry by losing the audience, cultural impositions

on the message can diminish the effectiveness of ministry by obscuring the Gospel. The Gospel in

either case remains efficacious. In extremes, a culturally conditioned message may eliminate any

efficacious Gospel with heresy; and a culturally insensitive message may become totally irrelevant

to the people for whom Christ sent us.

It is important to a theology of ministerial practice to maintain the tension between two truths:

the absolute efficacy of the Means of Grace and the relative effectiveness of methods of

communicating God's grace, emphasizing the former and understanding the latter.

Law And Gospel Properly Distinguished:
God's Map For A Theology Of Ministerial Practice

A cardinal distinctive of Lutheran theology is clearly distinguishing law and gospel and

properly applying each. Luther wrote: "We so constantly repeat, urge and drill this specific

doctrine of faith or Christian righteousness that we may keep it in perpetual practice and definitely

distinguish it from the active righteousness of the Law. Otherwise we shall not be able to

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[40] David Luecke wrestles with this issue in Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance (St. Louis: Concordia, 1988). On page 22 Luecke observes, "For most churches the line between style and substance remains unclearly drawn. The effort to re-establish it again and again remains necessary for churches that expect to continue a lively ministry among people in different and changing cultures. . . Because its starting point is change, planning is most faithful when done in the context of a theology confident of what does not change."

preserve true theology -- for out of this doctrine the church is born and by it alone it continues to exist. . . Therefore if we want to be preachers and teachers of others, we must exercise the greatest care in these matters and thoroughly grasp this distinction between the righteousness of the Law and of that which comes from Christ." [41] Understanding law and gospel correctly will assure that a church's ministerial practice in the area of evangelism preserves both mission and message as Christ gave them. A correct distinction between law and gospel lies at the heart of an appropriate sequence and balance of justification and sanctification in a church's ministry. This distinction is essential to appropriate motivation in every area of the congregation's work.

One of the most significant analyses of law and gospel is found in the classic work on preaching, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, by the nineteenth century theologian C. F. W. Walther. Perhaps the most important of Walther's theses is the last: "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching." [42] In this pragmatic age we're told that people are not so much interested in how to be right with God as they are how to make their life work right. [43] There is certainly a need for seminars on parenting, for classes on Christian financial management, and for workshops on coping with stress. And every such "problem" with life can become the starting

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[41] From the introduction to Luther's 1531 commentary on Galatians. This is recorded in: John Fallowes, editor, Commentary on Galatians by Martin Luther (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979), page xvii.

[42] C. F. W. Walther, The Proper Distinction Between Law And Gospel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1928), page 403.

[43] Cf. Gene Edward Veith's discussion of the theology of the cross versus the theology of glory in The Spirituality of the Cross (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), pages 57-69.

point for helping people understand the big PROBLEM that has created all these issues -- Sin.
Further, the anxieties and relational tensions caused by sin are a nice lead-in to the guilt and shame
that separate us from our God. All of this law in its primary use is preparation for the good news
that God has taken away our sin and restored us to a loving relationship with him in the life, death
and resurrection of His Son Jesus.[44]

When the programs a church operates and the teaching and counseling it offers are clearly
centered in the liberating message of the gospel which follows upon the condemning message of
the law, when leading people to rejoice in their restored relationship with God rather than merely
improving their lives is the clear goal of everything a church does, then addressing "perceived
needs" has an appropriate place in a theology of ministerial practice. But when the law is taught
chiefly as a guide for successful living, when the gospel is watered down to a generic message of
God's love, when "satisfied customers" and a lot more of them is the goal of ministry rather than
forgiven sinners and saints maturing in the faith, then a "sociology of ministerial practice" or a
"psychology of ministerial practice" has replaced a theology of ministerial practice. The Savior
who fed 5000 miraculously answered people's requests for more bread by pointing them to
Himself, the "Bread of Life." (John 6:35-58) The Lord who healed countless diseases told his
critics: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick," before pointing out their spiritual
sickness and concluding, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

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[44] Joseph Aldrich provides a profile of the lost that includes several examples of how the
consequences of sin become doors for witness in Gentle Persuasion (Portland: Multnomah Press,
1988), pages 111-118. David Henderson develops a number of evangelism models in Culture
Shift (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998). His use of moral consequence in pages 167-179
parallels the concept of moving from problems to PROBLEM, before offering the solution to the
real problem of sin in Jesus Christ.

Jesus spoke much about judgment and gave his life to spare us God's judgment, but when

someone wanted him to arbitrate a matter of civil justice, he replied: "Man, who appointed me a

judge or an arbiter between you." (Luke 12: 14) Truly, his kingdom is not of this world. (John

18:36) And yet, Jesus utilized the needs of this world to connect with people, to gain their

attention and to illustrate their greater need for forgiveness and salvation.

Walther's sixth thesis is equally important. "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the

Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness, when, on the

contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel."[45] In

this success-oriented world, evangelism and marketing are sometimes confused, with the result

that the law is "toned down" so as not to turn off the "prospects," and the gospel as a result

becomes "pretty good news."[46] While a church may very well use tenets of marketing to identify

the audience it hopes to reach and to communicate with that audience, such "pre-evangelism"

must avoid misrepresenting Christian truth or misguiding the people it hopes to reach.[47] So-called

"Friendship Evangelism" degenerates into being nice when "making friends" rather than "making

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[45] C. F. W. Walther, op. cit., page 79.

[46] Michael Horton, in A Better Way (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), pages 75-76, says: "Many who were raised on 'hellfire and brimstone' have reacted by preaching 'soft' law, as if Jesus were a kinder, gentler Moses, who replaces rules against dancing with encouraging, practical direction. . . Sentimental moralism (viz., 'If you follow God's principles for success in life, you will be happy') is actually just another way of confusing the law with the gospel in a manner that dilutes the seriousness of the one and the sweetness of the other."

[47] David Henderson, op. cit., page 59. "For us to 'sell' Christianity is to make it something far different and far less than it is. It is not an option; it is a claim. It is not a way to have needs met; it is a way of life. When we market the faith by reducing its claims to a set of comforting and non-threatening benefits that make it easy to come to Christ, we strip it of its substance and warp its intentions."

disciples" becomes the goal. The Institute for American Church Growth, lacking this understanding, created the remarkable confusion of law and gospel which claimed that the Great Commandment was the means to accomplish the Great Commission. [48]

The confusion of worship and evangelism fosters a confusion of law and gospel as well. By definition, a non-Christian cannot worship God. When the structure of worship bends too far in the direction of accommodating the unchurched, clear confession and absolution may be lost and the pressure for more "positive" (a term people use to describe what makes them feel good rather than bad) preaching intensifies. In that climate clear law and clear gospel, unmingled, becomes more difficult. (Ironically, it is the cultural assumption, rapidly becoming obsolete, that unchurched people believe going to church is important that has led the church to attempt evangelism with worship.)

In his seventh thesis Walther points out the fallacy of preaching sanctification first and then Justification. [49] This is the moralizing trap into which preachers fall when they spend too much time analyzing the world and too little effort studying the Scriptures. It is the subtle temptation that captures unaware those who want their church to be a nice place of good people and are frustrated by the pervasive ugliness of sin in the lives of members. It may even be the weakness of pastors who carry burdens of counseling and want to "fix" the lives and marriages of their hurting people. In its worst guise, this confusion of law and gospel demands benchmarks of discipleship

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[48] A statement by Chip Arn, introducing the film Who Cares About Love at a seminar entitled "How To Diagnose and Renew Your Church" (Minneapolis, MN, April 14-15, 1990).

[49] C. F. W. Walther, op. cit., page 89.

for people who are joining a church with only a rudimentary understanding of God's grace. A theology of ministerial practice not only sequences sanctification <u>after</u> justification, but gives preeminence to justification.

There is, however, an opposite danger that proclaims justification without sanctification. The failure to proclaim the transforming power of the gospel leaves sinners trapped in the weakness and despair of their sinful nature, without the comfort or strength of the new identity they have in their baptism. A caricature of this truncated understanding of law and gospel suggests that God's job is to forgive and his people's job is to sin. Romans 6:1-14 answers such a distortion of the gospel or "half a gospel." Titus 2:11-14 clearly roots the sanctified life in the gospel. Lutheran theologian Francis Pieper describes the relationship of justification and sanctification this way: "1. There is an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification; where there is justification, there is in every case also sanctification. 2. But in this <u>nexus indivulsus</u> the cart must not be placed before the horse, that is, sanctification must not be placed before justification, but must be left in its proper place as the consequence and effect of justification. . . It must be admitted that even the Christians who in theory maintain the inseparable connection between justification and sanctification are ever in danger, because of their flesh, of forgetting this connection in practice."[50]

Failure to link sanctification to justification produces a caricature of church membership that has neither the goal nor a strategy of spiritual growth to maturity and lives of joyful witness and

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[50] Francis Pieper, <u>Christian Dogmatics</u>, Volume III (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), pages 7-8.

service.[51] This fallacy has contributed to long lists of inactive members and verified for unchurched people their impression of "hypocrites in the church." Dietrich Bonhoeffer uses the term "cheap grace" to describe the result of gospel without law and justification without sanctification. He says: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." [52]

In explaining his twenty-third thesis, Walther wrote: "The attempt to make men godly by means of the Law and to induce even those who are already believers in Christ to do good by holding up the Law and issuing commands to them, is a very gross confounding of Law and Gospel." [53] And later, "This abominable confounding of Law and Gospel is practiced in its grossest form by rationalists. There really are rationalistic preachers who regard the Gospel as a dangerous doctrine, a doctrine that makes men secure and unwilling to strive after godliness, because they are constantly being told that a person is made righteous and saved by faith alone."[54] Any ministerial practice must deal with the challenge of getting members to attend Bible classes,

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[51] An alternative to the law/gospel paradigm, one that more readily demonstrates the sequence and inseparable linkage of justification and sanctification, is "two kinds of righteousness." Appendix F of this project provides a brief description and application of this model.

[52] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost Of Discipleship (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1959), page 47.

[53] C. F. W. Walther, op. cit., page 381.

[54] Ibid., page 386.

commit time to roles of service, bring their children to programs of Christian education, and give generously to support the church's ministry. When pragmatism rather than sound doctrine guides the practice of ministry, an insidious form of legalism results.

The law, properly used, produces guilt at selfish refusal to honor God, guilt that drives the sinner to the cross for forgiveness. Distorted law manipulates people with guilt-trips. The concern of such a distortion of God's law is not the soul's relationship with God, but the member's contribution to the well-being of the institutional church.[55] Similarly, appeals to loyalty and duty may raise more money and commit more time among long-time church members, but such compulsion will also be recognized as the manipulation it is when the appeal is made once too often. This one form of legalism uses the law to accomplish what God intended the gospel to do in the hearts and lives of his people.

The other form of legalism makes pseudo-law out of institutional rules and obligations, little different from first-century Pharisaism. In its worst form, such legalistic manipulation appeals to the basest instincts of human nature. The hint of reward for "good churchmanship" fosters self-righteousness. Recognition for roles and gifts, if not done appropriately, may fuel pride's desire for self-glorification. Bad ministerial practice can even turn service based on one's spiritual gifts into a humanistic self-gratification.

Sanctification, the Christian life, is what God works in and through his people. In Philippians 2:13 the apostle Paul follows his encouragement that Christians live out their status as forgiven and righteous children of God for Jesus' sake with this statement: "For it is God who works in

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[55] Cf. the article "Send No Money To Martin Luther" by Joel Nederhood, pages 233-240 in The Agony of Deceit, edited by Michael Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990)

you to will and to act according to his purpose." The very title of the book, <u>Sanctification: Christ in Action</u>, describes the source and power for Christian living. Its author, Harold Senkbeil, says: "Besides being the work of God *for us* in Jesus Christ, grace is also the work of God *in us* through the gift of the Holy Spirit." [56]

In a provocative article entitled "Why Exhort A Good Tree?" Paul Raabe and James Voelz deal with the exhortations to sanctification in the letters of St. Paul. After reaffirming the two natures in tension within a Christian with Romans 7:14-25, the authors develop five theses on paraenesis.

> 1. Paul's exhortations are addressed to Christians
> 2. Although they are Christians, they cannot live for God by their own power and abilities. The power comes from the Spirit working through the gospel.
> 3. Paul exhorts his hearers to live out their lives practically and experientially in a way that conforms with what they are already by virtue of Baptism.
> 4. Pauline paraenesis exhibits a twofold character of negative warning and positive encouraging.
> 5. Paul's intent in paraenesis is not to accuse the Romans as sinners. [57]

Raabe and Voelz use the analogy of Newtonian physics, the everyday, experiential, and phenomenological understanding of the universe, and Einsteinian physics, a deeper, more theoretical and ontological approach, to make the article's point. Both approaches to physics are correct. The authors draw the analogy this way:

> Problems arise when the Newtonian outlook is taken to be a full description of the 'real,'
> fundamental state of affairs, when, for example, people think they can, of their own nature

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[56] Harold Senkbeil, <u>Sanctification: Christ In Action</u> (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing, 1989), page 113.

[57] Paul Raabe and James Voelz, "Why Exhort A Good Tree?" <u>Concordia Journal</u>, Volume 22, Number 2, pages 158-160.

and by their own reason and strength, choose for God and live a God-pleasing life. Against this danger the 'Einsteinian' model needs emphasis, that a good tree yields good fruit by the power of the Spirit of Christ working through the effective Gospel. A distorted approach also emerges when we fail to treat Christians as down-to-earth human beings by never warning and exhorting them because we consider it useless to warn and exhort a good tree. With respect to this danger the paraenetic 'Newtonian' model applies. Both perspectives are necessary for a balanced, Biblical view of sanctification. [58]

II Corinthians 5:14-15 and 8:8-9 root Christian motivation in the love of Jesus for us. There are corollary motives for God's people. Gratitude for all that a gracious God has done for us moves Christians to self-sacrifice. Conviction inspired by the Holy Spirit's application of the Gospel to hearts, in turn, inspires a sense of mission. Absolute awe at the glory of our God moves Christians to soaring worship. The "joy of salvation" leads to a life of witness, as David says in Psalm 51. Jesus, in John 15:7-15, even uses the word "obey" as a fruit of the Gospel rather than a command of the Law. Gospel motivation is inspiration rather than manipulation; it is purpose-driven rather than duty-compelled, because Jesus has made his people "friends" instead of "servants." (John 15:14-15)

But is there not, somewhere between legalistic manipulation and gospel inspiration, a realm of purely neutral "human motivation?" Did not God create Adam and Eve as psychological beings, who were moved by such things as need and interest? In fact, if such psychological dimensions of our being existed prior to the fall, will they not also be a part of our make-up when Jesus returns to make all things new? Then, cannot the Holy Spirit sanctify human needs and interests for his use? A theology of ministerial practice must address also the motivational role of needs and interests, for these can be manipulated with legalism or directed by the Gospel. The church can

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[58] Ibid., pages 162-163.

approach the non-Christian on the basis of his needs and interests, since he can have no "gospel motivation." She may bring her children to a Lutheran school or Early Childhood Ministry because she wants them to receive moral training and loving care. He may attend a Christian recovery group meeting because he has a grief or an addiction he wants to manage. And in such a setting the church can share the message of sin and grace that not only makes sense out of life but is the Spirit's means of conversion.

The church may approach members also on the basis of sanctified psychology. The weak member needs to grow in his faith; and that occurs only through the Means of Grace. So the pastor invites him to a marriage enrichment weekend, because that is a current need or concern in this life; and in that weekend he will hear law and gospel. A member whose experience on a committee has turned her off on volunteering is invited to participate in a task force on Christian child care, because that is her area of passion and education. Misuse the law in such scenarios, and motivation becomes manipulation. Love for souls, however, seeks to reach people and mature Christians with sensitivity to the way in which God created them.

In a paper entitled "Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21st Century," Charles Arand addresses the issue of Christian motivation within the broader context of the two dimensions of the church, vertical and horizontal. He cuts through much of the conflict artificially created between orthodox theology and effective methodology by pointing out that ministry is conducted under both the third article and the first article of the Apostles' Creed. While third-article ministry, using the means of grace, is paramount, the church honors God by using his first-article gifts in service to the means of grace. Those first-article gifts may be the talents and skills of individuals or the insights and disciplines of culture. Dr. Arand writes:

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The situation also applies to the matter of how we motivate and organize people. On the one hand, in terms of the church as a fellowship of faith, people are moved by the Gospel. They are motivated both by the thanksgiving for the Gospel as well as the needs of people who do not currently know Christ. At the same time, in dealing with people who are made of flesh and blood, we need people skills by which we make them feel needed and important. Here we may draw on the methods and resources of other voluntary organizations. We can derive ideas and tips about how to do it, sift it through our theology for their anthropological presuppositions, and utilize them in service to and support of the proclamation of the Gospel. [59]

Pastors and lay leaders will want to base their ministerial practice on a clear distinction of law and gospel, with a clear emphasis on the gospel. They will want to give priority to the doctrine of justification and connect the doctrine of sanctification to it in the theological sequence Scripture teaches. They will appreciate and employ the sociological and psychological insights God allows people to discover, but they will subject these human precepts to the divine precepts of God's Word.

Adiaphora: Freedom With Responsible Love

Ministerial practice must rest between the error of legalism, which prescribes forms God hasn't, and the excesses of individualism, which demeans the traditions of the church and destroys the unity of the church. Based on Scripture, the Church has taught Christian freedom with responsibility under the theological term adiaphora. The German for this term means, literally, "things in the middle." Adiaphora are matters God has not prescribed with commands or

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[59] Charles Arand, "Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21st Century," a paper delivered December 3, 2001, page 6.

prohibitions. They are issues in which a church or individual Christian is free to exercise spiritual judgment. Applying the principles of adipahora to a theology of ministerial practice means that pastors and lay leaders must distinguish what dare never change from what may change and what must change.

In the first century the issues facing the church were whether or not to eat meat that had been brought to a pagan temple initially or whether to observe Jewish dietary laws, festivals and the Sabbath. Throughout New Testament history issues such as fasting and the mode of baptism have been subjects of dispute because the Scriptures do not prescribe them. In our generation it is forms of worship and church polity that necessitate restudying the subject of adiaphora.

The apostle Paul establishes several principles in I Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:23-33, Romans 14:1-23 and Galatians 5:1-13, principles as applicable today as in the first century Greco-Roman world. Among these principles are:

> 1) We ought not make rules or laws about that which God has neither commanded not forbidden. (I Corinthians 10:23 and 29; Romans 14:13)
> 2) While many things may be permissible to Christians and their churches, those that are not constructive or beneficial are best avoided. (I Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23)
> 3) Christian freedom is tempered by Christian love and responsibility that seek what serves and is best for others. (Romans 14:1 and 13; I Corinthians 10:24)
> 4) Do not allow a legalistic or tyrannical person to impose his viewpoint on the conscience of others and rob them of their freedom in Christ with spiritual abuse. (Romans 14:16; I Corinthians 10:29-30; Galatians 5:1)
> 5) Forego your freedom if a sensitive Christian conscience may be led to doubt by your actions. (Romans 14:20-21; I Corinthians 10:28-29)
> 6) If you are unsure whether something is right or wrong, don't violate your conscience by doing it. (Romans 14:23)
> 7) In all things, seek to give glory to God by what you do. (I Corinthians 10:31)

The Augsburg Confession, in Article VII, teaches: "It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and

that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places." [60] In Article XXVIII the Augsburg Confession addresses "Ecclesiastical Powers," and, pointedly, church ordinances and ceremonies: "It is proper for the Christian assembly to keep such ordinances for the sake of love and peace, to be obedient to the bishops and parish ministers in such matters, and to observe the regulations in such a way that one does not give offense to another and so that there may be no disorder or unbecoming conduct in the church. However, consciences should not be burdened by contending that such things are necessary for salvation or that it is a sin to omit them, even when no offense is given to others." [61]

The Adiaphoristic Controversy which followed Luther's death brought further clarification. Article X of the Formula of Concord says:

> We should not consider as matters of indifference, and we should avoid as forbidden by God, ceremonies which are basically contrary to the Word of God, even though they go under the name and guise of external adiaphora and are given a different color from their true one. Nor do we include among truly free adiaphora or things indifferent those ceremonies which give or (to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from that of the papists. . . Neither are useless and foolish spectacles, which serve neither good order, Christian discipline, nor evangelical decorum in the church, true adiaphora. [62]

Among the negativa of this article is the following:

> "We also reject and condemn the procedure whereby matters of indifference are abolished in such a way as to give the impression that the community of God does not have the liberty to use one or more ceremonies at any time and place, according to its circumstances, as may in Christian liberty be most beneficial to the church. In line with the

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[60] Theodore Tappert, op. cit., page 32.

[61] Ibid., page 90.

[62] Ibid., page 611.

above, churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies, when in Christian liberty one uses fewer or more of them, as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known axiom, 'Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith.'" [63]

These citations from the Lutheran Confessions demonstrate several principles. One such principle is that unity in doctrine does not require uniformity in forms and methods. Confirmation practice at a young congregation in a "saltwater" area of the country may be somewhat different from that of a long-established church in the Midwest. The make-up and mission of one church may suggest a less formal style of worship than is practiced in another Lutheran church. Pastors have a debt of love not to criticize sister congregations that observe more or less tradition than they do. Individual churches and their leaders must determine how best to carry out their mission, in their place and at this time, within the boundaries of orthodox doctrine.

Another principle is that peace and order in and among churches that are in doctrinal fellowship are to be prized and preserved, with freely given obedience to the church's leaders in issues of adiaphora. For example, in matters of controversy, such as applying what Scripture teaches on the roles of men and women in the church, there may be changes in practice that are perfectly free; and yet the exercise of that freedom could undermine unity in a church body, trouble uncertain consciences and misdirect energy from more important issues. Congregations and their leaders will, then, forego their freedom and forestall changes in practice for the sake of unity. At the same time, the leaders of a church body cannot impose policies that are not

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[63] Ibid., pages 615-616.

necessary applications of Scripture.[64] Church bodies, like congregations, remain a free association of Christians and Christian churches that confess unity in <u>doctrine</u>.

Similarly, in a congregation there may be members who would like to see dramatic changes in forms of worship or methods of Bible study, each of which lies within the realm of adiaphora and may enhance the congregation's ability to serve people.[65] While the pastor's preferences should not dictate the church's practices, the called leader of the church must help his congregation assess the pros and cons, as well as the pace, of change. In the polity of many North American churches, a majority of members will decide matters of adiaphora. Until they do and unless the pastor violates Scripture or tyrannizes consciences, people will accept their pastor's leadership.

One more principle is that ministerial practice which seems to imply ecclesiastical harmony without doctrinal unity ceases to be an adiaphoron.[66] And calling a practice by the term doesn't make it an adiaphoron if the form or method is shot through with false doctrine. In our pluralistic and ecumenical age, the experience of the sixteenth century reformers is somewhat repeated. Some evangelism methods may imply a synergistic view of conversion, no matter how much

[64] An example of articulation of this principle is found in "Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1985. Cf. also John Stott, <u>The Contemporary Christian</u> (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), pages 202-204.

[65] Robert Webber, <u>Worship Old and New</u> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), page 263: "Style is very different from content and structure. The content of worship is the Gospel. The structure of worship is the form that allows the Gospel to be remembered and enacted. . . But style is open and flexible and relative to each culture, generation, and preference."

[66] The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X makes this point. Paragraph 5 says, for example, "Nor do we include among truly free adiaphora or things indifferent those ceremonies which give or (to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from that of the papists." (Tappert, op. cit., page 611.)

"lutheranizing" is done.[67] Some marketing methods are so identified with worldly ends that they cannot be sanctified for the church's means.[68] Some educational psychology is so thoroughly imbued with secular humanism that it cannot be employed in Lutheran schools.[69]

That such possibilities exist does not mean that the church should not make use of methods developed elsewhere. In fact, many of the church's existing methods are adaptations of secular wisdom or another denomination's experience. For example, the organizational structure and accounting practices of a congregation are typically borrowed from the business world. Many of the pedagogical principles employed in teaching the faith to children are adapted from secular schools of education. The concept of Sunday School, developed in a Wesleyan tradition, has been employed in virtually all denominations.

There may well be disagreement on how to apply this principle of the confessions. There will likely be a great deal of sensitivity to any application of the Lutheran Confessions to matters of worship. One set of worship trends may be viewed by some as contributing to a blurring of the distinction between Lutheran and Roman Catholic doctrine.[70] Another set of worship trends may

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[67] For example, the "altar call" and "sinner's prayer" can't be harmonized with a theology that ascribes conversion solely to the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace.

[68] An example would be marketing promises of "health, wealth, and happiness" that Scripture does not make.

[69] An example is the "self-esteem" curriculum that is premised on the humanistic conviction that children are inherently good.

[70] For example, incense, chant, and similar "smells and bells" that some interpret as "Romanizing."

be viewed by others as a tendency toward compromise with Reformed teaching.[71] The fact that worship practice may move beyond the realm of adiaphora into false impressions of unity does not imply that it has done so. The burden of proof should rest with those who argue that a matter is not free, while the obligation of love urges all parties to demonstrate that their practice of ministry is both biblical and beneficial.[72]

Divergent views of worship practice are a good example of the importance of the doctrine of adiaphora. With Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions urge Lutherans today to respect the liturgical heritage of the church without insisting on any one form of worship.[73] The doctrinal principles of adiaphora lead Lutherans to reject worship practices that focus attention away from God and onto human beings, whether the human beings leading worship or those who've come to worship.[74] They emphasize the centrality of word and sacrament in God's service to his people. They insist that what is said and what is sung be fully faithful to Scripture. They caution against

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[71] For example, "contemporary worship" that does not use the historic *ordo* of worship or vestments.

[72] For a more complete treatment of the argument, the reader is directed to the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X.

[73] The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, Paragraphs 15-16, says "In the Confession we nevertheless added the extent to which it is legitimate for them to create traditions, namely, that they must not be necessary acts of worship but a means for preserving order in the church, for the sake of peace. These must not ensnare consciences as though they were commanding necessary acts of worship." After quoting Galatians 5:1, the paragraph continues, "Therefore the use of such ordinances ought to be left free. . . Thus even the apostle ordained many things that were changed by time, and they did not set them down as though they could not be changed. . . They worked hard to free the church from the idea that human rites are necessary acts of worship." (Tappert, op. cit., page 283)

[74] Michael Horton, A Better Way (op. cit.), page 28: "In worship it is not the culture -- whichever slice of it one might prefer -- that determines the shape of things. What we do on the Lord's Day is already determined by God."

misleading impressions, as though worship were merely entertainment or as though the mystery of

God's grace were the unrevealed domain of a priestly caste. They urge patient love for those

whose faith may be shaken by change. They recognize the right of the church's leaders to

establish worship forms, so long as these forms are not made matters of doctrine or conscience.[75]

They encourage unity and harmony among churches in fellowship with one another, without

prescribing any one form of worship.[76]

Neither Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions will resolve all the issues of debate over forms

of worship. They establish the parameters within which the debate ought to occur. That is the

intent of the doctrine of adiaphora. Pastors and lay leaders will want to review and apply the

principles of adiaphora to their ministerial practice.[77]

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[75] The Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, Paragraph 55 says: "It is proper for the Christian assembly to keep such ordinances for the sake of love and peace, to be obedient to the bishops and parish ministers in such matters, and to observe the regulations in such a way that one does not give offense to another and so that there may be no disorder or unbecoming conduct in the church." (Tappert, op. cit., page 90)

[76] Franklin Segler, in Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), page 178, says: "Liberty and liturgy, freedom and form are the twin pillars of worship. There is always tension between freedom and tradition. . . These should be kept joined and in proper balance. We must beware of championing a false antithesis between form and freedom."

[77] Marva Dawn provides criteria and questions for worship planning which apply these principles in A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pages 296-313.

The Doctrine Of Church And Ministry

A church's theology of ministerial practice must deal with the role of clergy and laity. It must be clear as to the church's mission and objectives. A congregation's organizational structure should reflect its convictions. The degree of freedom a group of Christians has to create new forms of ministry will affect its ministerial practice. For at least these reasons, it is important for a church to articulate its position on church and ministry.

Despite differences in articulating their convictions about church and ministry, Lutherans share a common heritage going back to the teachings of Martin Luther. While Roman Catholic theology taught an external and triumphal church, Luther emphasized the invisible Church and a theology of the cross.[78] Rome's canon law and Calvin's theocracy contrast sharply with Luther's emphasis on the Gospel and his teaching of the two kingdoms.[79] Apostolic succession in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy is a vastly different starting point from Luther's focus on the authority and administration of the Means of Grace.[80] His teaching of the Universal Priesthood of Believers is a Lutheran distinctive.[81]

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[78] John Dillenberger, Martin Luther (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961), pages xxi and xxxi. Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), pages 134-155.

[79] Heinrich Bornkamm, op. cit., pages 237-257. John Dillenberger, op. cit., pages 368-371. It is worth noting that Calvin taught that there are two kingdoms also. His practice at Geneva blurred the distinction between the two kingdoms.

[80] Julius Bodensieck, editor, The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, Volume I (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), pages 97-98.

[81] Heinrich Bornkamm, op. cit., pages 144 and 274. John Dillenberger, op. cit., pages 407-408.

A Lutheran theology of ministerial practice begins with the goal of a "free course" for the Gospel, not a tightly controlled ecclesiastical structure. Lutheran ministerial practice has a divine mission to free people from sin, not a social mandate to liberate society from poverty and injustice. When the church's primary purpose of bringing the forgiveness of sins to people is pursued, God's people will respond with love and work for justice in their communities. Lutherans trust the Word of God rather than bishops or majorities when theological tensions threaten the church. It should be Lutherans who lead the way in training members, not for more meetings, but for serving according to their gifts and in their spheres of influence. Instead of more efficient organizational structure, Lutheran churches will seek more effective strategies for getting people into the Word of God and, thereby, the Word into people.

While Luther's initial writing on the subject emphasized the priesthood of all believers against papal claims and practices, after 1525 he found it necessary to speak of the office of ministry God instituted in opposition to individualistic and mystical concepts of an immediate call. This theme is apparent in his commentary on Psalm 110, where Luther wrote: "For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office . And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of all the others, who are priests.. . . . This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests." [82]

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[82] Jaroslav Pelikan, editor, Luther's Works, Volume 13 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), page 332.

A Lutheran theology of ministerial practice balances the authority of the pastor's office with humility and faithfulness. It preserves the primary responsibility of the Christian congregation for the administration of the Means of Grace; and it upholds the biblical directive: "obey your leaders and submit to their authority." (Hebrews 13:17) It avoids false dichotomies that would pit "shepherding" against "equipping" or being a leader against being a servant.

Prof. LeRoy Dobberstein, in a 1991 essay for a Pastor's Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, echoed a principle of the so-called "Wauwatosa Theology" that articulated the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's position on church and ministry. He stated:"The public ministry and the universal priesthood are two species of the same genus." [83]

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, in its 1970 Doctrinal Statements, teaches:

"There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry. The one public ministry of the Gospel may assume various forms, as circumstances demand. The specific forms in which Christians establish the public ministry have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church. It is the Holy Spirit who through the gift of their common faith leads the believers to establish the adequate and wholesome forms which fit every circumstance, situation and need." [84]

Similarly, on the nature of the Church:

"In essence the various groupings in Jesus' name for the proclamation of His Gospel all lie on the same plane. They are all church in one and the same sense, namely in this sense that on the basis of the marks of the Church the Lord lets us apprehend the presence of the Una Sancta in each such grouping of people, and thus enables us to acknowledge them as

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[83] LeRoy Dobberstein, "Ministry: A New Testament Study," WELS Ministry Compendium, Volume II (Milwaukee: WELS Parish Services, 1992), page 690.

[84] Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing, 1970), page 11.

gatherings of believers possessing the ministry of the keys with the right of exercising this ministry in accordance with the considerations of love and order." [85]

This flexibility in form allows the congregation to call people to part-time or full-time ministry, as pastors or teachers, staff ministers or evangelists, according to needs and opportunities. The difference in office lies in the scope, not the essence, of the call. A Senior Pastor is not more important than the assistant pastor, but his responsibility is broader. Understanding this can avoid conflict that inhibits ministry or an artificial "co-pastor" structure that diminishes leadership and responsibility in the effort to avoid conflict. "Pastoral prerogatives" won't impede "lay initiatives" when the essence of ministry rather than human hierarchy is the basis from which Christians work together.

Such flexibility allows a Lutheran theology of ministerial practice to respond to a changing culture. A shift from the neighborhood church to the "mega-church" can be accommodated without compromising doctrine. "Para-church" agencies don't have to be a threat. "Satellite" ministry is a viable option. One pastor can serve two or three churches; or one church can call two or three pastors and a variety of "Ministers of. . . (Evangelism, Youth Discipleship, etc.).

Should American pluralism intensify its antagonism toward Christian churches and its objection to "organized religion," there will be more changes in the outward structure of churches; but the essence of church and ministry will not have changed. Understanding this will help pastors and lay leaders to deal appropriately with the cultural dimensions of ministerial practice. And there are significant cultural dimensions to any church's ministerial practice, as subsequent chapters of this project will demonstrate.

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[85] Ibid., page 7.

Conclusion

While the book of Acts does not prescribe a theology of ministerial practice, it demonstrates several principles essential to a theology of ministerial practice. The first is that the practice of ministry must be rooted clearly in biblical doctrine and mission. The second is that diverse ministry settings and changing circumstances for ministry will suggest the use of different forms and methods of ministry. The third is that the culture in which ministry is carried out will challenge the church to be both faithful to God's Word and relevant to the audience for its mission.

It is vital to a theology of ministerial practice to affirm the absolute efficacy of the means of grace, for the Holy Spirit uses only the gospel to convert, to renew, and to motivate Christian life. Because God has chosen to work through human language to reach people who have anthropological, sociological, and psychological dimensions to their being, churches convinced of the power of the gospel will want to employ the best methods of gaining an audience for the gospel and communicating to that audience. A clear theological position on this issue is central to a congregation's evangelism practice particularly.

Clear law condemning sin and the rich gospel of God's forgiving grace must have distinct roles in a church's ministry. Using the law to produce godly behavior when only the gospel can change hearts and produce lives pleasing to God is one error. Failure to encourage Christians in their life of sanctification is an opposite error. The doctrine of justification, the heart of the gospel, must have pre-eminence in a church's ministerial practice. A proper distinction of law and gospel is critical especially to a church's discipleship programs.

Both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions establish the truth that in matters of ministry where God has not commanded or forbidden, Christians and their churches are free to make choices that will best carry out their mission in their setting. At the same time, Christian love requires that neither the unity of Christ's church nor the conscience of weak Christians be damaged by those choices. This understanding is especially important to a church's worship practice.

How a congregation understands the doctrine of church and ministry will determine the parameters within which it organizes and staffs its ministry. Failure to root practice in theology risks the error of expediency.

Having established doctrinal footings for the theological foundation on which a ministry practice is built, this project moves in the following chapter to an evaluation of current literature on the practical dimensions of ministerial practice.

CHAPTER THREE:

A SUMMARY OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Introduction

The theological basis for a ministerial practice, as developed in the previous chapter, is

foundational. There are also practical dimensions to a theology of ministerial practice. This

chapter of the project will review current literature on the subject, most of which approaches the

subject from a practical vantage point.

"Theology of Ministerial Practice" is not a term used in published material addressing the

reasons for differences in the way churches carry out their ministry. "Philosophy of Ministry" is

the term used by a handful of authors. [86] Others discuss the subject without using the term.

Some churches draft a "philosophy of ministry" document, while others use terms such as "core

values" [87] to describe ministry emphases or their approach to ministry. This overview of literature

on the subject will look first at WHAT a philosophy of ministry is, by exploring different ways of

defining or approaching the issue. Arguments offered for WHY such a philosophy of ministry

should be intentionally defined will be summarized. Finally, this overview will look at the few

suggestions offered as to HOW such a philosophy of ministry can be developed.

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[86] Cf. Footnote one.

[87] Aubrey Malphurs, Values-Driven Leadership (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), pages 5-13, and George Barna, Turning Vision Into Action (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), pages 89-102.

The practical nature of the literature reviewed should allow pastors and lay leaders to identify with the rationale for developing philosophy of ministry statements and to adapt suggestions for doing so. While there will be some evaluation of the arguments and ideas reviewed in this chapter, the following chapter of the project will present a synthesis and expansion of the study done in this chapter and the preceding chapter.

As stated in chapter one, the terms "philosophy of ministry" and "theology of ministerial practice" are similar but not identical. Both terms include an appropriate role for theology, culture and values in determining how a congregation's ministry is structured and carried out. However, a philosophy of ministry begins with and emphasizes the differences from one congregation to another that exist as a result of culture and core values. A theology of ministerial practice begins with and emphasizes the biblical basis for any approach to doing ministry. Because the literature reviewed uses the term "philosophy of ministry," that term will be most often used in this chapter.

What Defines Ministry Practice Or Philosophy Of Ministry?

Authors and churches each have their own way of defining the components or characteristics of a philosophy of ministry. A synthesis of these different approaches can be boiled down to six categories that define ministry practice or philosophy of ministry: theology, core values, priorities, keys or qualities, cultural cues and models of ministry.

THEOLOGY

Nearly every author attempts to find a biblical basis or a theological framework for establishing

a ministry practice. Some risk stretching a biblical example into a universal precept, making the

descriptive prescriptive. [88] How the early church carried out ministry may *demonstrate* ministerial

practice, but not *dictate* ministerial practice. The church of Acts in Jerusalem is frequently cited

as a positive example; the church in Corinth is another example, though not so positive. In the

literature, lines between *mission* and philosophy of ministry are sometimes blurred, as is a

distinction between *vision* and philosophy of ministry.[89] Consciously or not, every author spends

far more time on the sociological and psychological factors that shape ministry practice than on

the theological factors. Perhaps the differing theologies of their readers explain this.

Kent Hunter suggests that Scripture presents a philosophy of ministry in its metaphors for the

Church: Temple, Household of God, Flock, Royal Priesthood, Bride of Christ, and Body of

Christ. [90] At best, these metaphors each provide one understanding of what the Church is and

does. Hunter's case is stronger when he points to Jesus' directions for the twelve in Matthew

10:5-6, "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost

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[88] For example, Robert Logan, in Beyond Church Growth (Tarrytown, N. Y.: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), page 121, asks, "What structure is most conducive to helping the church fulfill its biblical function?" The next sentence answers: "It is difficult to arrive at any answer other than 'the cell-group church.'"

[89] For example, see Harold Westing, Create and Celebrate Your Church's Uniqueness (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), page 26, or George Barna, Turning Vision Into Action (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), pages 145-146.

[90] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Personality (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), pages 69-75.

sheep of Israel," and Paul's words in Galatians 2:7, "They saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews," as examples of a philosophy of ministry. Here, culturally different audiences distinguish one ministry practice from another. [91]

Hunter provides these theological mandates for a philosophy of ministry: 1) It must be rooted in the Gospel and the Mission of the Church; 2) It must reflect what makes a church CHURCH; 3) It must connect people to God and to each other; and 4) It must demonstrate stewardship of the gifts and resources God has given. [92] As valuable as these guidelines are, one might wish he had added that the theological distinctives of a church's heritage ought to shape how that church does ministry.

Harold Westing outlines a philosophy of ministry in three theological realms, what he terms: Upward to God, Inward to His Body, and Outward to the world. [93] Others might have used the words worship, spiritual nurture and discipleship, and evangelism. Westing deals with differences in theological conviction, denominational traditions and individual emphases with a series of continua which define the "tension" that underlies philosophy of ministry decisions. These continua reflect both historic lines of theology and contemporary differences along lines often

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[91] Ibid., pages 59-60.

[92] Ibid., pages 52-54.

[93] Harold Westing, Create and Celebrate Your Church's Uniqueness (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), page 95.

described as "liberal" and "conservative." The reader can peg himself on these continua as one way of understanding his approach to ministry. [94]

In a broad-sweep diagram, Westing defines whole eras of church history by shifts in the "driving force" for ministry shaped by a confluence of theology and culture. [95] In the Reformation Era, Westing identifies worship and instruction as the drives which influenced the way fellowship and mission/evangelism were understood and carried out. In what he calls the "Evangelical Era," worship, instruction, fellowship and mission/evangelism are inter-related drives in equilibrium, without one clearly dominating others. In his "Post-Christian Era," Westing sees mission/evangelism as the area of ministry driving the way a church does worship, instruction and fellowship. [96] As subjective as these distinctions are, they provide another way of describing the importance that theological perspective has in shaping a philosophy of ministry. Westing's major contribution to understanding why a church carries out ministry the way it does is identifying how significant are theological emphases or priorities, emphases or priorities that may change as the situation inside or outside the church changes.

What is missing in the discussion of the theological impact on ministry practice is a debate of the position stated so well by Kouzes and Posner: "All processes can be used for good or evil. . . Processes themselves are neither positive or negative. People give processes their charge." [97]

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[94] Ibid., page 123.

[95] Ibid., page 161.

[96] Ibid., page 103.

[97] J. M. Kouzes and B. Z. Posner, Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), page 66.

Processes, methods, forms and structures originate somewhere. Some originate in a church and may or may not reflect the theological emphases and distinctives of that church. Some originate in the business world or the political arena; they may be neutral and they may be adaptable, but they often carry assumptions and emphases. Some methodology is developed out of sociological research or psychological truisms; and there may be a question whether these have been taken captive and made obedient to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

CORE VALUES

Aubrey Malphurs and George Barna represent the school of thought that defines ministerial practice largely in terms of core values. Barna provides a definition with distinction when he says: "Mission gives your life purpose. Vision gives your life direction. Values give you character." [98] A paraphrase of Malphurs would say that churches are doctrine-based, vision-focused and values-driven. [99] Core values are shaped by the distinctive theological emphases and traditions of a church's heritage. They are core beliefs, the way people understand their world and life. They describe what is really important to people, what people won't compromise. They are what influence behavior, shape decision-making and inspire action. In sum, what your church is like and what it does are determined by core values.

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[98] George Barna, Turning Vision Into Action (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1996), page 91.

[99] Aubrey Malphurs, Values-Driven Leadership (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), page 32.

A church's values may be consciously determined or unconsciously assumed. They may be shaped by a pastor-leader or be the product of a congregation's history. One value, such as commitment to the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, can drive all other values. Or there may be a small number of equally powerful values that together create a congregation's character and culture, such as respect for a heritage and the education of children. There may be incongruent and seemingly incompatible values that are producing conflict, such as the preservation of tradition and an informal and contemporary approach to worship. There may be dissonance between articulated values and actual values. For example, an articulated value of outreach to the lost may be compromised by the actual value of "being comfortable in our church." Shared values foster consensus, loyalty, a positive image of the church and ethical behavior. For that reason, it is important to state core values clearly. Malphurs lists seven characteristics of "good values:"

1) They are biblical.
2) They engender passion.
3) They are shared.
4) They are constant.
5) They can be expressed clearly.
6) They are congruent.
7) They are implementable. [100]

For some churches, a series of core values is their philosophy of ministry statement or their principles of ministerial practice. Here's one example:

1) We are a sacramental faith community fed by the grace of God.
2) We are a faith community nurtured through the study of God's Word.
3) We are a faith community filled with the Spirit of Christ.
4) We are a faith community whose worship celebrates Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

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[100] Ibid., pages 69-72.

5) We are a faith community led through prayer.

6) We are a faith community where everyone is a minister and everyone has a ministry.

7) We are a faith community that brings Christ's light and love to our community and beyond.

8) We are a faith community that sees children and youth as the church of today.

9) We are a faith community that supports and cares for the family.

10) We are a faith community that is innovative and open to new ministries and styles.[101]

As another example, Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, IL, identifies its

philosophy of ministry with the following core value statements:

1) Anointed teaching is the primary catalyst for transformation in the lives of individuals and in the church.

2) Lost people matter to God, and therefore ought to matter to us.

3) The church should be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.

4) Christ's followers should manifest authenticity and yearn for continuous growth.

5) The church should operate as a unified community of servants stewarding their spiritual gifts.

6) Loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life.

7) Life change happens best in small groups.

8) Excellence honors God and inspires greatness.

9) Churches should be led by those with leadership gifts.

10) Full devotion to Christ and His cause is normal for every believer. [102]

One difficulty with defining a church's ministry practice by core values is that those core value

statements can be "apples and oranges." Some are timeless truths of Scripture, while others are a

subjective evaluation of what works best in a particular time and place. Some are doctrine, and

some are merely program priorities. Some are "is" statements, and some are "ought" statements.

It might be better to distinguish God's core values from the congregation's.

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[101] Statements developed and published by Holy Cross Lutheran Church of Colorado Springs, CO.

[102] George Barna, op. cit., page 97.

A second difficulty with a core values approach to philosophy of ministry is that the term seems a bit too abstract for many members to grasp. Almost inevitably, it will be the pastor or a small group of lay leaders who establish the congregation's core values. Without the ownership of a broader slice of the congregation, those values might not really be "core."

PRIORITIES

Kent Hunter defines ministerial practice chiefly in terms of a congregation's priorities. "Every church has a philosophy of ministry. Often it is unwritten. Sometimes it's hard to discover. But it's there, always! A philosophy of ministry is that statement of ministry that reflects the peculiar priorities of a particular church." [103] In some Lutheran churches the clear priority is their parochial school. Others emphasize music. Excellence in preaching is the distinctive of some churches. Cross-cultural outreach is what makes other congregations unique. What a church does well, what it has been doing for a long time, what is the source of members' pride about their church, what the congregation is known for in the community -- there are any number of ways to identify what a congregation's priorities are.

Who or what determines a church's priorities? Hunter explores such questions in his book, Your Church Has Personality. It may be the pastor who establishes a church's priorities, doing so either unintentionally by his interests and previous experiences or intentionally because his driving

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[103] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Doors (Corunna, Indiana: Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center, 1982), pages 27-28.

passion and obvious gifts are directed to clear goals.[104] The denomination may forge priorities by

its theological emphases, by one or more programs of excellence in its history, or by the culture

and curriculum of its seminaries.[105] In smaller churches dominated by one or two clans, there are

often influential lay leaders whose preferences become the congregation's priorities.[106] In larger

churches there can be constituencies identified with traditions (such as a powerful women's group

or a unique children's ministry) that dictate priorities.[107]

Because change is resisted in churches, it can be difficult to forge a new set of priorities; but an

intentional philosophy of ministry may require this. Hunter returns to two normative bases for

ministerial practice. The first is the mission of the church and the theological emphases of

Scripture; the second is the nature and needs of the community. [108] Out of the intersection of

these two streams of thought will come a church's priorities.

John Vaughan's book, The World's Twenty Largest Churches, is from one viewpoint a case

study of priorities. Five of the churches are in Korea. Nearly every one of the American churches

profiled is Baptist. While Vaughan doesn't do so, the reader can trace common priorities among

these churches. The dominant priority, a common theme among all these churches, is an

extensive and intensive program of adult education based on the conviction that the Bible is God's

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[104] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Personality (op. cit.), pages 50-51 and 100-101.

[105] Ibid., pages 44-46.

[106] Ibid., pages 51-52 and 101-102.

[107] Ibid., pages 42-44.

[108] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Doors (op. cit.), page 13.

Word.[109] The second priority common to these churches, though expressed in different ways, is a strategically developed evangelism effort that fits the character and culture of the congregation.[110] A corollary of that priority in most of the largest churches is a concern for world missions, kept before the members. A third priority that is apparent in these churches is training lay members for witness and service, according to their gifts, in the church and in the community.[111] There is one more priority, common to most of the twenty largest churches: a top-notch music ministry.[112] There are other themes that can be traced through the churches profiled, such as visionary leadership, adequate and focused staffing and a call for financial commitment. But the four program themes identified above are how the practice of ministry in these large churches is defined.

Rick Warren's Saddleback Valley Community Church has become a model for many churches of diverse doctrinal backgrounds. Warren identifies five different kinds of churches on the basis of their dominant priority: evangelism, worship, fellowship, edification, and ministry to needs. [113] His "Purpose-Driven Church" attempts to balance all five of those priorities. Warren's "baseball diamond" chart, adopted by a number of Lutheran churches, demonstrates an instructional core to that balance. "Knowing Christ" leads to first base, committed membership. "Growing in Christ"

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[109] Ibid., pages 106, 122, 129, 148, 171.

[110] Ibid., pages 108, 114, 121, 150, 173, 183.

[111] Ibid., pages 110, 133, 137, 201.

[112] Ibid., pages 174, 182, 257.

[113] Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), page 125.

takes a member to second base, committed to maturity. "Serving Christ" is the base-path to third

base, committed to ministry. "Sharing Christ" is the instructional goal that leads to home plate,

committed to missions. [114] The four goals match Warren's assessment of five audiences for

ministry: the unchurched, regular attenders, members, maturing members, and core lay ministers.

[115] Rick Warren doesn't use the terms philosophy of ministry or ministry practice to describe his

emphases, but his five priorities centered in a comprehensive and synergistic strategy are just that.

Priorities may be the easiest way to recognize a church's philosophy of ministry. What a

church emphasizes and where it concentrates its resources shape its identity. More difficult is

determining what those priorities should be. Core values should determine priorities. In fact, the

difference between core values and priorities may be only that priorities are the practical

application of core values. Kent Hunter provides the most helpful approach to determining

priorities with his two criteria.[116] What best expresses a church's theology and accomplishes its

mission is the first criterion. What best addresses the needs and opportunities in the community a

church serves is the second criterion. Without serious discussion of these criteria, a church's

priorities may be little more than the product of its history.

Alan Klaas, in his recent research among Lutheran churches, identifies commonalities for both

growing and declining churches. Declining churches, for example, are characterized typically by

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[114] Ibid., page 144.

[115] Ibid., page 205.

[116] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Personality (op. cit.), pages 27-29 and 96-99.

low self-image, isolation from the community, and a view of themselves as a family.[117] Growing

churches, on the other hand, are involved in the community and understand it, meet people's

needs rather than institutional needs, and use members' gifts in new kinds of ministry. [118] While

Klaas doesn't use the term "philosophy of ministry," he does recognize intentional priorities as a

significant facet of the ministry in growing churches.

In her book, Congregation and Community, Nancy Ammerman studies churches in nine

different areas of the United States. Her conclusions tend to mirror those of Klaas. Regarding

growing churches, Ammerman says: "Those congregations that were growing were also likely to

have new programming in effect." [119] Her evaluation of declining churches is this: "Of those

currently experiencing serious declines in membership and resources, all have either actively

resisted change or have continued with existing patterns, apparently unable to envision how things

might be different. . . Congregations that do not try new programs and new forms of outreach

when they are faced with environmental change are not likely to survive past the life spans of their

current members." [120]

Books like those of Vaughan, Warren, Klaas, and Ammerman demonstrate an apparent trend.

Large and growing churches seem to define their ministry more intentionally than do small and

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[117] Alan Klaas, In Search of the Unchurched (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), pages 21-33

[118] Ibid., pages 34-46.

[119] Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Congregation and Community (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), page 319.

[120] Ibid., page 323.

declining churches. There is a developing body of research to help small churches define their

unique strengths and become more intentional about their mission.[121]

KEYS or QUALITIES

A somewhat more pragmatic way of describing ministerial practice comes out of the

consulting experience of Kennon Callahan and the research of Christian Schwarz. This is an

attempt to boil down the primary elements of an effective practice of ministry. Unlike Hunter's

emphasis on what is unique, this school of thought seeks what is common. And yet, there are

obvious similarities in defining philosophy of ministry by priorities and by qualities.

There isn't much theology in Callahan's Twelve Keys to an Effective Church[122]. The twelve

keys are sociological means to a spiritual end, characteristic of publications from the '80s that

carry a "church growth" bias. While they treat the church more as institution than the Body of

Christ, they present practical realities that any congregation must think through in order to take its

mission and vision beyond ideology and reach people. Callahan's study assumes a theology; that

is the strength and weakness of his approach. There is an inherent weakness in any "assumption"

of theology; and without explicit doctrinal drivers to ministry programs there is the risk that

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[121] For example, Lyle Schaller, The Small Membership Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); Steve Bierly, Help for the Small-Church Pastor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Ron Crandall, Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Ron Klassen and John Koessler, No Little Places (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

[122] Kennon Callahan, Twelve Keys To An Effective Church (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).

quantifiable success becomes the goal. The strength of Callahan's approach is that the reader

does not have to wade through and weed out theological biases in order to learn from practical

research. Without comment, those twelve keys are: 1. Specific, Concrete Missional Objectives.

2. Pastoral and Lay Visitation. 3. Corporate, Dynamic Worship. 4. Significant Relational

Groups. 5. Strong Leadership Resources. 6. Streamlined Structure and Solid, Participatory

Decision Making. 7. Several Competent Programs and Activities. 8. Open Accessibility. 9. High

Visibility. 10. Adequate Parking, Land and Landscaping. 11. Adequate Space and Facilities. 12.

Solid Financial Resources. [123]

Schwarz's voluminous and international research represents well the "church health" paradigm

that has replaced church growth. His book, Natural Church Development, uses the terminology

of science (e.g. "Biotic principles")[124] and a formulistic approach (e.g. "The 65 Hypothesis")[125] to

address spiritual health; and that is somewhat disconcerting. At the same time, however, Schwarz

debunks the notion that large churches are "good" churches.[126] He argues for a qualitative, rather

than quantitative, approach to analyzing churches. And his "bipolar paradigm" or "reformation

principle" (not quite the Lutheran perspective of paradox or tension in theology) insists that no

ministry practice can be theologically neutral. [127] Ironically, Schwarz applies pragmatic principles

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[123] Ibid., page 118.

[124] Christian Schwarz, Natural Church Development (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), pages 61-80.

[125] Ibid., page 40.

[126] Ibid., pages 46-48.

[127] Ibid., pages 94-99.

to defeat the arguments of pragmatism that insinuated their way into thinking about the church. The eight "quality characteristics" of Natural Church Development are: 1) Empowering leadership. 2) Gift-oriented ministry. 3) Passionate spirituality. 4) Functional structure. 5) Inspiring worship service. 6) Holistic small groups. 7) Need-oriented evangelism. 8) Loving relationships. [128]

Waldo Werning has unabashedly taken those eight quality characteristics and added four of his own, particularly for a Lutheran audience. His four additional "pillars" are: Centrality of God's Word/ Gospel/ Grace; Mission and Vision-Driven; Biblical Financial Stewardship; and Church Planting. [129] Werning is, by nature, a synthesizer; and his book manages to adapt Rick Warren's work as well as that of Christian Schwarz, and include a reprise of some of his own earlier work.

One more familiar name on the seminar trail fits the category of authors who take a "key" or "quality" approach to ministry practice. Leith Anderson also uses the terminology of church health and provides a list of health "symptoms" in churches, without claiming that the list is exhaustive. His list includes: 1) Glorifying God. 2) Producing Disciples. 3) Exercising Spiritual Gifts. 4) Relating Positively to the Environment (culture). 5) Reproducing (evangelism). 6) Incorporating Newcomers. 7) Openness to Change. [130] Anderson has a more folksy and narrative

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[128] Ibid., pages 22-36.

[129] Waldo Werning, Twelve Pillars of a Healthy Church (Fort Wayne, IN: Fairway Press, 1999), pages 49-61.

[130] Leith Anderson, A Church For the 21st Century (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992), pages 129-138.

style of developing these seven keys. Then he offers this summation: "The constants must be the Bible and the mission of the church. Everything else is negotiable." [131]

It would be helpful for pastors and lay leaders to look at this research and evaluate their congregation in the light of what the research says about healthy churches. However, to establish a congregation's philosophy of ministry on the basis of so formulistic an approach has too many inherent risks. The most significant risk is that sociology may replace theology as the driving force of the church, and externally measured "church health" may adumbrate spiritual health. Another risk is that in the attempt to "clone" successful churches, worthwhile principles are turned into bromides and the unique character and setting of a church is ignored. The "keys" or "qualities" reviewed above make better analysis categories than criteria for establishing a ministry practice.

CULTURAL CUES

Another way in which a philosophy of ministry is defined is how the church reacts to its cultural context. Lyle Schaller has been a prolific writer, producing books on the practice of ministry at a rate of almost one each year. The format is predictable: stories that illustrate issues, statistics that reveal social trends, insights into how the church is impacted by the shifting patterns of American life, and "44 ways to. . ." or something similar to outline practical principles. No one has done more to signal changes in our culture and demonstrate both the negative and positive

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[131] Ibid., page 139.

impact these changes will have on the way a church does ministry.[132] Schaller's broad experience

as a city planner, a parish pastor, and a church consultant give the ring of authenticity to the

challenges he issues to church leaders. A Methodist by confession, Lyle Schaller nonetheless

adopts a theologically neutral stance to the subject of ministerial practice. It is almost exclusively

the cultural cues that drive what others would call his philosophy of ministry. And yet in his

book, It's A Different World, Schaller demonstrates keen insights into how changed theological

emphases have affected the practice of ministry. In his typically incisive fashion, Schaller says:

"The clearest deviation from traditional mainline Protestant teachings is that one's personal

religious experiences, rather than the promises of God, constitute the central validation of one's

faith. A second characteristic. . . is that the centrality of word and sacrament has been supplanted

by word and music. Third, a theology of glory overshadows the theology of the cross. Fourth, a

far greater emphasis is placed on the immanence of God, rather than on the transcendence of

God." [133]

Among the issues shaping a ministry practice, from Schaller's perspective, are: generational

differences, themes in education, family and lifestyle descriptors, consumer and marketing

concerns, public policy issues, demographic charts, sociological surveys, philosophical shifts, and

a great deal more. [134] It isn't merely the national culture and its community idiosyncrasies that

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[132] For example, Bob Buford says, "Nobody knows more about churches than Lyle
Schaller." Kent Hunter adds: "This is a key contribution by the master of all consultants." (From
the flyleaf of Lyle Schaller, The Interventionist, Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

[133] Lyle Schaller, It's A Different World (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), page 65.

[134] In addition to It's A Different World, see Schaller's Reflections Of A Contrarian
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) and The New Reformation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995)
for cultural trends that impact the church.

Schaller chronicles, however. Church culture comes under his microscope as well. He will tell

you which data is significant and how to analyze it. He'll provide the questions you need to ask in

order to comprehend the character of your church. He establishes categories within which to

understand the nature and mission of your church. You won't find a philosophy of ministry in the

work of Lyle Schaller. What you'll find is a cultural road map to help establish a philosophy of

ministry and a set of criteria by which to evaluate your philosophy of ministry. [135]

As an example, here's a partial and paraphrased list of the questions Schaller raises in one of

his early books, Parish Planning. 1. Do the members of this church take the Bible seriously? 2.

Is worship the central and crucial element in the life of this church? 3. Is there a strong people

orientation in the life, program and outreach of the congregation? 4. Is the church's orientation

toward building a future or maintaining the past? 5. Is the purpose or mission of this church

clearly stated, widely understood, and used as the basis for decision-making? 6. Do members

have a high level of confidence in their leaders, and leaders in the members? 7. Do members have

the freedom and permission to try new things, even if there is a risk of failure? 8. Are members

able to distinguish between the message God has given them to deliver and the method that is

appropriate at that time and place for delivering the message? 9. Does this church operate from a

balanced definition of purpose: nurture and outreach? 10. Is there a recognition of the obligations

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[135] Two more books by Lyle Schaller provide help to pastors and lay leaders who want to think through the cultural issues that impact their ministry practice: 44 Questions for Congregational Self Appraisal (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) and Create Your Own Future (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

the parish has to each member; and is there a challenge to members to commit themselves to specific goals of spiritual growth? [136]

Robert Logan, perhaps, best summarizes the school of thought that sees ministry practice largely in terms of cultural cues. "You see, being culturally relevant is actually another way of describing what incarnating the Gospel is all about. It means putting good news into forms that relate and communicate to people where they are. Of course, the best example of this is what God did in the ultimate incarnation, when he himself became man in Jesus Christ. Cultural relevance means incarnational ministry." [137]

Understanding the culture in which a church ministers is vital; and the work of researchers like Lyle Schaller and George Barna[138] will help pastors and lay leaders understand the context for their ministry. However, culture cannot be what drives ministry. Theology and mission determine the essence of a congregation's ministry. An understanding of culture will shape strategies and refine methods. An understanding of culture may even help a congregation establish priorities. But culture alone cannot create a philosophy of ministry.

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[136] Lyle Schaller, Parish Planning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pages 152-159.

[137] Robert Logan, Beyond Church Growth (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), page 69.

[138] Cf. George Barna, The Frog In The Kettle (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), Marketing the Church (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), User Friendly Churches (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), and Boiling Point (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001)

MODELS OF MINISTRY

One more way in which excellent ministerial practice has been defined is by looking at different

models of ministry. In this age of mega-churches serving as "teaching churches," there are any

number of models available, from the Lutheran "Community of Joy" in Phoenix to a Reformed

model in Barrington, IL, called "Willow Creek Community Church." [139] The problem with this

aping of "successful" models is that it bypasses any need for thoughtfully developing a theology of

ministerial practice. And there are a growing number of negative examples for what happens

when imitation IS the philosophy of ministry. [140] (It must be mentioned that none of the teaching

churches explicitly encourages imitation; and, in fact, most caution against it. The suggestion of a

"model," however, seems inevitably to create some mindless imitation.)

There is another way to look at the concept of "ministry models." In Generating Hope, Jimmy

Long offers his contemporary version of H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture.[141] He suggests

that there are five models into which a church falls. The "Assimilating Church" he defines in

words from John 17 as "in the world and of the world." A second model he calls the "Protecting

Church" and describes it as "not of the world and not in the world." His third model, the

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[139] Walt Kallestad, founding pastor of Community of Joy, provides provocative insights
into the philosophy that underlies his church in his book, Entertainment Evangelism (Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1996). Similarly, Bill Hybels, the founding pastor of Willow Creek Community
Church, discusses principles that underlie that church's philosophy of ministry in the book,
Christians in the Marketplace (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988).

[140] ABC's Peter Jennings explored this imitation in a 1995 television program entitled "In
The Name of God."

[141] H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ And Culture (N.Y.: Harper, 1951)

"Unchanging Church," is "not in the world and oblivious to the world." A fourth model is the "Battling Church;" it is "in the world and over the world." The final model, which Long champions, is the "Influencing Church," defined as Jesus did with "in the world but not of the world." [142]

Still a third kind of church modeling is historical in nature. Ronald Osborn uses a series of metaphors and titles to describe changing styles of ministry. As might be expected from his Roman Catholic perspective, Osborn sees ministry primarily in terms of the approach taken by the priest or pastor. He offers this unique insight: "The congregation projects onto the pastor expectations of a new model -- perceived as 'successful' -- while, however illogically and unconsciously, projecting hopes and demands associated with the traditional form of ministry they themselves chose to replace." [143] Osborn's thesis is that until now pastors tended to adopt one or another "model" (comprised of a practical "form" driven by philosophical or psychological concepts) of ministry, but that today the competing models are creating frustration. [144]

Osborn sees four nineteenth century models. The "saint" (or shaman) is in direct touch with God; he is a model of holiness, and that is externalized in his dress, jargon and mannerisms. The "priest" is identified with wisdom and a religious cultus; there is a distinct clergy "separateness" in this model. The "master" (Latin magister) is the teacher and preacher. Osborn attaches

[142] Jimmy Long, Generating Hope (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pages 19-34.

[143] Ronald Osborn, Creative Disarray: Models of Ministry in a Changing America (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1991), page 9.

[144] Ibid., pages 11-12.

significance to the shift in recent times from the parsonage "study" to the church "office" as this model is altered. The fourth nineteenth century model is that of "awakener." This is the visionary and prophetic role of the fervent preacher-evangelist who introduced subjective "experience" and psychological individualism into American Christianity.[145]

Before describing the four models of pastoral ministry that have evolved at the end of the twentieth century, Osborn -- like a Roman Catholic parallel to Protestant social critic Francis Schaeffer[146] -- describes the social and philosophical forces that drove negative change. Among these are the breakdown of community, the loss of human scale (an emphasis on "bigness"), the dehumanizing of higher education (more bigness and bureaucracy), and the ethical relativism, cultural subjectivism and marketplace values of a post-Christian era (a "landscape without landmarks" in Osborn's words).[147] In cynical fashion, Osborn decries "denominations recast as religious bureaucracies, diminishing the sacral character of the church" and the "theological undercutting of ordained ministry" with the notion that "every member is a minister." [148] The four models of today, in Osborn's typology, are: "Manager," "Counselor," "Impressario" (celebrity minister), and "Teacher." [149]

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[145] Ibid., pages 20-57.

[146] Cf. Francis Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976) and Whatever Happened To The Human Race (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1979).

[147] Ronald Osborn, op. cit., pages 121-131.

[148] Ibid., pages 132-133.

[149] Ibid., pages 137-179.

Osborn concludes his study by offering five biblical models: Servant, Prophet, Shepherd, Teacher and Soldier, and three secular models to explore: Storyteller, Reporter/Commentator, and Sports Star. [150] That he chose not to explore these secular models is telling.

The historical approach of Osborn provides scholarly depth to the subject. The popular approach that examines successful churches sells books. Jimmy Long's adaptation of Niebuhr's models is the most significant contribution to an understanding of philosophy of ministry, because it combines a concern for culture with the greater concern for the church's mission. Utilizing models may be a useful way to understand philosophy of ministry, but it is not particularly helpful in determining a congregation's philosophy of ministry.

SUMMARY

Much of the current literature deals with models or qualities that characterize effective ministry practice. Many of these authors don't use the term "philosophy of ministry." While they help to establish important criteria for effective ministry practice, they give too little attention to the unique setting of individual congregations. Few authors provide any depth in analyzing the theological basis for a philosophy of ministry. Of the literature available, the most helpful to a congregation intent on developing a theology of ministerial practice may be material that assesses cultural impacts on ministry practice and that which explains how core values and priorities shape the way a church does ministry.

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[150] Ibid., pages 192-195.

Before church leaders explore *what* a philosophy of ministry is, they will likely need to be convinced of *why* statements that define ministerial practice would be valuable. The literature provides cogent answers.

Why Develop A Philosophy Of Ministry Or
Principles Of Ministry Practice

Churches in the same community may see themselves in competition with each other if they operate from the assumption that all churches are pretty much alike, and the ones with the best preacher, best location, best facilities, best something get the most members. A healthier perspective sees God investing different strengths in different congregations, and different target groups or audiences for ministry suggesting different programs or approaches. Churches of the same doctrinal confession can complement each other in the priorities they develop. One may be poised to reach young families, while another has the ethos and programs that attract empty-nesters and retirees. One has built a very effective program to teens; another ministers especially well to people who've been in jail or are struggling with addictions; one congregation targets young adults particularly; another focuses on educational ministries.

Harold Westing quotes Pastor Gerald Sheveland of San Diego as saying: "There are always philosophies of ministry in existence. In any given church, there are always multiple philosophies that are jogging for priority, energies and resources." [151] Conflict between different values and

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[151] Harold Westing, op. cit., page 40.

priorities for the congregation, tension over style and approach to ministry, divergent

understandings of the culture we address -- all these are reasons for an intentionally developed

philosophy of ministry. Church fights over money are often the result of submerged disagreement

over what is important and how to deal with debt and deficits. Conflict between pastors who

share a congregation's ministry is many times rooted in unarticulated differences in assumptions

about ministry and goals for ministry.

Kent Hunter makes a related point. "A philosophy of ministry helps a congregation become a

good corporate steward of time, talents, and money. It will reflect intentionality of ministry and

the directing of resources according to well thought-out priorities. It will help a congregation

focus on its identity; it will help the people discover who they are and who they are not. It will

help show outsiders why the church is different from the one down the block. While each church

has a different identity, attitude, and priorities, this foundation of concern for good stewardship

will be a common theological basis for all churches and establish a philosophy of ministry." [152]

Harold Westing offers several more arguments for developing a philosophy of ministry. [153]

The first is based on the biblical metaphor of the body. Churches are inherently different, Westing

observes; and a philosophy of ministry expresses the things that are significantly unique about

each church. The second argument is similar. Culture varies from one parish area to another.

Failure to understand the ethnographic characteristics of a neighborhood or the life-style factors

of the area will diminish a church's ability to reach the people that are its mission field. The

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[152] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Personality, op. cit., page 63

[153] Harold Westing, op. cit., page 40.

pastor who assumes that the way he did things in his previous parish will work in his new call may be wrong. The long-time member who would like to hang onto the way things were, because they're comfortable, may become an obstacle to others making that church their home. Designing ministry methodology to address community culture is one objective of a theology of ministerial practice.

Westing's fourth case for a philosophy of ministry is the need for focus. [154] Too many churches are continually distracted by new ideas and programs. Many want to believe that they can be everything to everyone. Two questions of focus will help: To whom are we going to minister, and how are we going to do that ministry? Westing's sixth point, the tremendous diversity and variety in methods of ministry today, adds weight to the case for focus. [155]

This writer's experience in consulting with churches suggests that ministry balance is another argument. The tyranny of the urgent overcomes the importance of mission and goals. What a pastor enjoys or is good at tends to dominate his schedule. What serves and satisfies members is often an agenda that is followed at the expense of outreach to the unchurched and unsaved. Teens and young adults get lost in churches where there is little deliberate effort to reach them. The balance between nurture and outreach, a balance among several different audiences for ministry, a balance in the content of educational ministries -- all of this is a reason for pointedly developing principles of ministry practice.

Experience in consulting with churches creates the observation that good decision-making is predicated on such principles. Staffing is one example. Without a clear philosophy of ministry, it

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[154] Ibid., page 45

[155] Ibid., page 48.

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is difficult to draft good position descriptions. Unity among called workers will be enhanced or disturbed by the level of agreement they have on philosophy of ministry. What facilities are needed and how those buildings should be designed can be divisive issues when a congregation has not thought through its ministry practice. In fact, divisive issues and long meetings are an almost inevitable consequence of ignoring the fact that people see things through different windows and approach issues with different assumptions. A clearly articulated philosophy of ministry allows the convergence of differences in the interest of unity and mission.

Aubrey Malphurs contributes a few more reasons for developing a set of principles that will drive ministry practice. By establishing what is distinctive and what is important in a church, leaders prepare the way for positive change. Homeostasis -- the tendency for things to remain the same -- is a force that inhibits creativity and frustrates leadership. The process of developing principles of ministry practice can help members see where and why they will have to make changes in the way they carry out their ministry. The product of that effort will help them appreciate the unique character of their church and its mission. A philosophy of ministry can generate enthusiasm and move people to action. [156]

Few pastors and lay leaders will want to invest time in developing a philosophy of ministry if doing so seems an academic exercise. Authors tend to assume that the need for and value of a philosophy of ministry is already understood. Westing's arguments are valuable in selling the case for a philosophy of ministry. The best case, however, will be developed locally by a serious analysis of a congregation's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

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[156] Aubrey Malphurs, op. cit., pages 13-30.

How To Develop A Philosophy Of Ministry

In this overview of literature pertinent to identifying a congregation's philosophy of ministerial practice, consideration has been given to the definitions of such a philosophy and the reasons for developing one. But the question remains, *how* is such a philosophy identified and developed? The literature is less extensive here, but it does provide some guidance.

Perhaps the first question is who should develop a philosophy of ministry or establish the principles of ministry practice. There are at least three answers, as the summary of literature which follows will demonstrate. The first and simplest answer is that the (senior) pastor must establish such principles as a function of leadership. He has the theological training and the practical experience that equip him for the task. He must forge unity in the staff and congregation around those principles. And he is the one who most often represents the congregation's philosophy of ministry, both within the congregation and in the community.

Another answer is that the church's philosophy of ministry should be the product of the congregation's study and discussion. If the members are to own these principles, then they must be instrumental in establishing them. If they are to live these principles out in their lives of discipleship and their volunteer service, then they need to have thought their way through the development of the principles. However, while most authors would agree that the congregation should adopt the philosophy of ministry, far fewer would argue that the congregation should develop the document.

A third answer, somewhere between the previous two, is that a group of leaders -- probably including the (senior) pastor -- should be appointed to draft a philosophy of ministry. How much

input this group should have, and from how many sources, will be a subject of disagreement. The dominant answer to the "who" question, among authors who in some way address process, seems to be the pastor.

Kent Hunter doesn't offer a detailed process for developing a philosophy of ministry, but he suggests input from three sources: pastor, elected leaders and members. The input will be the result of basic questions such as: "What is most important here? What would you say this church is all about? What makes this church unique or different? And How would you describe this church to a new neighbor?" [157]

Robert Logan would expect the pastor to develop a philosophy of ministry. Logan borrows ideas from leadership gurus such as Tom Peters and Alvin Toffler and the experience of mega-church developers like Rick Warren and Robert Schuller. He offers a couple of simple action steps. The first is to identify your target group for ministry. The second is listening, naively, both objectively and subjectively, to the people in the community. Knocking on doors with a simple survey is one method of listening recommended. Finally, Logan urges the pastor to write one or two paragraphs that define his style of ministry. The criteria he offers, with which to evaluate the written document are: Does it state what makes your church unique and what type of person you're trying to reach? Is it accurate to your experience? And is it stated in a manner that is accurate, enduring, succinct, memorable, believable and energizing to all? [158]

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[157] Kent Hunter, Your Church Has Doors, op. cit., pages 27-28.

[158] Robert Logan, op. cit., pages 74-75.

Harold Westing offers a series of continua as a way of determining the style of worship, governance, discipleship and outreach a church is going to employ. In suggesting a broad road map to a philosophy of ministry, however, he seems to mix terminology and become overly broad. His seven steps are: 1) Seek the face of God (in prayer and meditation). 2) Define your vision (a term Westing seems to confuse with "mission"). 3) Do your theology. 4) Assess your environment. 5) Study your history. 6) Design your ministry. 7) Evaluate constantly. [159] For Westing a philosophy of ministry is not a static position.

Because the most common approach to developing a philosophy of ministry seems to be letting the senior pastor articulate his philosophy of ministry, the literature lacks a systematic process for a congregation to do so. While the suggestions of Hunter and Westing are worthwhile, they don't lay out steps to follow. Chapter six of this project will attempt to fill that void. Busy and practical pastors and lay leaders will be able to adapt such a process, but most will not create a process. They can learn much from the literature reviewed in this chapter, but a philosophy of ministry should be unique to each congregation.

Conclusion

This chapter of the project reviewed current literature on the subject of philosophy of ministry in three distinct areas: what a philosophy of ministry is, why a church should articulate a

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[159] Harold Westing, op. cit., pages 63-78.

philosophy of ministry, and <u>how</u> that can be done. The very term, "philosophy" of ministry, suggests a sociological rather than theological starting point. While authors make reference to Scripture, what is missing in the literature is a well-developed theological foundation and framework for ministerial practice.

The chapter traced six distinct approaches to a philosophy of ministry in current literature: theology, core values, priorities, keys or qualities, cultural cues, and models of ministry. The most important of these is theology. The most practical way to express a church's philosophy of ministry is with statements of core values or priorities, which are nearly the same thing. Pastors and lay leaders may find the most insightful information under the category of cultural cues. The literature describing keys or qualities and models of ministry is generally more useful in analyzing ministry than in developing a philosophy of ministry.

The most compelling material in the literature has to do with <u>why</u> a church should articulate a philosophy of ministry. Among the arguments offered, three are especially cogent. Unarticulated and competing philosophies of ministry create conflict. A clear philosophy of ministry helps a congregation focus its resources and attention in effective and efficient stewardship. The development of a philosophy of ministry compels a church to think through its unique strengths and important aspects of the community in which it ministers.

The majority of authors expect the (senior) pastor to develop a congregation's philosophy of ministry, perhaps with input from lay leaders and members. Beyond a few helpful questions to launch the thought process, the literature doesn't offer any systematic process for either teaching the concept of a philosophy of ministry to a congregation or developing specific statements of ministry practice.

The next chapter of this project will synthesize and expand on the current literature, and incorporate theological principles developed in chapter two. It will add the perspective of the author's experience as a church consultant, helping congregations identify and build on the unique strengths and opportunities God has given them. This next chapter is intended to serve as a teaching tool for pastors and lay leaders on the subject of a theology of ministerial practice. Chapter six will provide both a workshop to help members think through elements of a philosophy of ministry and a step-by-step process for a task force to use in developing statements which articulate a theology of ministerial practice.

CHAPTER FOUR:

A COMPREHENSIVE RATIONALE FOR AND DEFINITION OF

A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed several streams of thought in an effort to define what a philosophy of ministry is. It looked at arguments for creating a philosophy of ministry, and it summarized helpful hints for doing so. This chapter will put together the theology that underlies a ministry practice, the cultural factors that impact ministry practice, and the priorities that give unique flavor to each congregation's ministry practice in a comprehensive definition of a theology of ministerial practice. Pointed and practical examples will make this applicable to individual ministry settings. An expanded argument for developing statements of ministry practice will encourage thought and effort toward doing so on the part of pastors and lay leaders. The use of many different illustrations and examples is intended to help readers from many different settings find a point of reference.

While the congregations and pastors of a church body confess the same theology, their ministerial practice may have striking differences. One reason is the impact of ethnic and regional culture on their style of ministry. Another is the age of the congregation and the tenure of the current pastor. Varied values and priorities among pastors and congregations shape their approach to ministry. Personalities, gifts, and experiences condition the way different people view

things and do things. That raises several questions. What differences in ministerial practice are appropriate, and when may our way of doing things compromise either God's Word or Christ's mission? Is it just the pastor's approach to ministry that should shape a congregation's practice of ministry, or should each congregation intentionally articulate the principles that shape how its ministry is carried out? Is a church's ministerial practice thoughtfully determined or unconsciously carried out? Are the pastor and lay leaders doing ministry the way they do because that is what is most comfortable for them, or because that is the best way to reach and serve people?

Widely divergent trends may appear within the same theological tradition. In the area of worship, a liturgical renewal can coexist with the desire for contemporary music, less formal settings, and a children's sermon. One could attribute this to the age-old tension between the transcendence and immanence of God, or to competing forces in our culture for tradition and ritual at one end of the spectrum and a postmodern rejection of anything historical and normative at the other. [160] Or maybe it is just this generation's celebration of differences that has produced so many such differences. In the area of stewardship, many churches are less than a century removed from dues and pew rents. The trend toward a "unified budget" has now been pretty much unraveled [161] by a culture that doesn't trust leaders or denominations and insists on personal choice. [162] Changes in the economy have made deferred giving almost as significant as percentage

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[160] For a more thorough discussion of this tension, see Gene Edward Veith's The Spirituality of the Cross (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), pages 55-69.

[161] Lyle Schaller, It's A Different World, pages 234-235.

[162] George Barna, What Americans Believe (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), page 159.

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giving. [163] While some churches are still arguing over pledge cards, others have instituted direct withdrawal of offerings from members' bank accounts. Certainly, there are biblical principles which need to guide our practice. But there may be personal perspectives passed off as such principles. A theology of ministerial practice has to separate sound doctrine from what merely sounds like doctrine.

Why we do what we do the way we do it is a complex subject. There are clear biblical truths that drive an approach to ministry; and there are theological distinctives of one's doctrinal heritage that shape his practice of ministry. But there are also many factors which contribute to a practice of ministry that lie in the realm of adiaphora. Many of the assumptions on which we base the methodology of our ministry are sociological and psychological in nature; and people may differ in how they understand the audiences they serve. Some issues of difference among churches are merely preferences, while others are dearly held principles that may or may not have been thought through.

Christians have a debt of love to challenge each other, personally, when there are misgivings about the theology a church or pastor is practicing. But love means that they do not judge one another over legitimate differences in methodology, style or priorities -- differences often shaped by cultural forces. Lutheran identity ought to be shaped by the theology Lutherans confess, not the worship forms or evangelism and stewardship programs they develop. Christians need to sort out doctrine and culture in a theology of ministerial practice before they engage in "worship wars," before they label someone's evangelism methodology "church growth," before they

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[163] George Barna, <u>Boiling Point</u>, page 228.

demonize another congregation's approach to financial support.

Experience in consulting with nearly a hundred congregations confirms that some churches seem to carry out a ministry at variance with their theology. Lutheran theology's emphasis on God's universal justification and free grace is sometimes couched in a ministry that gives little attention to evangelism and produces leaders who exhibit little joy. A theology that highlights God's Means of Grace may be mismatched with a ministry that has few members in Bible study and fewer who appreciate what Baptism and the Lord's Supper do for them. Luther's teaching on the universal priesthood of believers can get lost in a ministry dominated by the pastor and focused on the institutional church. Too often the practice of ministry reflects neither the theological emphases of Lutheran doctrine nor the functional realities of contemporary culture. Rather, a congregation seems to perpetuate a "church culture" that has developed, unexamined, over several generations. The question, WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO THE WAY WE DO IT, deserves better answers.

The factors that shape a ministry practice should be identified and defined. Here is one view of those factors: THEOLOGY is what we believe and teach, because this is what God has revealed in His Word. MISSION is why we're here, what we exist to do and accomplish as a church, based on the Savior's commissioning. PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY is "why we do what we do the way we do it," the important assumptions that shape our approach to ministry and the key priorities that govern our conduct of ministry. VISION is where -- under God -- we are going, the key goals for the next several years of our ministry. STRATEGY is how we intend to get there, the steps necessary to move from where we are to where we believe God wants us to be. MINISTRY, then, is what we do, the application of our theology and mission as shaped by our

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philosophy of ministry and vision and outlined by our strategy.

Examples To Illustrate The Importance Of A

Clearly Defined Theology Of Ministerial Practice

Rather than a series of abstract arguments, contemporary examples drawn from American church life will demonstrate the value of a clearly defined theology of ministerial practice. Examples from the realm of theology are offered without any attempt to resolve the concerns raised, but to demonstrate how important it is for pastors and lay leaders to have a clearly defined theological base to their ministerial practice. Cultural examples will make the case for a theology of ministerial practice by pointing out differences and changes that confront a church's leaders.

THEOLOGICAL EXAMPLES

It is especially where the church experiences conflict or controversy that the value of a clearly defined theology of ministerial practice is apparent. Three examples of this are civil religion, the relationship between church and state, and the church's voice in addressing societal issues.

Civil Religion

Many of the civic memorial gatherings following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001

demonstrated, among many other things, that "civil religion" has adopted the pluralistic flavor of

our postmodern culture. A generic god was invoked on several occasions by clergy representing

Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and other beliefs. The challenges of American

ecumenism to a biblical church fellowship principle have been escalated to the point that St. Paul's

words in II Corinthians 6:14 apply directly: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. . . What

fellowship can light have with darkness?" It is certainly not popular, in the community and even

in some quarters of the church, for a pastor or congregation to refuse to participate in Christ-less

worship. Unless there is a ministerial practice rooted clearly in biblical theology and articulated in

clear principles, the pressure of patriotic sentiment, populist non-judgmentalism and misguided

notions of outreach can lead a congregation into the practice of universalism that denies the

Gospel.

The Relationship Between Church and State

American politics include a powerful lobbying force in the Christian Coalition. [164] Members of

Christian churches, especially those whose conservative political leanings aren't well distinguished

from their conservative religious position, may want their congregation to identify with the

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[164] Ralph Reed, Active Faith: How Christians Are Changing The Soul Of American
Politics, (New York: The Free Press, 1996), pages 151-187.

movement. This has challenged church leaders with several questions. One has to do with the distinctly different spheres, mission and means of church and state. Another is distinguishing what is biblical from what is socio-political among the many values endorsed by that organization. When should the church speak publically on issues in public controversy? Still another issue is distinguishing what has come to be known as "social gospel" from ministry to society.

There are doctrinal concerns that must drive ministry practice. Churches will want to avoid the confusion of law and gospel which misplaces reconciliation with God behind reconciliation among men and confuses making disciples with reforming society. The confusion of sin, from personal accountability before God for the violation of his holy will to social injustice that violates God's order for life in his world, is another concern. A third concern is the confusion of biblical interpretation which fails to distinguish the theocracy of Old Testament Israel from the New Testament Church, the fruit of faith from civic righteousness, and the kingdom of God from social order.

The Church's Voice in Addressing Societal Issues

At the same time, the church cannot abdicate its role of teaching all that Christ commanded and applying that truth to contemporary moral issues so that mature disciples are "trained in righteousness" and "equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). It will not shrink from opportunities to express Christ's love in a community of needs and hurts (John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:2 and 10). The church will look forward to legitimate opportunities to clarify what God's Word says to a society that has distorted natural law. Unless a congregation has a ministry

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practice rooted pointedly in sound doctrine, it will be driven by expediencies arising out of a changing culture [165] or a reactionary isolationism that ignores the culture.

There are other examples that demonstrate how a changing culture challenges the church to apply its theology. When must marketing principles and the Christian message part company? Can law and gospel be blended with the principles of behavioral psychology in Christian counseling? How will a congregation minister to people struggling with homosexuality without compromising God's moral will? Will the church practice civil disobedience if laws governing hiring practice are at odds with its theology? A theology of ministerial practice stands at the nexus where timeless truths of Scripture meet complex challenges of contemporary life.

CULTURAL EXAMPLES

Cultural shifts confront the church with a changing audience for ministry and with new tools for ministry. Unless there is a clearly defined theology of ministerial practice, such cultural shifts may produce declining numbers and conflict among members. Four examples of cultural change are: changes in ethnicity, changes in rural/suburban/urban demographics, generational differences, and changes in modes of learning.

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[165] For an example of accommodating theology to culture, read William Dyrness, How Does America Hear The Gospel? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pages 119-130.

Changes in Ethnicity

What happens when the neighborhood around the church changes? Once the conservative center of white, upper-middle-class America, Orange County, California has seen Hispanic and Asian immigrants turn Caucasians into a minority. [166] The impact of "left coast" lifestyles and "Boomer" and "Gen-X" outlooks further altered the setting for ministry. Churches there had to determine what their response would be. On one extreme is the determination to continue an unchanging model of ministry, with the likely but unintentional consequence of limiting the audience for that ministry to white "Builder" and "Silent" generation people, for the most part. At the other end of the spectrum are churches that decided to help launch a Hispanic, Korean, or Vietnamese congregation, or a "Buster" congregation, that would share their facility but remain distinct. Somewhere in between are a variety of efforts at multi-cultural ministry, with more than one style of worship, ESL classes and youth ministry targeted at kids who are "between cultures."

Multi-cultural ministry necessitates intentional examination of cultures. Such issues as musical taste, the way time is viewed, family structure and social mores must be understood. There will be a religious heritage of some kind, as well as history and traditions that define how people see life. Church leaders must listen to the hopes and fears of people with whom they want to share the treasures of their faith. They need to balance their own preferences with those of people much different from themselves. They will have to cultivate a flexibility in style of ministry, new

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[166] PERCEPT (29889 Santa Margarita Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688; phone 949-635-1282), a company which produces demographic and psychographic profiles for churches, is the source for this data.

goals and patience in achieving those goals. German and Scandinavian Lutheran immigrants of a century ago made just such cultural accommodations, only on a slightly smaller scale.

Changes in Rural/Suburban/Urban Demographics

Across America, once rural churches are finding themselves in an ex-urban clash of cultures. (Ex-urban describes what lies beyond the suburbs, housing developments that may be surrounded by farm fields or forests and require a commute of thirty miles or more.) [167] The retired farmers and small-town merchants regret the loss of a way of life, as sub-divisions of expensive new homes replace fields of crops and commuter congestion begins its inexorable domination of the rhythms of each day. Further, television and transportation have distanced their own children from the values that once defined rural America. Assimilating the newcomers into the church will mean tensions; and when the number of newcomers approaches the number of old-timers, there will likely be significant conflict. There will be demands for more ministry programs and more variety to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse membership. The frugal financial perspective that so long dominated the meetings of the church will be challenged by the credit-card mentality of the new members, whose mortgages may dwarf the church's budget. Counseling takes up more and more of the pastor's time, and he is caught between several different viewpoints on what makes a good sermon.

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[167] Lyle Schaller, The New Reformation, pages 126-127.

Generational Differences

A phenomenon of the past two decades has been "generation-specific" churches. Several mega-churches unabashedly describe themselves as "Boomer" churches. The hallmarks are excellence, variety, contemporary music, strong pastoral leadership, anonymity for seekers and clearly defined goals or expectations for members. More recently, there have been satellite ministries identified as "Gen X," launched on separate sites by churches who have adopted the so-called "homogeneous unit principle" of church growth. [168] These sort-of-churches have edgier music, less formal structure and a premium on making everything "authentic." Without deciding to become this, a large number of churches in America are clearly "Builder" or "Silent" generation in nature. They are recognizable by a sea of gray heads in a largely unchanged experience of worship. [169]

Changes in Modes of Learning

There is a variety of cultural issues that a church must address if it intends to reach people. One such issue is how people learn. In an increasingly visual and narrative society, the methods of Christian education that worked so well in an auditory and rational culture are met with

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[168] For an amplified discussion of Gen-X worship and ministry, consult What Next? (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), a compendium of research edited by Andrea Lee Schieber and Ann Terman Olson, especially pages 101-136.

[169] For another description of generational impact on churches and worship, see Lyle Schaller, Reflections Of A Contrarian, pages 65-94.

diminished response. [170] Another issue is how people get together. The large Men's Club, Ladies Aid and Youth Group of the mid-twentieth-century church are all but gone. In a non-joining and relational culture, many different events for much smaller audiences are more appealing. Small group ministries, from Bible classes to support groups and ministry teams, engage and involve people. [171] Still one more example is how people volunteer. The volunteer of four or five decades ago was typically female, loyal to the congregation, expecting to cook, clean and stuff envelopes, and willing to sign up whenever there was a notice of need in the bulletin. Today's volunteer is as likely male as female, interested in doing something to help another human being, expecting a role that is flexible and matched to his or her gifts and interests, and waiting to be recruited personally. [172]

SUMMARY

When a church's practice of ministry is not aligned with Scripture, any number of dangers exist. One such danger is the pressure of expediency and popular sentiment overriding biblical truth when there are hard decisions to be made. Another is a risk of mere activism, the mission of the church getting lost as a lot of good things get in the way of the most important thing. On the

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[170] A resource that not only affirms this premise, but offers practical responses is: Kurt Bickel, Get Active (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), pages 4-5 and 25-38.

[171] Lyle Schaller, Getting Things Done (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), pages 87-139.

[172] A valuable resource that expands on the changing nature of volunteers and provides a wealth of responses and resources is Sarah Jane Rehnborg, editor, The Starter Kit for Mobilizing Ministry (Tyler, TX: Leadership Training Network, 1994).

other extreme is legalistic tyranny that imposes the will of a few on the spiritual life of many or obscures the sweet gospel in manipulative guilt-tripping. When a church's practice of ministry is not aligned with Scripture, church membership can obscure discipleship as the church accepts far less than the Lord Jesus expects in people's lives but demands something beyond what Scripture requires in loyalty to the institution.

When a church's practice of ministry is not matched to its cultural setting, it may be ministering to an audience that no longer exists, in ways that no longer work. When there is not an intentionally determined philosophy of ministry, people will resist and criticize the changes that make them uncomfortable. When biblical and cultural principles are not brought together to define a church's ministerial practice, the spirit of the congregation may become reactive and negative. When there is no clear vision of who we are and where we're going, competing agendas and diverse viewpoints get in the way of consensus and action.

A process that helps members understand the theological and cultural factors that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice can foster harmony among people who would otherwise become polarized over proposals such as a worship processional, a staffed nursery, a pew register or inviting the community to use the church's gymnasium. Discussing the factors that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice will help to negate the tendency of leaders and members to act and vote on the basis of personal preference rather than what best advances Christ's kingdom and serves the weak in faith. A consistent set of principles for ministry practice gives a congregation a basis from which to respond to new ideas, by establishing parameters and criteria for accepting or rejecting change.

The Impact Of Paradigms On Ministerial Practice

Virtually everyone views ministry, initially at least, on the basis of his or her experiences. One reason that some churches just can't get the people who attend worship also to attend Bible class is that this is contrary to their experience. Their paradigm is that "church" is a one-hour experience on Sunday morning. Because people tend to teach the way they were taught, older pastors find it most comfortable to use the lecture method in Bible classes and confirmation instruction. "Discussion" is really just a way to reinforce the lecture. And after years of preaching experience, the suggestion of other homiletical styles or visual tools such as Power Point is, at best, daunting. The suggestion of a staffed nursery to make attending worship more attractive to young families has met opposition in many churches because an older generation grew up with the axiom that parents brought their kids to church and taught them how to behave there. Many a new pastor, intent on involving members meaningfully in the church's ministry, has been stymied by the tradition that ministry is what the pastor does. And that tradition was caught more than taught from a sainted pastor who did everything himself.

"SUNDAY SCHOOL"

Sometimes the very terminology a person employs establishes the parameters of her paradigm and keeps her from separating ends from means. For example, "Sunday School" is a term that does two things to our understanding of children's ministry. The first is that it focuses Christian education on Sunday. The second is that identifies children's ministry with the formal process of

education children experience in classrooms during the week. (The ultimate oxymoron, "Vacation Bible School," is another such illustration.) Sunday schools are declining in many churches [173]; and the number of member children who go without Christian education of any kind is increasing in at least one church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. [174] One reason may be that church leaders can't see beyond Sunday morning and the model of cognitive learning that requires "classrooms."

There are other reasons. In blended families, the children are not with the same parent every weekend and may not be able to attend on Sunday morning regularly. In the affluent and stressed society of suburban America, many families are out of town regularly on Sunday. In an increasingly post-Christian culture, the importance of regular Sunday school attendance has been lost on too many parents. And as long as congregations are bound by the "school" paradigm, they risk turning off older children with methodology perceived to be boring and a curriculum that doesn't connect with what they are experiencing. [175] Further, the very thing that was the strength of the Sunday school, a sense of historical sequence in Bible stories that together deliver God's story, is lost because regular attendance on Sunday is less frequent.

Churches that have abandoned the paradigm may employ a midweek program, retreats and aggressive family ministry, as well as the Sunday morning spiritual growth hour, to assure that the

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[173] Marva Dawn, Is It A Lost Cause?: Having The Heart Of God For The Church's Children (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), page 6.

[174] George Barna, Boiling Point, page 228. The increasing number of member children who have no exposure to Christian education is a conclusion arrived at by the team of consultants who comprise the "Parish Assistance" program of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

[175] Cf. The research and resources of "Faith Inkubators" of Stillwater, MN.

children of the congregation are able to participate. They employ a variety of educational methods and strategies, including more visual and interactive approaches and more experience-based tools. Uncoupling the goals of children's ministry from the means of the traditional Sunday school is the essential first step.

"GOING TO CHURCH"

Another bit of terminology that few inside the church have questioned is "going to church." For long-time members this means attending worship. For an unchurched acquaintance, the terminology sounds terribly institutional, not to mention boring. When the idea of evangelism is "inviting people to go to church," the paradigm may become a barrier. Since someone who is not a believer cannot worship, we are inviting people to be spectators at our worship. That may have worked fairly well in an era when most unchurched people were really some church's "delinquents" and society reinforced the notion that good people go to church. But in an age when many young adults have little or no background in a Christian church and "going to church" is more a negative caricature than a positive aspiration, inviting a friend to go to church is probably not a great strategy. Perhaps some churches can do evangelism and worship at the same time, but most compromise in one direction or another.

Churches can develop a number of alternative events to which members can invite their friends and at which those friends can experience Christian love and hear Christian truth. It begins by getting rid of a paradigm and clarifying objectives. Perhaps by calling worship what it is, rather than calling it "church," we may help members also recapture the significance of the experience.

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A number of churches have been unable to connect with their teens, in part, because the terminology they use reinforces a paradigm that no longer works. "Youth Group" is the term, and it implies getting teenagers to "join" a group of people they probably wouldn't hang out with at high school. Most of the teens have jobs. Many are active in extra-curricular life at their school. In many churches the teens attend several different high schools; and their culture tends to sort them out according to their interests.

A multi-faceted strategy of "Youth Ministry" allows the church to connect with teens at a variety of different points. A Sunday morning Bible class targeted at their issues reaches some. Service roles that match what they have a heart for capture a few more. A few high profile events, such as retreats and rallies or road-trip service projects get bigger numbers. And adult "mentors" who try to build a relationship with at-risk teens may connect with a few more. But none of these and a dozen more ideas will show up in a board meeting so long as the "Youth Group" terminology establishes a paradigm with blinders.

"GETTING DELINQUENTS TO RETURN TO CHURCH"

There are other paradigms that obscure ends with means. For example, the goal of the elders in many Lutheran churches is to get people who've been absent from worship to "come back to church." That goal, unexamined, puts the elder into the posture of cajoling; and the inactive member understands that to keep up appearances he needs to show up at church every so often.

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Typically, when there is a "success" in getting a "delinquent" (the terminology reinforces the paradigm) back to church, that member is back on the inactive list again a few months down the road. The reason is that the approach never dealt with the *reasons* why a person has discontinued worship. The elder didn't know where the person's spiritual life and understanding were. Spiritually weak people may view membership in the institutional church as a combination of perquisites such as marriage and burial and obligations such as showing up and contributing money. And it is these institutional perceptions that may keep a congregation from really reclaiming people.

"ATTENDING MEETINGS"

For most older members, loyalty to the church is expressed by attending meetings. And older members lament the dwindling attendance at voters meetings and the unwillingness of younger members to serve on boards and committees. The paradigm fits the older members' generation and its institutional perspective. Younger members may be no less committed to the Lord Jesus, but far less willing to sit through a three-hour meeting that is redundant, lacking in focus and unlikely—in their judgment—to make any difference. They may be far more willing to visit a shut-in or be a big brother or sister or even volunteer for several months in an overseas mission. They will commit to a short-term project with clear goals and with a team of people who have the same interests.

"BIBLE CLASS"

A major barrier to involving adults in Bible study is, again, the paradigm. For many of those

adults the word "class" conjures up negative memories of classrooms in which they didn't excel.

Their only experience with Bible study at the church was confirmation instruction, and they just

don't see themselves sitting through the same thing again. If they've attended a Bible class that

reinforced the stereotype because the pastor does not understand the adult learning process, it is

the methodology rather than the subject matter that keeps them away. [176] Or maybe the adults are

unwilling to participate in Christian educational opportunities because of the church's misguided

notion that all adults can be lumped into one class, because they were turned off by a class that

was over their head and dominated by a few members, or because they experienced a class that

was so simplistic that it failed to challenge them.

SUMMARY

Paradigms keep people from seeing alternatives. They distort people's experiences to fit what

is expected, and they filter information to the point that what doesn't fit the preconception isn't

easily heard. Paradigms are barriers to understanding people who see things differently. And they

may become bunkers in which church members take an unnecessary stand.

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[176] For an extended description of what characterizes adult education, see Raymond Wlodkowski, Enhancing Adult Motivation To Learn (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Primary Directives For Our Ministerial Practice:

Biblical And Theological Principles

If a church's theology is to be more than abstractions, key principles of Scripture and primary

emphases of that church's theological heritage must drive the way ministry is carried out. What

we believe should be apparent in why we do what we do the way we do it. While chapter two of

this project developed the biblical and doctrinal foundation for even having a theology of

ministerial practice, here several examples of applied theology will make the point that a church's

theology should be apparent in the design of its ministerial practice.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

A primary source of biblical direction for ministry practice is the pastoral epistles of St. Paul.

For Timothy and Titus the apostle provided instructions for pastoral care. But Paul addressed the

issue of a congregation's ministry practice in his letters to the churches as well, sometimes in

order to correct wrongs.

Paul's Epistles to Pastors

At the head of any list of biblical principles for ministerial practice is II Timothy 1:13-14,

"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ

Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you -- guard it with the help of the Holy

Spirit who lives in us." Apostolic teaching is the criterion against which a pastor's teaching or preaching is to be measured. The Lutheran Confessions are a good example of the "model," "standard" or "prototype" that St. Paul describes. The apostle, who warns frequently against false doctrine, urges the church to "guard" and "defend" divinely inspired truth, and to do so through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

So, what does this mean for ministerial practice? It means that a congregation will hold elected leaders to the high standard of spiritual maturity and ongoing growth in the Word, for they must apply the doctrinal criterion of apostolic teaching to the congregation's ministry practice. The church's leaders must be students of the Bible. It means that the congregation's curriculum for spiritual growth should include a course on at least one of the Lutheran Confessions, with application to the issues of controversy in contemporary Christendom and the goal of reinforcing confessional Christianity. It means that the congregation will encourage and support its called workers in continuing education that will deepen their grasp of sound doctrine and provide a framework for correction if that is necessary. It means that doctrinal discipline will be carried out in love and with the convincing power of the Holy Spirit's means, Scripture, rather than as a mere application of by-laws and policies.

Earlier in that chapter the apostle wrote, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." (II Timothy 1:7-8) Too many pastors and congregations are so afraid of failure or criticism that they won't risk the bold ministry that can reach more souls and nurture greater service. Too many are focused on their own limited resources and society's opposition. They lose sight of God's promises and the Gospel's power. Others have been deadened by the frustration of effort unrequited by results or intimidated by the

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fear of lawsuits, so that a palpable love for people has been lost. Still others have allowed the excesses of a leader to kidnap the agenda of the church. On the basis of St. Paul's encouragement, a congregation may adopt as a principle of ministerial practice a statement such as this: Confident in God's promise and the Gospel's power, we will approach ministry with the twin criteria of bold decision-making and love for individuals.

In I Timothy the apostle provides specific directives regarding the church's relationship with government (2:1-4), the relationship of men and women in the church (2:11-15), the qualifications of pastors and other leaders (3:1-13), provision for needy widows (5:3-16), and the stewardship of wealth (6:3-10, 17-19). Throughout the pastoral epistles there are warnings against divisive arguments over non-doctrinal matters and self-gratification in ministry (E.g. I Timothy 6:3-6 and II Timothy 2:14). There are continual reminders to teach the Word faithfully and develop relationships of mutual love and respect (E.g. I Timothy 1:18-19 and 4:11-16; II Timothy 1:13-14 and 2:22-25). While each of these provides timeless direction for the practice of ministry, one or another may require emphasis at different points in a congregation's history. It is healthy for churches to revisit their theology of ministerial practice every five to ten years, so that the biblical principles that match the current situation can be affirmed and applied in clear language.

Paul's Epistles to Congregations

The "Body of Christ" passages in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 provide a good example of how biblical principles shape ministerial practice. St. Paul's emphatic statements that all Christians have spiritual gifts, that there are different roles for these different gifts and

differing ways of carrying out those roles (I Corinthians 12:4-7) should guide the way a congregation structures its volunteer ministry. The pattern of electing people to specific roles of leadership, such as evangelism or stewardship, without an indication that the nominees' gifts match the position and with the statutory requirement that after a few years these people have to move on to another area of ministry, seems at odds with the biblical principles. To issue general calls for volunteers to serve in specific areas of ministry and to limit the possibilities for service to boards or committees spelled out in by-laws seem out of synch with the biblical model. If we practice, not just believe, that the church is the Body of Christ, then helping each member discover his or her gifts and providing roles or opportunities for service that match those gifts will be both our objective and our strategy.

While Ephesians 4:11-16 has been used to blur the distinction between the office of the pastor and the service of the people, the words of Scripture actually exalt the pastor as Christ's gift to the church and refocus the goal of ministry in a way that should eliminate clergy - laity conflict. Pastor-teachers prepare God's people to *serve*. When God's people serve, the church is built up in spiritual unity and maturity. There are biblical warnings against pastoral pride and a controlling spirit, and there are encouragements to respect and obey spiritual leaders. A distorted view of the church makes "control" the issue, rather than serving, "getting my way" the goal instead of unity. The longer a congregation exists, the easier it is to lose sight of God's intended outcomes for ministry. Ephesians four offers three such outcomes: growing, serving and uniting.

Colossians 3:16-17 provides both an overarching principle for ministry and a directive for one aspect of ministry. The principle that whatever we do, whether in word or deed, be done in the name of the Lord Jesus and with gratitude to God deserves a banner at the church's entrance. It

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focuses the church's ministry on its head, Jesus Christ, and encourages the spirit of grateful praise that makes everything we do an expression of worship. If we can't do something in Jesus' name, we can't do it. What we do as a church should point people to Jesus, people both in the congregation and in the community. Self-aggrandizing in pastors or churches is unthinkable.

Verse 16 suggests something more specific. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." The verse assumes that teaching and admonishing are a mutual dimension of the church's fellowship, not the "job" of the pastor and elders. It confirms that only growing to spiritual maturity in the Word will enable and encourage Christians to such a life of mutual teaching and admonishing. As churches struggle with a growing list of inactive members and conflict when the pastor disciplines people living in manifest sin, perhaps the apostle's directive is to develop something more than a hierarchical approach to Christian discipline. In an age where no one wants to tell someone else that he is wrong and the world's morality has intruded on the church, it is all the more important to establish the responsibility of Christians to admonish one another and to teach with the expectation that this will occur as part of spiritual maturity.

While it may be pressing the apostle's intent, there does seem an intentional commendation of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" that appreciates more than one style of music for Christian use. And the encouragement to "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" as the basis for singing these three genres of music should prevent both the use of songs with bad theology and the insistence that only one style of music is appropriate for Christian use.

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II Corinthians 5:14-21 is an important description of the motivation and power for Christian life and witness. "Christ's love compels us," the apostle exclaims. "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ." The gospel is the reason for the new life in Christ. The gospel is the motivating power to live that life. In Titus 2:11-12 the apostle reiterates the point. "The grace of God that brings salvation. . . teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives." In Galatians 2:20 Paul describes the nature and source of his Christian life. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

A theology of ministerial practice based in the gospel will encourage forgiven and righteous children of God to draw on the power and promises of God, to call on the Holy Spirit's strength amid human weakness, and to let Jesus live out his life through theirs. It is sanctification by grace that follows justification by grace. In contrast, legalistic attempts to modify behavior will use guilt and shame to drive religious people to "do better." Legalism manipulates giving and serving with mere loyalty to the institutional church and threats of what might happen to the church unless such giving and serving is rendered. More subtle legalism substitutes self-help formulas and even biblical principles for the gospel. While Christians appreciate the law in its third use as guide, they carefully avoid replacing gospel with law as the motive or strength for Christian sanctification.

There is at least one more passage with overarching significance for a theology of ministerial practice. In I Corinthians 9:22 St. Paul says: "I have become all things to all men so that by all

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possible means I might save some." This apostle, who repeatedly warns against accommodating the truth of God's Word to the philosophies of the world, nonetheless states as a principle his willingness to accommodate himself to the perspective of the people Christ sent him to reach. It cannot be a biblical practice of ministry to insist that others accommodate themselves to our church culture, to our "insider language," to our comfort zone, before they can be won by the gospel. It cannot be a biblical practice of ministry that refuses to explore alternative methods and strategies when the "way we've always done things" no longer seems to connect with the people around us. Pastors may not, like Paul, be called to a mobile and multi-cultural ministry; but their stationary ministry will have people from a variety of different religious, ethnic and philosophical backgrounds within the church's ministry area. The flexibility of the apostle is in the interest of his passion for saving souls. That passion will inspire similar flexibility in ministry today.

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

A church's theological emphases and distinctives should shape its practice of ministry. For Lutherans that means organizing the way a congregation carries out its ministry around such key themes as an emphasis on grace, properly distinguishing law and gospel, assuring that objective truth guides subjective experience, and systematic instruction for faith formation.

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Emphasis on Grace

The Lutheran heritage of <u>sola gratia</u> should shape the ethos of the church, not merely its theology. A Lutheran church, then, is a place where class and race distinctions are absent, for human beings are all alike condemned under the law and justified by grace. The very reserved and the very expressive will both feel at home in this fellowship that is united by God's grace rather than human commonalities. A Lutheran church, then, will be a place where it is acceptable to admit weaknesses and sins, rather than give the appearance of rectitude. In this church penitent sinners are forgiven and embraced rather than shunned. God's grace will inspire a graciousness in his people, a gentle kindness and a warm hospitality. Newcomers will be accepted for Jesus' sake and assimilated into a circle of loving friends quickly. Leaders are not compelled to "wear their mistakes," and failure to meet expectations is met with forgiveness and encouragement. The cardinal doctrine of God's grace will create servant-leaders rather than dictatorial managers, willing volunteers rather than arm-twisted conscripts. <u>Sola gratia</u> can be the theological touchstone for the climate of a congregation.

Law and Gospel

The Lutheran understanding of a proper distinction between law and gospel will be apparent, not only in preaching and teaching, but in counseling and encouraging. From pastoral counseling to mutual admonition, the goal will be to assure people of God's forgiveness and love. To do that will mean helping people accept responsibility for their wrongs, rather than allowing them to

blame others, wallow in self-pity or justify what is sin. The goal of such counseling is to bring people into a closer relationship with God, not merely fix problems and psyches. It is to restore Christians to healthy spiritual life and service, not simply provide a structure of "how to" prescriptions that will make them happier or more productive. An understanding of law and gospel means that Christian life and service is a "fruit of faith." The gospel must motivate it; the law dare not be used to coerce it. Leaders in the church will see themselves as administrators both of the means of grace and of the fruit of faith. When attendance, offerings, witness and love are not what they should be, leaders understand that they must intensify their administration of the means of grace, not focus on their management of the fruits of faith.

Objective Truth and Subjective Experience

The Lutheran principle that our justification is, first, *objective* and the biblical teaching that renewal begins with the Christian's *mind* (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23) should have a profound impact on the style of ministry in a Lutheran church. Lutherans do not deny the significance of emotions, but they are careful to root emotions in objective truth. Love and joy are traced to the promises that inspire them, not celebrated for their own sake. Worship lets God's law and not the worship atmosphere produce sorrow over sin. Similarly, praise is a response to who God is and what God has done rather than a spiritual cathartic. A Lutheran church's vision for the future will likely be the carefully considered product of many Christians searching Scripture, listening to each other and discussing the challenges and opportunities of their ministry together, rather than the charismatic dream of one inspiring leader.

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Catechesis and Faith Formation

A confessional Lutheran church's emphasis on sound doctrine will be reflected in its adult Bible study curriculum. While there will be classes on contemporary issues, a core curriculum that teaches for spiritual maturity will predominate. Membership will not follow a few hours of introduction to the church, but several weeks of study to assure that the essential doctrines of the Christian faith are understood. And the expectation will be to build on this foundation with regular Bible study thereafter. "Training" for lay people will be understood to mean more than imparting skills; the primary concern of such training will be faith formation, developing Christian wisdom and character. Meetings begin, not with perfunctory prayer, but with significant Bible study. Volunteers are placed, not simply on the basis of their gifts, "passion," personality and schedule, but also with a concern for spiritual maturity. New ideas for accomplishing the church's mission will be welcomed, for a confessional Lutheran church refuses to let truth be encased in tradition. Yet new ideas will be evaluated on the basis of biblical criteria and not merely pragmatic results.

Cultural Impact On Ministerial Practice

There are a variety of cultural impacts on the way we do ministry. Tradition is largely a vestige of a church's culture of origin. Robert's Rules of Order and whatever accounting practice produces the treasurer's report are methods borrowed from the culture around the church.

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Communication methodology in the church is, typically, patterned after what's happening in society, though often a step behind technologically. Sometimes without consciously determining to do so, a church shifts with the culture in its approach to evangelism. For example, the confrontational methods derived from D. James Kennedy's "Evangelism Explosion" [177] in the seventies have largely been replaced by more relational approaches that fit American culture at the turn of the millennium. [178] Changes in the economy will likely be reflected in fund-raising methods. The "small group" phenomenon in churches has been largely a response to the needs and preferences of contemporary culture.

Failure to respond to cultural shifts will mean that the church unnecessarily distances itself from its mission field and may disconnect from its most vulnerable members. Aping the culture as it changes will mean that the church loses its distinctive character and may very well mean that it loses much more, theology and mission. Interpreting Scripture is one of the most important tasks that a church does. Next to that in importance is the task of interpreting its culture. Remember that Christian leadership means distinguishing what dare never change from what may change and what must change.[179]

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[177] D. James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1970).

[178] For example, Joseph C. Aldrich, Gentle Persuasion (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1988) or Richard Korthals, Agape Evangelism (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1980).

[179] Lesslie Newbigin, in The Gospel In A Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) says: "There is no such thing as a pure gospel if by that is meant something which is not embodied in a culture." (Page 145) But Newbigin adds: "True contextualization accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgment and grace." (Page 152)

Churches will work with broad cultural forces and local cultural themes. A matrix of cultural impacts will demonstrate a handful of implications that churches consider in the design of their ministry practice.

BROAD CULTURAL FORCES

There is a difference among "fads," "trends," and "forces." Fads fade quickly, do not affect the majority of people, and do not substantially alter the significant dimensions of a culture. Trends last several years or more and at least capture the attention of most people. They "color" a culture but do not substantially alter the culture. Forces have a philosophical dimension and significant social, economic, political or technological impact. They will in one way or another affect virtually everyone in a culture, though that affect may not be perceived by everyone. Forces "steer" a culture, changing how people view things and do things. The church should ignore fads, respond to trends where appropriate, and utilize forces.

The realm of education is known for fads. "Outcome-Based Education" is a good example. While there were some worthwhile objectives in this approach, excesses branded it quickly and made "O.B.E." a term of opprobrium among conservatives. "WWJD" on articles of clothing appealed to an audience of youth and, therefore perhaps, lacked staying power. Christian leaders needed to know something about these fads, but were wise not to make changes in their ministerial practice based on these fads. (Exaggerated efforts to discredit WWJD because the primary question should be "What DID Jesus Do?" may be a negative example of paying too much attention to a fad.)

A good example of a trend may be "Promise Keepers." While the trademark name and huge rallies in stadiums are fading from national prominence, Promise Keepers deserved the church's attention. First, this trend was a leading edge of the movement to develop stronger spiritual leadership among men, in both home and church. And this goal was an important response to negative gender and family forces in American culture. Secondly, Promise Keepers captured the attention of a significant percentage of people, not only in the church, but also in the world. Promise Keepers *has* influenced the church in both perspective and program, and it has spawned more local efforts to achieve the goal of spiritual maturity and leadership among men.

Significant Forces in Society

Within the church there have been significant forces that respond to similar forces in society. In some cases the church adapts a cultural force for its own purposes, as is the case with small group approaches to ministry or communications technology harnessed for the church's mission. In other cases the church responds to what is happening in the culture around it. For example, the importance placed on a pastor's relational skills is a response to contemporary culture, and sensitivity to the affective and experiential realm of learning are a response to the postmodern age. Sometimes the church is confronted with challenges that change the way it carries out ministry. Family ministry is a response to a cultural crisis. A brief exploration of several examples will illustrate the point.

Small Groups

A good example of a societal force that has impacted the church is small-group approaches to ministry. American culture over a period of some 25 years has become more relational, more attuned to feelings and experiences, more aware of the things that make people and groups of people unique. The "sensitivity training" of the seventies was a fringe expression of this cultural force. Therapy groups became mainstream. "Break-out" groups for discussion became a staple of educational methodology. "Project teams" occupied the time of business school students and then employees. And high schools witnessed an accentuation of the cliques that separated kids according to their interests and gifts.

In the church, small group methodology was adapted to support groups, Bible study programs, fellowship life, volunteer structure and even evangelism methodology. [180] The key word is "adapt." The church didn't invent small group ministries; it adapted this practical tool of a cultural force to its ministerial practice. While there is no immediate indication that American culture is moving away from the themes that forged small group methodology, inevitably the culture will shift and the church must utilize the new forces of social interaction.

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[180] To discover more about the small group phenomenon in churches, contact Serendipity, Box 1012, Littleton, CO 80160. Lyman Coleman, the founder of Serendipity, has been a pioneer in small group approaches to ministry. Another resource for small group ministry is Stephen Ministries, 2045 Innerbelt Business Center Drive, St. Louis, MO 63114.

Family Ministry

Family ministry is another good example of the church utilizing a force in our culture. Negative pressures on the family and social reconstruction of the concept of family made family ministry necessary. Two working parents, divorce, living together, blended families, single-parent families and even intentionally single-parent families altered the setting in which the church does ministry. Materialism, feminism, pornography, spousal abuse and child abuse are just a few of the negative forces in society that threaten the family. [181] A new generation (Gen-X) saw the failures of the previous generation at about the time that many in the "Boomer"generation began to regret their misplaced values and priorities. But for many young Americans, not only the skills but even the ideals of Christian family life were outside their experience. Models, mentors and instruction were needed. And so congregations, imperfectly and with varying degrees of commitment, have begun to develop family ministry programs that have the possibility of outreach to the lost as well as reinforcing biblical principles rooted in Law and Gospel for the church's young adults. [182]

One other force in American culture has contributed to family ministry in the church. Our society has for several decades believed that education is the answer to social ills. That theme has taken such things as sex education out of the family, in part because families abdicated the role, and made it socially acceptable to address publically what previous generations believed were

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[181] Lyle Schaller, It's A Different World, pages 139-178.

[182] For one model of family ministry, see Kenneth Kremer, From The Ground Up (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000).

private matters. Family ministry has become acceptable in the church because of this cultural shift, even though older members may not yet see it that way.

Relational skills of the Pastor

Broad cultural forces such as the relational nature of our society change how members view their pastor. Where once the pastor was an authority figure, measured primarily by his preaching skills, today people want their pastor to be a friend, a counselor, to be "real." And he will be measured more by his relational skills than by his academic ability. [183] His preaching is still where he will be evaluated chiefly, but the criteria for evaluating his preaching have changed. How "life related" his preaching is has become more important than how well crafted is his sermon. The pastor who doesn't understand how important it is to build relationships with members and evangelism prospects will diminish his ability to bring God's truth and love to them. [184]

Technology

Technology has changed the practice of ministry, because we've moved from an industrial economy to an information economy. Communications technology, from television to the

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[183] Two sources for exploring the importance of relational leadership are: John C. Maxwell, Developing The Leaders Around You (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) and George Barna, Building Effective Lay Leadership Teams (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2001).

[184] Thom S. Rainer, Surprising Insights From The Unchurched (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), pages 58-60.

internet, has altered how people learn. The volume of communication has made people selective listeners. (Caller ID is a symbolic small example.) The quest for information means that people feel "out of the loop" if they don't have access to what's going on. From Power Point presentations that accompany the sermon to streaming video Bible classes on a church's web site, technology is changing the forms of ministerial practice. And young adults measure a church, in part, on whether or not its technology says it understands them.

A number of authors, such as Os Guinness, have used the term "post-literate" to describe contemporary American culture. [185] People don't read much; and when they do, they aren't very discerning. People today are more visual and experiential learners than auditory. The stimulus of television on young children has altered the way they process information, furthering the concept of "mosaic" rather than linear logic. We respond to sound bytes rather than essays, diminishing our capacity for analysis. Television is about what's believable, not what's true, and that has impacted our sense of judgment. Education has moved from learning information to accessing information, at least in the minds of many. The church, recognizing inherent ills and challenges in this culture shift, can continue its style of ministry as a methodological counter-culture. Or it can adapt the way it communicates an unchanging truth to its changing culture, becoming more narrative and more visual, more explicit, even more simple. For certain, it must assume a greater burden of teaching discernment. To make the challenge even greater, in the audience for ministry there are still linear thinkers and auditory learners who are anything but post-literate.

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[185] Os Guinness, <u>Fit Bodies, Fat Minds</u> (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), pages 72 and 78-80.

Post-Christian Culture

Another group of authors, represented well by Loren Mead, have chronicled the shift in American culture from Christian to post-Christian. [186] One facet of this shift is that many Americans, some of whom claim to be Christians, know little or nothing about Bible history or Christian theology. The church no longer enjoys favored status in our society. The Christian heritage that has shaped many American festivals is roundly denounced. The church is more likely to be opposed when it seeks construction permits and is sued for its counseling. Being "spiritual" has replaced being "religious," with the obvious implication that the institutional and doctrinal features of the church are no longer acceptable to many. Biblical morals have been replaced by individual values. A common perception is that religion is merely a cultural thing; and in an era that values multi-culturalism, all religions are equally valid. Denominations seem an unnecessary carry-over from a previous era. And it is simply no longer conventional thinking that "good people go to church."

Some in the church are still in denial, hoping that society will come back to the church. Others are angry, venting frustration at the world and looking for someone to blame in the church. Some evangelicals would like to bring America back to Christianity via political means; and George W. Bush's "faith-based initiatives" is one expression of their hope. Too many in the church are simply depressed at what has been lost as America moves farther away from the church and seem content to wait for Jesus to return. A more positive and pro-active approach will be to see

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[186] Loren Mead, The Once and Future Church (Bethesda, MD, The Alban Institute, 1998), pages 8-28.

mission opportunities in this new reality and to appreciate the positives in a separation of

Christianity from culture (chiefly a clearer and more authentic expression of the faith).

Postmodernism

A broad cultural force the church must respond to is postmodernism.[187] Its subjectivism and

relativism appear everywhere in the culture. Its pluralism challenges the claim of Jesus to be "the

Way, the Truth and the Life," through whom alone people come to God. Deconstruction, which

is at the philosophical heart of postmodernism, denies any objective meaning to Holy Scripture.

The cynicism and pessimism of postmodernism reject any grand purpose or individual meaning to

life. Perhaps church people became too comfortable in the cold war with secular humanism, too

familiar with apologetic approaches that counter the arguments of reason and philosophical

science. [188]

While postmodernism confronts the church with the need to emphasize the objective and

absolute nature of truth and the exclusive salvation in Jesus Christ, it also presents the church with

great opportunities to reach people who need a reason to hope and want desperately to believe

that they can shed their shame. Postmodernism can serve as a corrective to what may have

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[187] Gene Edward Veith, in <u>Postmodern Times</u> (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994) says on pages 206-207, "Traditional symbols, such as those of religion, are not repudiated; rather they are trivialized. Statistics reduce beliefs to opinions and moral standards to personal preferences. . . We are currently in the midst of a profound transition, away from the pre-modern and the modern into uncharted waters."

[188] For a good overview of postmodernism's impact on the church's ministry, see: David S. Dockery, <u>The Challenge Of Postmodernism</u> (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995).

become an overly cognitive approach to teaching and expressing the Christian faith, an approach shaped more by modern culture than by Scripture. For certain, postmodernism will impact the way the church does evangelism, emphasizing relational approaches and suggesting the need to begin at creation in order to establish God's claim on us and to focus our initial witness more on the person of Jesus than on the logical flow of doctrine.

Generational Distinctions

That the church today serves five generations, each with unique characteristics, is a cultural force the church should understand and respond to. [189] What Tom Brokaw called "The Greatest Generation" has been the loyal backbone of the church, volunteering time and contributing dollars to back their commitment. But this generation (born before 1928), especially in its declining years, has become generally resistant to change and intolerant of differences. This generation (and the "Silent" generation, born between 1928 and 1946, that largely identifies with it) tends to dominate church meetings and champion fiscal conservatism stridently.

The "Baby Boomers," born between 1946 and 1964, have challenged institutional expressions of Christianity and migrated freely from one church to another. They have introduced a lot of change to the church, from worship to fellowship life; and they want excellence and options in the church's programs. They want their church to provide "meaningful" experiences.

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[189] In addition to earlier references regarding generation theory, see: Leith Anderson, Dying for Change (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1990), pages 61-108; Mike Regele, Death Of The Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pages 111-142; and Lyle Schaller, The Very Large Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), pages 217-218.

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The mega-church has been a phenomenon of this generation. "Boomers" often butt heads with the previous generations over finances, as the baton of leadership is passed.

Generation X, born between 1964 and 1982, is more conservative than the Boomers, less attracted to big causes and more interested in what makes a difference in people's lives. Time, more than money, is the issue of concern to them; and they are reluctant to get involved in structures and programs that seem to waste time. "Authentic" is the word that drives what Gen-X looks for in the church; and as a result, smaller and more intimate structures resonate with them better than large-setting anonymity. Outwardly more casual, they are often more intense about the things that matter to them.

The Millennial Generation, born after 1982 is still being shaped, but some observers expect it to have traits and goals similar to the Builders. A congregation must determine if and how it can serve diverse generations well, realizing that the uniting force of God's love and biblical truth override many of the differences in perspective that characterize generations.

Such issues as telecommuting, the "experience economy," [190] urban density, and the "global village" appear to be forces the church will want to bring into captivity to Christ. In an era of rapid change, the church has less response time than ever before. The challenge will be, once more, to distinguish what dare never change from what may change and what must change.

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[190] This term and the culture shift it describes is elaborated in: Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, The Experience Economy (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), pages 11-89.

LOCAL CULTURAL THEMES

While churches together can determine how best to respond to and utilize the broad cultural forces of their society, each congregation must individually analyze how the unique characteristics of its community do and should impact ministry practice.

Local Demographics

There are demographic factors to consider. Among these are the distribution of the population according to age cohorts. Is there a preponderance of seniors, or young children, or another group of people? Ethnic percentages provide a starting point for analyzing the nature of the church's mission field, if not its membership. Average household income and the percentage of people who've completed a college degree will have an impact on how ministry is carried out. In what geographic areas is there population growth, and where are the starter homes in the community? How many people comprise the average household, and is this a significant departure from the national norm? Are the divorce rate and the number of single adults parallel to national statistics, or are there statistical trends that suggest something for the way a congregation structures its ministry? How frequently do people move? These factors and other demographic data can be gathered with ease, then discussed for implications.

Local Sociological Factors

There are also sociological factors to consider. Lifestyle issues such as work schedules and commuting, weekend pursuits, family values and recreational interests paint a picture of the church's setting for ministry. There may be political perspectives that describe how the majority of people think, whether shaped by a dominant labor union or a history of political loyalties. Religious affiliations, or the lack thereof, can be researched. A predominantly Roman Catholic community has a character different from one where unchurched percentages are significantly higher than the national norm. What are the community's values: education, the arts, environmental concerns, strong neighborhood associations, youth soccer, ethnic heritage, or something else? These issues will affect the scheduling of ministry programs as well as the "flavor" those programs will have.

Local Issues

Another way of analyzing local cultural issues is to look for the needs and problems that occupy residents' thinking. In some communities there are gang problems, while in others it is the consequences of abusing alcohol. Gambling may be an issue, or what to do with middle school children who roam the streets after school. There may be racial tensions or class conflict, a lack of programming for senior citizens or inadequate child care options. The loss of a major employer can create a whole set of problems for the social infrastructure of the community, from job retraining to domestic violence. Understanding the issues of concern in the community can

help a church assess how it can best reach out to people in order to build the relationships across which it can bring the Gospel to people. Whole programs of ministry may be developed in service to the church's mission that are appropriate in one community but irrelevant in another. What moral issues must be emphasized as a part of "making disciples" may be a little different in one community from another.

A theology of ministerial practice recognizes that the nature of the church's mission field and the distinctive characteristics of its members help to shape the way we carry out ministry. Jerusalem and Antioch were not the same setting for ministry, and neither are suburban Chicago, central city Los Angeles and rural Minnesota.

The Impact Of Priorities On A Church's Ministerial Practice

What is important to the church changes from one congregation to another and from one era to another. How staff time, volunteer energy and financial resources are allocated is probably the most accurate way to assess what a church's priorities are. But those priorities are shaped by several factors. One factor is the congregation's values, what has been and is treasured by the church. Another factor is the strengths and resources of the congregation. What the pastor is good at or what a handful of lay leaders have been doing will probably determine priorities. Finally, the needs and opportunities before the church shape priorities. A congregation demoralized by losses or torn apart by conflict will have a different set of priorities than one which has determined to reach out to the college campus or Hispanic farm workers that are nearby.

Opportunities provide a more positive reason for prioritizing but needs are a more likely basis for establishing the church's focus.

Because churches seldom apply criteria to the determination of priorities, the "default mechanism" is to perpetuate what has been done in the past or to respond in crisis to a need. There are, no doubt, different criteria appropriate to differing churches. However, the following four are a starting point: 1) What lies closest to the twin themes of the great commission, reaching the lost and maturing the saved with God's truth and love? 2) What will likely have the greatest impact, make the biggest difference, as we seek to become a more faithful and fruitful church? 3) What are we best equipped to do right now, because of the strengths God has invested in us and the opportunities that match those strengths? 4) What do we need to do <u>first</u> in order to make possible a number of other ministry goals in the future?

VALUES

Most churches have values that can be read in anniversary booklets, by what members take pride in and talk about, or what escapes budget cuts. There are theological values that will become apparent in a church's introductory brochure and class. There are highly valued ministry programs which get top billing in the newsletter and attract the most people. And there are audiences which the congregation obviously serves better than others. There are long-held values and there are new, emerging values; and sometimes there is conflict over values as a result. Seldom, however, do churches consciously establish what their core values are or rank programs and audiences according to value. When this is done, members frequently recognize an "is/ ought

gap," between what they identify as most important and what they're forced to admit is receiving a majority of resources and attention.

Confessional Lutheran churches place a high value on the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. That value is time-honored, but more emphatic in the wake of the past half-century's denials of Scripture. The doctrine of justification, particularly objective justification, is another example of a long-held value that has received greater emphasis as a result of Evangelical churches' emphasis on sanctification and charismatic churches' emphasis on subjective experience. Lutheran churches are sacramental, a value recognized in chancel furnishings as well as in the liturgy. While no Lutheran church intends to de-emphasize doctrines, few people -- typically -- would identify the Lutheran church in their neighborhood for its prayer life, its aggressive evangelism or its support group ministries. (These generalizations, of course, are conditioned by the tradition of an individual church and by the emphases of a long-term pastor.) Pastors who have attempted to develop a new theological emphasis often discover a resistance rooted deeply in the fabric of the church but never verbalized.

Values Formed by Reaction

It is important for a congregation to celebrate its historical emphases in theology, in order to pass these on to succeeding generations and to assure that the teaching, programs and ethos of the church are shaped by these values. It is also important for a congregation to identify theological values that must be reaffirmed in the face of contemporary denials or weaknesses in the understanding of its members. But a congregation must beware that its theological emphases

aren't defensive, a mere reaction to trends and emphases in the broader religious scene. Reactive theology can easily become distorted by failure to preserve the "tension" or balance in biblical doctrines, by applications that go beyond what is necessary, and by a negative tone.

For example, in an era of theological compromise and ecumenical unionism, biblical principles of church fellowship may assume too large a role in a church's theology, be pressed too far at the expense of other doctrines, and create a negative image and climate that inhibits joy and verbal witness. The fear of losing objective justification can result in so minimizing subjective justification and sanctification that a congregation's spiritual health is harmed. While a church's confessions are in fact a value statement, it is worthwhile for a pastor to lead his church in a study that fosters better understanding of theological values periodically.

Values Reflected in Unstated Priorities

In some churches a Christian Elementary School is the primary program. It draws the majority of the budget and the greatest amount of volunteer effort. It is what members take pride in and what the community knows about the church. In many churches worship is what is most highly prized; and that is reflected in the amount of time the pastor commits to his sermon, in the fact that there are one or more part-time staff members focusing on worship and music, and in the cost and care dedicated to the sanctuary. Care for the elderly is a value that explains the number of hours pastors spend on sick and shut-in calls, as well as devotions at nursing homes and special events at the church. Few churches or pastors have consciously made care for the elderly their priority; and if they thought about it, many would see teens or families in need of greater

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attention. But priorities are more likely the result of tradition, "the way we do things here," than intentional decision in most churches.

There are other program values that characterize congregations, for example: youth ministry, after-school programming, family ministry, women's ministries, men's ministry, singles ministry, a child care program, support groups, evangelism, adult education, fellowship life, and more. In some cases, the emphasized program is no longer achieving what it once did, whether because the audience for that program or the leadership of that program has changed. Unless the congregation consciously evaluates its values and priorities, a declining "signature program" risks demoralizing a whole congregation. Launching a new program of excellence will almost certainly require a comprehensive effort to establish a broadly accepted sense of value for this area of ministry.

Values and Prioritizing Audiences

It would be valuable for churches to identify as many audiences for their ministry as are realistic. Then leaders can assess which of these audiences the congregation is serving well, which are in need of greater attention, and which the church must acknowledge it is unable to serve well at this point in its history. While most congregation leaders have trouble with such prioritizing and argue that their church seeks to serve everyone, reality is that in any church there are some people served better than others. Determining what the priorities should be requires a matching of strengths and needs, but ought to begin with articulated values.

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STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

Congregations will build an effective ministry for the future on the strengths and blessings God has invested in them, not on high-sounding ideals or the model of other churches. Those strengths may be the gifts of the pastor and/or a core of members. They may be material blessings such as a healthy endowment, a large and attractive facility, or a location that provides great visibility and accessibility. Sometimes the strength of a congregation is less tangible, such as the tradition of Christian love and caring that is palpable or a positive self-image and "can-do" spirit that overcomes obstacles. Frequently, the primary strength and blessing of the congregation is a program of excellence that attracts new people. Above all, the strength of a Christian Church is its theology; and it need not be a distasteful concession to find the most effective way to communicate the distinctive doctrine of God's grace to the community.

One reason for emphasizing strengths and blessings is that it is too easy to find weaknesses and problems. Negative churches focus on what they don't do well or what their pastor isn't good at doing. Churches that thank God for blessings and emphasize their strengths will find ways to serve the Lord better, enjoy each other's company and attract other people.

Strengths of the Pastor

Every pastor comes with a unique gift mix, personality, experiences and interests. Each of those can be a basis for prioritizing. Obviously, the pastor who is a compelling speaker should be given as many opportunities to use that gift as possible, from radio and television to seminars

offered in the community. Some pastors write well, even if their preaching doesn't match that gift. Those pastors should be frequent contributors to the local newspaper's religion page, if possible. Since this gift is frequently matched with a more introverted personality, e-mail messages to members, brief Bible studies distributed to members, and work with the church's web-site can maximize the strength. Pastors who are outgoing and meet people well should be given the time to create evangelism opportunities in community organizations or to walk the neighborhood periodically.

If a pastor's gift is counseling, members can be encouraged to carry his business card and give it to unchurched friends and coworkers who are hurting. The pastor may volunteer his counseling services to a school or hospital in the community. A pastor with experience in campus ministry may be able to reach out to the nearby college campus, despite the congregation's lack of any program or track record. If the pastor is a veteran of the armed services, there is an audience for his witness in any community. Pastors who are athletic can reach people, members and non-members, by getting involved in youth sports programming in the community; and they may create a "Bible Basketball Camp" at the church which connects with kids. Gifts and interests in music, archeology or horticulture provide connecting points with people. A healthy church seeks to make the most of the "package" God gave them in their pastor.

Strengths of the members

When a congregation identifies a number of members with the same gift or interest, that common strength can be the basis for prioritizing an area of ministry. It may be a common

interest in people of another culture that creates a full-blown outreach combining transportation, English classes, food and clothing, as well as evangelism. Hospice programs and support groups have developed out of the experiences of members who, as St. Paul urges in II Corinthians one, translate their experience of God's comfort into a ministry to others who are hurting. Young mothers in the congregation have parlayed their experience into an outreach effort to unchurched young mothers, complete with Bible studies and parenting classes. A cadre of active senior members can launch an aggressive ministry to nursing homes. Prison ministry, after-school programs and new resident outreach have been developed around the gifts and interests of a handful of committed members.

Strengths of Facilities

Churches with gymnasiums or a large campus invite members with a sense of outreach to envision ways to use the facility. Family nights, adult sports programs, senior exercise and health screening, children's ministries. . . space invites program. If the congregation is affiliated with a Christian high school or college, that source of volunteers and interests may spark a program of excellence. Affiliations with a Christian camp or counseling agency create another set of possibilities. It may be a group of early retirees, in good physical health and in better spiritual health, that are the catalyst for a new "signature ministry." The possibilities are as broad as the gifts and blessings the ascended Lord gives his church. The key is to look for strengths and blessings, and then to create a "climate of permission" that allows Christians to capitalize on those gifts.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Change in the church is most often driven by needs. When membership is in decline and the budget isn't being met, or when membership growth has taxed the pastor's ability to cope with the workload and the church is overcrowded on Sunday, people are more open to change. Needs move projects up the scale from nicety to necessity. Needs become irritants, and they grab attention. When the need is felt especially by a congregation's most influential members, that need becomes a priority. While felt needs aren't usually the best way to establish priorities and shape ministerial practice, God may use needs to move a church in the direction He wants them to go.

Identifying Primary Needs

Leaders in the church can use constructive discontent to focus attention on needs that *should* shape priorities. To do so requires distinguishing primary needs from secondary needs and symptoms or consequences from real needs. The primary need is virtually <u>never</u> budgetary; and yet most people perceive the need there. The real issue is probably <u>not</u> the condition of the property, but leaders can use this perceived need to help members focus on what really needs changing.

Leaders emphasize spiritual needs and people concerns. They may do so with statistical evidence or stories that touch hearts and make the point. They seek to establish preventive ministry, not merely reactive ministry, addressing problems at their root rather than dealing with

consequences. For example, getting people into Bible study, where the Holy Spirit will build

them to maturity is the critical need; fund-raising is the reactive approach to an immediate

financial problem. Family ministry that strengthens marriages and teaches parenting principles is

the real need; counseling is the perceived need that patches up problems. The high rate of drop-

out from the church among teens and twenty-somethings will trigger calls for better youth

programs; but perceptive leaders will recognize that the real need may lie in parenting and in the

approach the church took to children's ministry and confirmation instruction.

Needs as Opportunities

How an issue is stated will determine how it is debated. Leaders will want to define the needs

and problems of the church in such a way that ministerial practice isn't kidnaped by strident voices

and urgent issues. Because needs become priorities, it is vital that the important needs are given

primary attention and that God's priorities drive the church's agenda. Because a negative climate

generally produces bad decisions, needs ought to be defined as opportunities whenever possible.

Christians who've studied St. Paul's prayers for the church in Ephesians will see opportunities

where others see only needs or problems. The apostle prays in chapter one, "that the eyes of your

heart may be enlightened in order that you may know. . . his incomparably great power for us who

believe" (1:18-19). And then Paul reminds us that Jesus ascended to rule the universe in the

interest of his Church (1:20-23). In chapter three the apostle's doxology honors "Him who is able

to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work

within us" (2:20). For every need and every problem there is an opportunity to grow in faith, to

increase our trust, to see the Lord come through. In most needs and problems there are opportunities for ministry if Christians will simply see them from another perspective. Leaders believe that opportunities make the best priorities.

And there are an increasing set of opportunities in a post-Christian, postmodern America. The problem that many people today have little understanding or experience of the church is really an opportunity to introduce them to Jesus without institutional obstacles and negative stereotypes. The subjective and experiential nature of contemporary culture means that, instead of beginning an Adult Information Class with doctrinal proof passages, the Gospels introduce people to Jesus. If loyalty to the church is waning in this era, then let the church refocus people's loyalty to their Lord. Ministerial practice may need to be reshaped; and if needs and problems drive God's people back to God's Word, the church will find opportunities and ways of realizing those opportunities.

Some opportunities show up without a need or problem. The nation's concern for failing schools has in a few areas produced voucher programs that will allow children from low-income families to attend Christian schools; and some churches have recognized this as a mission opportunity immediately. When the community's budget crunch means closing down an after-school program, the church may find a host of children for its after-school ministry. Similarly, a community's need for child care or senior care may create an opportunity for outreach to those audiences. Changing neighborhoods mean new opportunities for evangelism. The change may be ethnic, economic or generational in nature. Denominational projects and initiatives from foundations can provide a congregation with ideas, training, manpower and/or finances to develop new programs locally. Christian colleges and high schools may make teams of young workers

available to do summer programs with congregations. National concerns and crises present the church with questions and emotions that can be pointedly addressed with God's Word in a class or forum. Local media outlets may make special rates available to churches for an advertising campaign.

Opportunities and Priorities

Not all opportunities lend themselves well to ongoing ministry; and churches want to avoid jumping on and off bandwagons of possibility. Just because there's an opportunity doesn't mean there's a priority. Before adjusting ministerial practice or creating new programs, a church's leaders want to apply a few criteria to the opportunity, such as: 1) Does this opportunity fit clearly within the parameters of the church's mission and theology? 2) Does this opportunity match our congregation's values, character and strengths? 3) Will addressing this opportunity enhance or distract from the other important priorities in our church? 4) Is there a significant audience to be reached through this opportunity? 5) Will this be a project of short duration and limited significance or a program of several years or more and significant consequence? 6) Do we have the time and resources to gear up for this opportunity? 7) Will seeking to capitalize on this opportunity create controversy and conflict, or will there be a high degree of unanimity in pursuing this?

When values, strengths and opportunities come together, a congregation will recognize God's kairos and establish a priority that, in turn, shapes ministerial practice.

Sample Statements Of A Theology Of Ministerial Practice

Or Philosophy Of Ministry

It is generally easier to relate to examples than theories. Understanding the factors that contribute to a theology of ministerial practice may not mean that a person knows how to articulate a philosophy of ministry. What follows is an example of statements that reflect the principles developed in this chapter.

1. Faithfulness *to* the Word of God and faithfulness *with* the Word of God will guide every program and decision of this congregation.

2. Involving members in systematic study of Scripture, especially our adult members, is the key to accomplishing this congregation's mission.

3. Strengthening Christian families is the first goal in our program of children's ministry.

4. Worship here will be guided by the twin criteria of *reverence* (focusing on God and his grace and emphasizing Word and Sacraments) and *relevance* (addressing issues of real life and involving people in ways they find meaningful).

5. We will involve people in the congregation's ministry primarily on the basis of their gifts and interests, rather than the church's needs.

6. Fellowship life will seek to connect Christians with one another in relationships and structures that foster authentic support and accountability.

7. Every program and group in this church will seek to engage unchurched people and/or encourage Christians in their personal witness.

8. Ministry to our at-risk members will be personal, persistent and -- as much as possible -- preemptive (seeking to prevent the issues and consequences of poor spiritual health).

9. Because we are an *Evangelical* Lutheran church, we will GO to people with our ministry rather than simply expect or demand that they *come.*

10. This church will challenge and encourage members to grow in their faith, their character and their life of service to the Lord, so that the description of church membership becomes the definition of Christian discipleship.

11. We will foster bonds of mutual trust between leaders and members by communicating openly, honestly, redundantly, positively and lovingly.

12. We will establish goals and priorities chiefly on the basis of the special strengths and blessings God has invested in our church and the unique opportunities he presents to us in our community.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide concrete and compelling examples of how churches confront theological and cultural questions, raised by a changing society and answered best with a thoughtfully articulated theology of ministerial practice. It is important that a congregation's ministry practice is aligned with its theology and matched to its cultural setting if it is to be faithful in its mission.

Too often ministry practice is unconsciously shaped by the paradigms of recent history and personal experience. Churches simply perpetuate a way of doing things. Even the terminology they use reinforces a way of looking at ministry which can blind pastors and lay leaders to alternatives. Some prevailing paradigms are no longer as effective as they were a generation ago in accomplishing the church's objectives.

Churches that take theology seriously will want to generate a list of key biblical principles that shape ministerial practice, and find concrete ways of applying those principles. The pastoral epistles are a good starting point. It is also important that a confessional church analyze, and if

necessary reshape, its ministry practice in the light of its theological emphases and distinctives. For Lutherans that begins with the three solas of the Reformation.

There are broad cultural forces such as postmodernism, generational differences, and the impact of the information economy that will impact the way a congregation crafts programs of ministry. The waning influence of Christianity on western culture presents churches with a need to rethink their communication with that culture. Each church serves a community with its own cultural themes: demographic features, lifestyle issues, and felt needs.

A theology of ministerial practice may be expressed best in a church's priorities. Those priorities, whether consciously or unconsciously determined, will be forged by the congregation's values, strengths, needs, and opportunities. Of these, needs are the least helpful.

This chapter concluded with pointed questions and practical examples to help a church understand and begin to develop a theology of ministerial practice. The following chapter will analyze survey research in five Lutheran churches to assess how consistent is a congregation's view of ministry practice. Are the church's theological emphases understood? Do members share the same values? Is there a common understanding of the cultural context for the church's mission? Following this analysis of research, chapter six will provide a process by which churches can come to understand the nature and importance of a theology of ministerial practice and then develop statements that express their theology of ministerial practice.

CHAPTER FIVE:

ANALYSIS OF SURVEYS FROM FIVE CONGREGATIONS

Introduction

A premise of this project is that without an intentionally developed theology of ministerial practice, congregations will lack some cohesiveness in their outlook on ministry. There may even be competing agendas. Another premise of the project is that without a clear theology of ministerial practice, a congregation's programs and priorities may not match its mission, or even its theological emphases. Yet a third premise is that in a changing culture, congregations can expect to have diverse viewpoints on the style and method of ministry in anything from worship to fellowship life.

A survey is a somewhat limited way of testing these hypotheses, but it is more objective than conclusions drawn from interviews. Among the questions survey analysis should address are these: Are the theological distinctives of the church well understood? How diverse are members' views of their mission field? What degree of coherence is there in assessing the church's priorities? Are there apparent differences in style-of-ministry preferences?

A significant argument of this project is that a church's setting should have a major impact on its approach to ministry. Will that be apparent in a comparison of responses from five different churches?

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Literature cited in previous chapters suggests that different generations will approach ministry with different expectations. Will the survey bear that out, or does a common faith over-ride many of the differences among generations?

One more question to explore is whether lay leaders see ministry differently than do the rest of the members.

Churches sometimes discover an "is/ought" gap in the way they carry out their ministry. The previous chapters of this project have established the _ought_ of a theology of ministerial practice. This chapter provides a window on the _is_, how congregations actually view their practice of ministry.

Purpose and Process

A three-page survey was completed by 240 members, elected leaders and pastors from five different churches. Part One of the survey utilizes ten questions from a 1998 survey of 2200 Lutherans, carried out by the fraternal insurance company Lutheran Brotherhood. [191] The questions are theological in nature and attempt to measure church members' understanding of and adherence to the theology of their church, as well as their loyalty to the church. One purpose of using these ten questions was to make a comparison with the results of the Lutheran Brotherhood survey. A further purpose was to determine if there were significant differences among elected leaders and members in their adherence to basic doctrine and in their loyalty to the church. A final

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[191] Cf. Footnote four.

purpose was to measure differences among three age cohorts as to their adherence and loyalty. Determining how well church members understand basic Christian doctrine is important to any analysis of ministry practice. It should also be helpful to determine if members are able to distinguish truth from error when challenged by statements that reflect current cultural assumptions. One variable is that while the congregations polled are all from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Lutheran Brotherhood survey was taken among members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Synod.

This portion of the survey will make the point that a congregation's ministerial practice must be clearly rooted in its theology. When members are unsure about cardinal doctrines of their church, the church may have to adjust its methods of teaching and its priorities. Where lay leaders demonstrate confusion on such important doctrines as the proper distinction of law and gospel, it would be advisable to reaffirm this doctrine as a cornerstone of the congregation's ministerial practice.

Part Two of the survey asked respondents to select from three or more responses in answer to questions regarding their understanding of the people in their community, the attitude of their congregation, their own values regarding their church, the priorities of their church, and the primary outcomes toward which their church's ministry is directed. Questions were framed to address factors that contribute to a congregation's theology of ministerial practice and an individual's philosophy of ministry. Evaluation will be done on three levels: comparing responses of the five congregations, comparing responses of elected leaders and members, and comparing responses of three different age cohorts. A priori assumptions are that the culture and

circumstance of a congregation will have measurable affect on responses to key questions in the survey, that leaders and members will see the church differently in at least a few areas that impact ministerial practice, and that different generations will view the church differently -- again, in at least a few areas that have been addressed in literature on generational theory.

Significant conclusions from the survey and implications for a theology of ministerial practice will be reported in this chapter. A more thorough analysis of the survey, together with raw statistical data, can be found in an appendix.

THE SURVEY

PART ONE:

1. I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

2. Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.   (Check one response)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

3. A child is sinful already at birth.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

4. The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

5. Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

6. God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

7. I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

8. God is one divine essence, but three persons.   (Check one response.)
___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

9. Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.   (Check one.)
 ___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

10. I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.   (Check one response.)
 ___ Strongly Agree   ___ Agree   ___ Disagree   ___ Strongly Disagree   ___ No Opinion

PART TWO:

1. Most people in this community who don't go to church. . . (Check 1 response in each of the 2 categories)

 A.   _____ are concerned about truth and values.
         _____ are trying to figure out how to make their life work.
         _____ are looking for a good time.

 B.   _____ learn best by hearing.
         _____ learn best by seeing.
         _____ learn best by doing.

2. Most people in this congregation. . .   (Check one response in each of the two categories)

 A.   _____ would prefer that everything stayed the same.
         _____ appreciate some change.
         _____ believe things need to be done differently.

 B.   _____ are pessimistic about the church's future.
         _____ are realistic about the church's future.
         _____ are optimistic about the church's future.

3. My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by. . . (Check one response)
         _____ my experience as a child.
         _____ the perspective of my parents.
         _____ the influence of a pastor.
         _____ my experience as an adult.
         _____ discussions with peers.
         _____ my education.

4. I think a sermon should, primarily. . .   (Check one response)
         _____ reinforce basic Christian truths.
         _____ teach new insights from the Bible.
         _____ make sense out of life.

5. I would prefer that music in the church be. . .   (Check one response)
         _____ classical Lutheran hymns.
         _____ a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs.
         _____ up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs..

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6. What people want most to get out of membership in a church is. . . (Check one response)

_____ close Christian friends.

_____ an inspiring experience of worship.

_____ an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving.

_____ growing in their understanding of God and his Word.

_____ help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses.

_____ the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs.

7. I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:

(Put a 1 in front of your top priority, a 2 in front of the next most important issue, and a 3 in front of the third priority in your estimation.)

_____ evangelism to the lost

_____ teaching our children

_____ regaining members who've drifted away

_____ getting more members involved in fellowship and service

_____ solving our financial problems

_____ caring for the sick and elderly

_____ building people up in spiritual maturity

_____ counseling and comforting the hurting

_____ retaining our teens and young adults

_____ enhancing our worship

8. I think the pastor's role should be, primarily. . . (Check one response)

_____ strong spiritual leader.

_____ compassionate Christian counselor.

_____ wise Bible teacher.

_____ motivating equipper for Christian life.

9. I think a good church member is best described as: (Check one response)

_____ an eager participant in worship every Sunday.

_____ a willing volunteer.

_____ an avid student of the Bible.

_____ a generous giver.

_____ a committed Christian witness in the community.

_____ a strong leader who stands up for what's right.

_____ a moral example of Christian love.

10. When people volunteer, most would prefer. . . (Check one response)

_____ a physical task that they can complete with a sense of satisfaction.

_____ an opportunity to help another human being.

_____ a role on a committee that gets things done.

_____ a position of leadership that can make things happen.

11. For each of the five statements which follow, circle the response that best expresses your outlook:

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.

SA   A   D   SD

B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.

       SA   A   D   SD

C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.

       SA   A   D   SD

D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.

       SA   A   D   SD

E. The average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.

       SA   A   D   SD

12. In my estimation an effective church is best defined by: (Check one response)

    _____ a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer service
    _____ growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community
    _____ a high percentage of members attending worship each week
    _____ remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people
    _____ a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study
    _____ a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry

THE CONGREGATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

Congregation "A" is 42 years old and is situated in a Wisconsin city of about 40,000 people. There are 437 baptized members, 353 communicant members, and an average worship attendance of 188. There is one pastor. A Christian elementary school of four teachers that once served nearly 100 children has seen enrollment drop below 40. The previous pastor was asked to resign. An undercurrent of conflict has continued through the present pastor's tenure. There are highly committed leaders and long-term members, but the loss of members and decline of the school has left a somewhat demoralized spirit. 60 members and 3 leaders completed the survey.

Congregation "B" is 114 years old and is situated in a rapidly growing and affluent suburban area outside Milwaukee. There are 580 baptized members, 488 communicant members, and an

average worship attendance of 281. There are one full-time and one part-time pastor, as well as a part-time deaconess for music and women's ministry; the congregation anticipates calling a second full-time pastor soon. The congregation recently purchased a 25-acre site on a heavily traveled road and looks forward to relocation. After many years of "quiet" ministry, a new pastor and community growth have brought new members and excitement to the congregation. 17 members and five leaders completed the survey. However, part one of the survey was not included.

Congregation "C" is 130 years old and is located in a very small Wisconsin town. There are 298 baptized members, 233 communicant members, and an average worship attendance of 153. There is one pastor. The congregation has operated a Christian elementary school for a couple of decades, but the enrollment has dropped into the twenties. The current pastor has been serving for only a few years and has restored a measure of optimism after his predecessor's short and unhappy pastorate. 48 members and 14 leaders completed the survey.

Congregation "D" is 105 years old and is located in an ex-urban Chicago community of affluent commuters. There are 688 baptized members, 506 communicant members and an average worship attendance of 276. There are two full-time pastors, one of whom has served for nearly 20 years. There is a Christian elementary school of eight teachers and a rapidly fluctuating enrollment that in the past decade went from 60 to 147 and back down to 103. Indecision over relocation or renovation and a large operating debt related to the school's enrollment have cost the congregation some optimism and unity. There is a large cadre of elected leaders from three generations. 41 members and 22 leaders completed the survey.

Congregation "E" is 19 years old and is situated in an upper-middle class suburb of Atlanta. There are 374 baptized members, 286 communicant members and an average worship attendance of 194. There are one full-time and one part-time pastor; and the congregation is weighing the decision to call an additional pastor or staff minister. While there has been steady growth, excellent preaching and a positive spirit, some restlessness may be related to an inability to make critical decisions regarding the future. 21 members and 4 leaders completed the survey.

A Comparison of Surveys With the Lutheran Brotherhood
"Survey of Lutheran Beliefs and Practices"

The Lutheran Brotherhood survey was completed by a random sampling of people who identified themselves as Lutheran. The members of the five congregations who answered the same questions were active members and regular worshipers. As might be expected, responses from the five congregations surveyed were far more in harmony with orthodox Lutheran theology. Questions two, three and eight were basic and unambiguous doctrinal statements. The percentage of respondents who agreed with these three doctrinal statements was virtually twice as high among the regular worshipers as among the random sampling. Questions four, five, six and nine were more subtle statements of doctrine that required greater theological discernment. The gap between the random sampling of Lutherans and the regular attenders was even greater. While regular attenders were more positive about the church in questions one, seven and ten, the gap

between them and the random sampling of Lutherans was far smaller. Too many Lutherans seem to appreciate the church without knowing what the church teaches.

The data available does not allow measuring differences based on membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. What seems apparent, however, is the importance of regular worship to one's understanding of Christian doctrine and one's ability to distinguish truth from error. When more than half of those who call themselves Lutheran are wrong or uncertain on central teachings of the Christian faith, some changes in ministerial emphases and practice seem appropriate. One emphasis the data suggest is more aggressive efforts to reclaim members who are drifting from active involvement in worship and spiritual growth. Occasional attenders are an audience the church can encourage toward spiritual growth in Bible study with a deliberate strategy. A change in ministerial practice the survey might trigger is more pointed teaching of basic Christian doctrine in worship, for in this setting the church engages the greatest number of members. Another conclusion from the surveys may be the value of expressing truth, as did sixteenth century theologians, in statements both affirmativa and negativa. Knowing what is wrong as well as what is right is more difficult in a culture that no longer sees such clear distinctions in matters of faith.

A comparison of responses by elected leaders and other members of the five churches surveyed for this study demonstrates that elected leaders tend to be more certain about matters of doctrine, though not by wide margins. Leaders were generally a bit more likely to distinguish truth from error than members in questions that pitted biblical truth against popular sentiment. The exception was that leaders were no more able than members to distinguish Law and Gospel.

And while leaders are considerably more insistent on attending worship than members, they are more likely to challenge the church's position if they personally disagree with it. This paradox prevents drawing any conclusions about degrees of loyalty to the church.

One premise of a theology of ministerial practice is that the church's leaders must be examples of spiritual maturity, capable of distinguishing truth from the conventional wisdom of culture. Churches may want to establish greater training and expectations for elected leaders. That there are not large gaps in understanding between leaders and members may suggest that there is a fairly large pool of biblically knowledgeable members from which to elect leaders.

Generational differences in the church are not nearly as great as might be expected, at least in the understanding of and adherence to doctrine. Still, younger church members seem somewhat more likely than older members to be influenced by prevailing sentiments in the culture around them than older members and a bit less discerning. Members older than fifty were significantly less inclined to see the church as helpful with daily life than were younger members. The conclusion for ministry practice might be that younger members need more opportunities to discuss the tensions of truth and culture, while older members want to see truth applied to life more practically and personally.

See the appendix for a more thorough analysis of comparative data.

Survey, Part Two: A Comparison of Responses by Elected Leaders and Members

This comparison is intended to discover whether there are significant gaps between leaders and members in their understanding of their church's mission, in their understanding of how ministry can best reach today's audiences, and in their priorities and preferences. The gaps that exist are an argument for an intentionally developed philosophy of ministry. The data produced by surveying may lead pastors and lay leaders to see the value of an intentionally articulated theology of ministerial practice.

In general, leaders tended to be more pessimistic about the church's future than members. They tended to be more institutional in outlook, while members tended to be more relational in their view of the church's work. Leaders were not inclined to rank evangelism in the community as highly as did members. These differences make some sense if leaders are spending most of their time in meetings focused on the problems of their congregation. Nonetheless, significant gaps between leaders and followers in these key areas may demonstrate the need for elected leaders to be nourished with the promises of God, to study once more the mission Jesus Christ gave his Church, and to develop a theology of ministerial practice that is clearly rooted in that mission. That there was so little difference in the responses of leaders and members in other areas suggests that active members and leaders are, for the most part, looking at the church through the same window.

A plurality of members chose "seeing" as the way people learn best, while a clear majority of leaders identified "doing." Though more than twice as many members as leaders chose "hearing," neither group rated hearing highly. The traditional mode of learning in the church has been

auditory, but the survey indicates that members recognize the importance of more active and interactive learning styles as well as more visual ways of communicating the faith. Ministry practice that utilizes the best in technology and methodology will mean change; and that change will be easier to accomplish if the congregation has defined its ministry practice with an analysis of its cultural setting.

The survey indicated that most members and leaders are open to change. Leaders are a bit more inclined to see the need for change, but more than half of each group indicated they appreciate at least "some change." It is important for elected leaders to clearly distinguish the changeless Word of God from changing forms of communicating that Word and then lead members to see that difference. Leaders who fear that change will disturb members should be encouraged by the survey. But they will need to implement change in increments, with an appreciation for the transitions people undergo as they adapt to change. A theology of ministerial practice can define how a congregation will approach and implement change.

The survey reinforced the importance of parents in shaping people's outlook on the church. But the highest response from among six options was "my experience as an adult," for leaders even more than for members. As important as children's ministry is, this survey might encourage a greater emphasis on adult discipleship and family ministry in the effort to develop mature faith. "Experience as a child" ranked only third in shaping outlooks on church. The influence of a pastor rated fourth.

Three-quarters of both leaders and members chose "a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs" when asked to choose a preferred style of music for worship. Rather than traditional or contemporary, people opt for "blended" worship when given a choice. It will take

more than a survey for a congregation to determine the style(s) of worship it will employ.

Without a carefully and biblically reasoned theology of ministerial practice, one of two extremes

may prevail. At one extreme, the congregation will simply adopt a style of worship that caters to

majority preferences. At the other extreme, the church's leaders show apparent disdain for the

way in which many of its members prefer to worship.

Out of six choices for "what people want most to get out of membership in a church," a clear

majority of both leaders and members selected "growing in their understanding of God and his

Word." This "vertical" relationship so far surpassed the "horizontal" relationship responses that it

might be difficult for the church's most active members to understand the Christian fellowship

needs of members at the margin of the congregation. The church's most active members tend to

have a strong spiritual support network in place and don't see the need to create more

opportunities for new members and less involved members to meet other Christians and develop

close Christian friendships. Responses to question eleven, part "e," confirm this. The process of

articulating a theology of ministerial practice can help pastors and lay leaders recognize a

fellowship need that they themselves do not experience.

In assessing the primary role of a pastor, 77% of elected leaders and 70% of members chose

"strong spiritual leader." The roles of teaching, equipping, and counseling divided up the few

remaining percentage points. This emphasis on pastoral leadership may run counter to how some

pastors perceive their role. In a theology of ministerial practice it will be important not simply to

emphasize pastoral leadership, but adequately define it.

Both leaders and members see *living* the Christian faith and witnessing it as the best way to

measure a church's effectiveness. Institutional measures drew little enthusiasm. Postmodern

culture is experiential rather than rational. People who rub shoulders with the unchurched and dechurched understand the importance of demonstrating the truth and power of Christianity, not merely arguing the case. Ministry practice should respond to this reality.

While leaders predominantly felt that volunteers in the church would prefer a physical task to do, members selected "an opportunity to help another human being" as their first choice. (A role on a committee was low on the list of preferred forms of service for both groups.) This may, in part, explain the difficulty there is in some churches to recruit people for service. A theology of ministerial practice will want to emphasize opportunities for people to use their gifts in ways that personally serve others rather than maintaining the institution.

It appears from the survey (questions seven and twelve, particularly) that there are competing priorities in churches. Leaders will need to articulate the church's mission and its priorities more clearly if ministry practice is to bring people's energies and resources together.

See the appendix for a more thorough analysis of comparative data.

Survey, Part Two: A Comparison of Responses by Age Cohorts

38 members between the ages of 18 and 35, 84 members aged 36 to 50, and 81 members age 51 and older completed surveys. While these age cohorts roughly correspond to Generation X, the Baby Boom generation and the Builder and Silent generations, it would have been more accurate to have made the middle cohort ages 36 to 55. There are a number of generalizations about different generations that have been reported in chapters three and four of this project.

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While this survey does not presume to validate or contest those generalizations, there will be an effort to determine to some degree whether active church members parallel their generational peers in outlook. A theology of ministerial practice must take into account differences in perspective and understanding from one generation to another.

A few key themes summarize the generational differences that emerge in the survey. Generation X is clearly more relational and Baby Boomers are more task-oriented in their view of the church. Generation X is also more inclined toward active learning and volunteering, less positive about quiet reverence in the church. Grandchildren are a bit more like their grandparents than their parents in their outlook on the church. Middle-aged church members seem more pessimistic about the future of the church, perhaps because they are more bottom-line oriented. They are more interested in personal growth and character development than those older and younger than they. The Builder and Silent generations really are more happy with their church, more loyal to it, more traditional in their view of its ministry. However, they share some of the caring about people that describes Generation X; and they share a preference for blended worship with the other generations.

The youngest cohort preferred "learning by doing" by margin of 50% more than the middle age cohort and nearly twice the percentage of the oldest cohort. Reaching Generation X with active learning methods and hands-on service opportunities seems the best strategy. Both the Baby Boom respondents and the Builder and Silent generation members chose "learning by seeing" as their preferred style. Only the oldest cohort gave a response of more than 10% to "learning by hearing." While all three age groups selected "Reinforce basic Christian truths" as their number one choice for what a sermon should do, the youngest cohort was more than twice

as likely to select "make sense out of life" as their top choice. Life-related preaching, with visual aids and inter-active opportunities to follow will probably engage any audience, but especially Generation X. This survey, coupled with published research already available, may lead pastors and lay leaders to emphasize the importance of life-relatedness in the development of a theology of ministerial practice.

The three generations show little difference in choosing a "blend of classical hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs" as their preference for music in worship. However, in response to the statement "The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence," 48% of the youngest age cohort responded negatively. Only 8% of the oldest age cohort and 33% of the middle age cohort chose a negative response. Among active church members of different generations, it appears that musical style is less an issue than is the degree of formality and the mood created by lighting, sound and demeanor. Young adults prefer a more informal and joyful atmosphere. A philosophy of ministry will have to assess whether one style of worship is capable of engaging everyone. How young and old dress for worship will probably demonstrate different perspectives.

The youngest cohort of members was substantially more likely to think that people wanted from their church "close Christian friends" and "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs." They were more likely to respond that the pastor's role should be primarily "compassionate Christian counselor" and more likely to prefer a volunteer role that was "an opportunity to help another human being." More than the other generations they would define an effective church with "remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people." Clearly, Generation X has a more relational view of ministry. Retaining that generation will be enhanced

by a theology of ministerial practice that highlights the relational dimension of our Christian fellowship.

Older members were more likely than those younger to measure church membership and a church's effectiveness with attendance statistics and "a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry." The Baby Boom respondents were more likely than other age cohorts to choose such responses as "develop Christian character" and "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community." Though generalizations are hazardous, this does seem to confirm prevailing characterizations of Builder and Silent generation church members as more "institutional" in their view of the church and Baby Boomers as more "success" and "personal growth" oriented.

The anti-institutional mood of younger members was borne out in responses to the statement, "Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters." 75% of the oldest cohort agreed with the statement, while only 48% of the youngest cohort did so. It may surprise some to note that those aged 18 to 35 were *more* likely than the other two age cohorts to disagree with the statement, "Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship." Perhaps just as surprisingly, the oldest age cohort was *least* likely to disagree with this statement. One explanation for this response may be that Generation X is more interested in close families and good parenting than Baby Boomers. It may be, however, that too many members between the ages of 18 and 35 have left the church, and those who remain hold the values of their grandparents. Older members who've heard arguments for a staffed nursery may be demonstrating their attempt to be flexible, or they may simply be annoyed by crying babies.

A hypothesis worth confirming with further study is that active and committed church members are more like each other than they are like their generational peers in society. Both the teaching of Scripture and the culture of the church tend to bring people together in their view of life and ministry. However, this hypothesis has a corollary, that with each successive generation the gap between highly committed church members and the unchurched audience for their witness is increasing in terms of beliefs, values, and worldview.

See the appendix for a more thorough analysis of comparative data.

An Analysis of Surveys by Congregation

The responses of each of the five congregations participating in the survey have been analyzed, first against the broader norm of responses from all congregations and then internally -- leader responses compared to member responses. Only those questions where significant deviation from the norm or significant gap between leaders and members occurs are addressed. Hypotheses will be developed where appropriate, based on the surveys and the situation of each congregation. In this chapter only a brief summary for each congregation will be provided. The appendix offers a more thorough analysis of comparative data.

CONGREGATION "A"

This congregation has experienced internal conflict and statistical decline. The survey responses reflect the situation.

Part One of the survey suggests that members of this congregation are not as theologically well grounded as the other churches. Questions two and three, statements about salvation only in Jesus Christ and about original sin, demonstrated less certainty in this congregation than in the composite of five congregations. Respondents in congregation A were less able to distinguish Law from Gospel and more likely to embrace universalism than were members of the other congregations.

Part Two of the survey suggests that members of this congregation are less aware of the culture around them and less sensitive to the unchurched in their community. For example, twice as many members of congregation A checked "learn best by hearing;" and this congregation was more likely to believe that the unchurched "are primarily looking for a good time." Members of this church were much less likely to believe that sermons should "make sense out of life." Their preference for "classical Lutheran hymns" was greater than in the other churches. And they were more likely to reject a "quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship." The response to question twelve can be interpreted as more "institutional" than the norm.

Members of congregation A were significantly more pessimistic about the future of their church and considerably more likely to believe "things need to be done differently." "Counseling and comforting the hurting" ranked two places higher in this church than in others when assessing the issues the congregation needs to address.

In response to the question evaluating a church's effectiveness, evangelism and spiritual growth through Bible study ranked significantly lower than the norm. Ironically, the very things that can lift a congregation out of its depressed mood and conflicted climate are not high on the list of things members prize.

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The fact that only three elected leaders completed surveys and the pastor did not makes it impossible to draw statistical conclusions about the perspective of this congregation's leaders. This low response rate may, however, substantiate that one problem in this congregation is a lack of ownership on the part of leaders. Where leaders did respond, the answers rated community outreach even lower than members did.

This is a congregation that is practicing a ministry developed a generation earlier. It will be helpful for their pastor and lay leaders to consciously determine how to practice their theology in their cultural setting today.

CONGREGATION "B"

This is a resurgent church in an affluent and rapidly growing suburban area. There is an upbeat mood driven by appreciation for a very competent pastor and the purchase of a large new site. Only seventeen members and five elected leaders completed surveys, so conclusions based on the data provided by these surveys must be viewed more tentatively. However, responses to the survey reflect the church's situation. As a result of a clerical oversight, Part One was not completed in this congregation.

This church's members are more flexible and more sensitive to their community than the norm. They were 50% more likely than the composite of five churches to indicate that people in the congregation "appreciate some change." They were considerably more likely to view their peers as optimistic and almost 400% less likely than the composite to feel that people in their church were pessimistic. The percentage that felt a sermon should "make sense out of life" was nearly

twice that of the composite of five churches; and more than one-third more indicated that a sermon should "teach new insights from the Bible." Twice as many members marked "strongly agree" to the statement about a staffed nursery as did in the composite of five churches.

Interestingly, members of congregation B chose "an inspiring experience of worship" by nearly three times the number in other churches when assessing what most people want to get out of church membership. They rated "getting more members involved in fellowship and service" significantly higher than did members in other churches. And they said that volunteers wanted "an opportunity to help another human being" by a margin significantly higher than in other churches. Members ranked "retaining our teens and young adults" number one among issues the church needs to address. Congregation B seems to understand the psychological make-up of its diverse audiences and the demographic "hole" in contemporary church life better than the other churches.

Leaders were even more optimistic than were members, a reversal of the norm among the other congregations. They were also more mission-minded. With seven choices available to describe "a good church member," all five leaders who completed surveys chose "a committed Christian witness in the community." Evangelism tied for second among issues the church needed to address.

That this church is growing and that it purchased an expensive and expansive new site is not surprising. The leaders are optimistic and evangelism-minded. The members are flexible and hopeful, more likely than their peers to see outreach to the community as vitally important and more sensitive to the people they must reach in the community. This congregation has responded to its environment, but more unconsciously than intentionally. This is a church in a hurry. A thoughtfully develop theology of ministerial practice might avert the problems of too much haste.

CONGREGATION "C"

This is an old congregation situated in a small town/rural setting. While there has been difficulty maintaining the enrollment of the Christian school begun two decades ago, the mood of the church is positive. A new pastor and healthy relationships are the best explanation for the present climate. 48 members and 14 elected leaders completed surveys.

The doctrinal questions in part one of the survey revealed that this congregation is slightly less discerning than the norm established by the members of all five churches. 50% more members here than in the composite of five congregations checked a positive response to the statement that most religions in the world lead to the same God. Elected leaders in this congregation tended to be less certain in their responses to questions of basic doctrine than were leaders in the other churches. Two of the fourteen leaders marked "strongly agree" to the statement, "God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can." The pastor of this congregation is concerned about the low number of elected leaders in Bible class. The survey supports his concern and may be one part of a strategy to convince people to grow in their understanding of God's Word.

Responses to part two of the survey paint the picture of a congregation quite satisfied with the way things are and somewhat resistant to change. The number of members who marked "things need to be done differently" was less than a quarter of the percentage of the other four churches. Nearly a third more than normal marked "would prefer that everything stayed the same." In this church members are less optimistic and less pessimistic than the norm, opting in majority numbers for "realistic about the church's future." Members here were nearly a third more likely to respond negatively to the statement, "Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are

done at their church." They were more than 50% more likely to reject the statement that "the average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered."

Leaders in this congregation are more resistant to change than are the members. They are more than twice as pessimistic about the future as are the members. They are more inclined than members and much more likely than leaders in other churches to prefer "classical Lutheran hymns." Members were more likely than their peers in other churches to pick "a physical task" over "help another human being" in assessing what volunteers prefer to do, but leaders were even more likely to choose this somewhat institutional response.

Evangelism and community outreach are not high on the list of this church's priorities. Evangelism ranked only fifth among issues the church needs to address, in comparison with a composite ranking of third. Members of congregation C were considerably more inclined than members in the other churches to think that the unchurched were merely "looking for a good time." 83% of them responded negatively to the statement about a staffed nursery during worship. Again, leaders' responses were more likely to run counter to an emphasis on evangelism. Only 21% chose "a committed Christian witness in the community" as the best description of a good church member, while 37% of the members and nearly 30% of all leaders chose this option.

The survey helps to explain why the task force charged with drafting a mission and vision statement in this congregation has been unable to do so after a year. It might have been more valuable for this church to draft a theology of ministerial practice document. Resistance to change can be ameliorated by an intentional philosophy of ministry.

CONGREGATION "D"

This is an old church in an affluent ex-urban community. It has experienced recent turmoil over the enrollment, staffing and facility needs of the Christian school, a large operating deficit related to the school, and indecision over relocation to another site the church owns. This congregation has twice left one Lutheran church body for another in the past forty years. The members have studied doctrinal issues. Not surprisingly, the responses to Part One reflect greater certainty about cardinal Christian doctrines. This is a discerning group of members. They were better able to distinguish Law and Gospel (55% strongly disagreed with the false statement, compared to a member composite of 43.4%.). Only one member, 2%, agreed with the statement that most world religions lead to the same God, whereas 14.8% of members across five churches agreed. However, elected leaders are less discerning than members in the questions that are worded to reflect conventional wisdom in the culture. The absence of leaders from Bible class is an issue the pastors have been addressing.

In Part Two of the survey, members of this church demonstrate a greater awareness of the culture around them than was the norm. By a significant margin they were more likely to feel that the unchurched "are trying to figure out how to make their life work." They were also considerably more likely to believe that a sermon should "make sense out of life," and that what people wanted out of church membership was "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs." They were far more in favor of a staffed nursery and far less inclined to believe that the atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.

In three different questions, members of this congregation placed a higher value on

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involvement than did their peers in other churches; and elected leaders did so to a still higher degree. For example, members made "getting more members involved in fellowship and service" the number two issue of need, while leaders ranked this number one.

Recent problems and indecision in this church are reflected in the survey. Members, by nearly twice the percentage in the other churches, indicated that they are "pessimistic about the church's future." Nearly a third more than in other congregations "believe things need to be done differently." Leaders are significantly more pessimistic than members and more open to change.

There are bigger gaps between leaders' responses and members' responses in this congregation, particularly in assessing what people want to get out of church membership and what defines an effective church. Members are quite a bit more relational in their choices, leaders more institutional. Members tend to place greater importance on evangelism than do leaders.

This is a church that would benefit from the process of developing a theology of ministerial practice. The pessimism and the gaps between leaders and members are a barrier to healthy congregational life and mission.

CONGREGATION "E"

This is a young congregation in an upper-middle class suburb, with well educated and over-committed leaders. The church has grown steadily and has enjoyed excellence in pastoral

leadership. The congregation faces decisions regarding location, facilities, program and staffing if it is to reach a significantly larger number of people.

Responses in part one of the survey demonstrated that this church surpassed the others in affirmation of basic Christian doctrine and discernment of truth from error, among both members and elected leaders. Not surprisingly, both pastors emphasize adult spiritual growth and excel as teachers. And this is the congregation with the highest percentage of members and leaders in Bible class.

In part two, responses indicate optimism, flexibility, and a healthy appreciation for the importance of evangelism. 83% indicated that most people in their church are "optimistic about the future," compared with a composite figure of 31%. Members rated evangelism the number one issue in need of attention. They ranked aggressive evangelism and spiritual growth through Bible study higher than the other churches in evaluating an effective church. They were almost three times less likely to disagree with the statement that members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done. And they were almost 12 times less likely to disagree with the need for a staffed nursery.

The number of members who were confirmed as adults probably explain why this congregation is less likely to want "classical Lutheran hymns" and more likely to rank their experience as an adult as the most powerful shaper of their outlook on the church. Nonetheless, members of this church were more likely than the norm to affirm a worship atmosphere of quiet reverence and "growing in their understanding of God and his Word" as the reason people join a church.

The responses of elected leaders paralleled those of members, with a few exceptions. Leaders tended to take a more institutional stance when assessing volunteers, giving to a unified budget and getting comfortable with the way things are done.

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By whatever measures this survey can provide, congregation E appears to be the most healthy. This is the congregation that employed the process for developing a theology of ministerial practice that the next chapter describes.

SUMMARY

In summary, the situation of these five churches seems reflected in the responses of members and leaders. There are differences between small-town and suburban settings. There are differences between growing churches and declining churches, churches in harmony and churches in conflict. The primary areas of difference relate to levels of optimism or pessimism, the degree of openness to change, the priority given to outreach and the way members view the unchurched. There are also discernible differences in the way members respond to the theological questions of Part One, though these barometers of spiritual health do not show huge differences from one church to another. Leaders tend to be "more" of whatever characterizes their church; and they tend to be more institutional, less relational.

A larger number of congregations and a larger number of responses would create a more reliable norm against which to measure responses. With a more reliable norm, surveying leaders and members of congregations could produce a statistical means of identifying concerns and verifying hypotheses. A broader range of members who respond would also paint a truer picture of a congregation's theology and ministerial practice. The current data probably reflects the position of the most active 30 to 35% of the churches participating.

Conclusion

In general, the survey confirmed hypotheses developed earlier in this project. Typically, there is no clear consensus on ministry priorities when there has not been pointed discussion about ministerial practice. Ministry setting explains many of the differences among congregations in their outlook. In growing and diverse communities, members are more likely to understand unchurched people and the culture around them. In declining and homogeneous communities, members are less conscious of the factors that contribute to evangelistic outreach. The impact of a changing culture is discernible in the importance attached to living the faith and strong pastoral leadership, as well as in the primary impact of adult experience in shaping a person's outlook on the church.

While active members score fairly high on the ten-question theological survey, the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel was not so well understood by leaders or members. In growing, optimistic churches theological understanding tended to rank a bit higher, especially among leaders.

Differences among generations confirm the literature on the subject, though not as dramatically as might be expected. The Builders are more institutional and more inclined to describe ideal worship atmosphere as "reverent." Boomers are more task-oriented and more program-focused, as well as more pessimistic about the church. Gen-X is least likely to trust the institutional church; and these young adults are more inclined to learn by doing and want preaching to "make sense out of life." Not surprisingly, Gen-X is more relational in their outlook on ministry; and their grandparent Builders appreciate that.

That elected leaders are more institutional and pessimistic than the rest of the congregation may not be surprising, but it is sobering. That they score very little higher in theological matters is also sobering, if not surprising.

While this survey can be improved, it does offer a way of measuring a congregation's theology of ministerial practice or philosophy of ministry. The theological Part One can be used to help a congregation determine both how well members grasp Christian doctrine and how discerning they are in those points where culture compromises doctrine most readily. Questions that better reflect the subjects addressed in Chapter Two, "Biblical Examples and Theological Issues," would sharpen the survey's use in measuring a theology of ministerial practice.

Part Two of the survey can also be refined. Expanding the number of questions that deal with members' understanding of the unchurched populace, and connecting the questions to larger polling data, would make the results more helpful in assessing how well a congregation's ministerial practice matches its culture. The survey does help to analyze several things that contribute to a church's philosophy of ministry. The level of optimism or pessimism and the degree of traditionalism or openness to change are addressed quite well. Questions regarding the issues that need addressing and the definition of both a good church member and an effective church are useful in assessing priorities. Question eleven's statements are helpful in contrasting responses to specific issues that reflect a philosophy of ministry.

Survey responses will be best used as only part of an analysis process that helps congregations assess where they are in attitude, in their understanding of important issues, in their priorities and sense of mission and -- above all -- in their ability to apply Christian doctrine to life and ministry. The next chapter of this project will provide a workshop that can assist in raising awareness of the

need for better understanding of the connection between theology and ministry, between context

and ministry, and between missional emphases and functional priorities. The next chapter will

also offer a step-by-step process for stating a cohesive theology of ministerial practice.

CHAPTER SIX:

A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING

A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

Introduction

The previous chapter of this project demonstrates a need for greater cohesiveness in a congregation's understanding of and approach to ministry, as was argued in chapters three and four. Chapters two and four have established the importance of a theological foundation and framework for a theology of ministerial practice. Chapters two, three, and four have established the value of culture and context to the development of a theology of ministerial practice. But how does a congregation arrive at a theology of ministerial practice?

While there may be many ways of articulating a theology of ministerial practice, the most useful format is probably a series of statements which express a congregation's theological emphases, ministry priorities and cultural sensitivities. These "guiding principles" shape both what a congregation does and how that congregation does them. (Recall that the working definition of a philosophy of ministry is "why we do what we do the way we do it.") They become a tool for both planning and evaluation of ministry. They are a statement to members and prospective members of what this church is all about, how this church carries out its ministry.

How does a congregation formulate a theology of ministerial practice? This chapter will provide a two-phased approach to the formulation of a theology of ministerial practice. The two

phases reflect two primary goals. The first goal is to challenge leaders and active members of a congregation to evaluate the theological and experiential assumptions that underlie their practice of ministry and create parameters and criteria for rethinking ministerial practice. A five-hour seminar is the first phase, the attempt to achieve the first goal. The second goal is to develop a series of statements that articulate a congregation's theology of ministerial practice. A step-by-step process conducted by a small task force is the second phase, addressing this second goal.

The seminar outline/handout follows, with presenter's notes in italics at a few places where intent may be unclear. Following the seminar outline will be commentary that connects the seminar to the learnings presented in chapter two, three and four, as well as to the survey of leaders and members presented in chapter five.

The Seminar

OUR THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

SESSION ONE: THINKING THROUGH OUR MINISTRY PRACTICE

I. An Object Lesson to demonstrate different windows on reality

Ten balloons are distributed, with mumbled comments about who should or should not receive a balloon. Those who did not receive a balloon are asked how they felt about being excluded. Then they are asked how they would feel if they were second-graders. The lesson applied is that life and ministry look different from differing perspectives.

Balloon recipients are asked to blow up and tie off their balloons, then come forward. (They will -- in all likelihood -- stand in a line, which provides an opportunity to point out that in the absence of clear direction we have assumptions about how things should be.) In the first exercise, the ten participants are to stand in a circle, with their left feet restricted to a point in the middle of the circle without moving. They are to try to keep their own balloon in the air the longest (by batting it up into the air); but they cannot touch anyone else's balloon. After a minute or so, the rest of the participants are asked to describe what occurred. Responses will be things like "intense faces," "safe and limited tapping of balloons," "some more competitive than others." The lesson is that in the church, when people concern themselves only with the area of ministry they are involved in and see themselves in competition with others for resources, there is little risk or advancement and there is not much fun.

In the second exercise, participants are told that the goal is to keep everybody's balloon up in the air for as long as possible. Anyone can touch any balloon. The other participants will observe that some balloons hit the floor quickly, but the balloons go higher in the air and the people have more fun. Applications to ministry include the observation that when we work together, ministry is more fun and we are more bold and creative in the way we do things; however, a number of ideas will likely fail.

II. Practical Examples of Differing Ministry Practice:

A. Two WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) churches in a large urban setting, located a little more than a mile apart, have very different experiences of worship on Sunday. Both have existed for more than a century and worship in beautiful, old Gothic-style churches. Both have top-notch preaching and pastoral ministry. Both are growing significantly, especially with young adults. In one, the service is highly liturgical, with full vestments, procession, chant and beautiful music -- chiefly in the style of Bach, but with variations on the liturgical songs. In the other, the service has liturgical elements but is more informal, with greeting and clapping. The pastor may or may not preach from the pulpit. The music may be traditional or contemporary or "Gospel."

<u>What explains the differences?</u>

B. Three WELS home missions on the East Coast began with radically different strategies. One followed the "normal" path of bringing together a nucleus of transplanted confessional Lutherans, organizing worship and educational programs, canvassing the community and searching for land on which to build. The second (in a New York City borough) rented space on a well-traveled street and hung out a "Christian Counseling" shingle. The space was also used for multiple worship experiences, small-group Bible studies and support groups. The third (in suburban Washington D.C.) rented space in a shopping mall and launched a Christian Child Care ministry, with worship on Sunday and adult Bible studies on weekday evenings in the same space.

<u>What explains the differences?</u>

III. Biblical Examples of Differing Ministry Practice:

A. Read Acts 15:1-5.
      1. What created this tension in the early church's practice of ministry?

      2. When is "different" wrong? When does tradition become legalism?

B. Read Acts 2:42-46.
      1. How did the early church in Jerusalem carry out ministry? What <u>core values</u> shaped this method of ministry? What <u>cultural forces</u> shaped this method of ministry?

      2. Peter's ministry changed dramatically (cf. Acts 9:32) shortly hereafter. Why? (Acts 8:1, 4-5, and 14)

      3. How did St. Paul's practice of ministry differ from Peter's? Why?

C. Read Romans 15:20, Romans 15:27 and I Corinthians 9:14-15.
Describe unique characteristics of the Apostle Paul's "Philosophy of Ministry" from these passages.

IV. One Model for Outlining Ministry Practice:

THEOLOGY is__*what we believe and teach*_____

MISSION is __*why we're here*_____

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY is_ *why we do what we do the way we do it* ___

VISION is __*where we're going*_____

STRATEGY is __*how we intend to get there*_____

MINISTRY is _*what we do*_____

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY IS <u>WHY</u> WE DO <u>WHAT</u> WE DO <u>THE WAY</u> WE DO IT.

SESSION TWO: <u>DEFINING "PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY"</u>

I. Our Philosophy of Ministry is driven by ASSUMPTIONS about ministry.

> For each of the following statements, decide whether you <u>agree</u> or <u>disagree</u>. (You may also want to answer the question, "Does this statement describe our church's practice of ministry.) If you disagree, explain why and offer a substitute statement.

A. Ministry is what the pastor does.

B. The biggest problem the church faces is meeting its budget.

C. Ownership of this congregation's ministry is expressed best by attending voters' meetings.

D. The church's ministry is most effective when its members are comfortable with the way things are done.

II. Our Philosophy of Ministry is driven also by our EXPERIENCE of ministry.

> Think about the experiences and habits of the members of your church, and complete the sentences based on what experience has taught people.

A. Sunday morning at church is a _____ - hour experience.

B. Christian education means . . .

C. On Sunday morning, little children should be . . .

D. The atmosphere of worship should be . . .

III. A Philosophy of Ministry may be expressed in unchallenged "truisms" or unspoken value judgments, such as:

A. A church should never get bigger than what one pastor can handle.

B. Every worship service should include the Lord's Supper.

C. Children get confirmed when they are in eighth grade.

D. When people haven't been to communion for six months, they are delinquents.

IV. A Philosophy of Ministry reflects a church's PRIORITIES.

In groups of four-to-six, discuss the following audiences for ministry and programs of ministry. Debate which is the MOST IMPORTANT audience to address at this point in the history of your church, and arrive at a consensus priority you can report. Then debate which program of ministry should receive TOP PRIORITY in your church's allocation of resources today, and arrive a consensus choice to report. (Determine what should be, not what is. You cannot combine audiences or programs; you must decide on one.)

AUDIENCES	PROGRAMS
Teenagers	Reclaiming inactive members
Families	Worship
Children	Fellowship life
Seniors	School or Sunday School
Non-members	Stewardship
Young Adults	Missions abroad
Empty-nesters	Adult Spiritual Growth
People with special needs	Evangelism in the community
Men	Assimilation of (new) members
Women	Maintenance of our facilities

_____	_____

The presenter, on an overhead transparency, lists the responses from each group. Then he draws lessons, among which are the following: It's not easy to agree on priorities, especially when there are no criteria. (Ask the groups for the criteria they applied to arrive at consensus, such things as critical need, greatest opportunity, greatest impact, etc..) Priorities change with time, needs and opportunities. (Ask if what they believe should be the priorities actually are. And ask how someone would know what the priorities of their church are.) Describe the "is/ought" gap, and ask people to list the things that would keep their "ought" priorities from becoming the "is" of their ministry.

V. A Philosophy of Ministry is shaped by the church's culture.

    A. Forces at work in the contemporary culture of our nation.
Discuss how each of the following cultural forces impacts the ministry of your church.

        1. We are a <u>relational</u> culture today (not "confrontational").

        2. We are a <u>spiritual</u> culture today (not "religious").

        3. We are an <u>informational</u> culture today (visual and technological).

        4. We are a <u>pluralistic</u> culture today (many "truths," many "ways").

        5. We are a <u>subjective</u> and <u>pragmatic</u> culture today ("It works for me.").

    B. Characteristics of our community's culture (e.g. historical factors, demographic issues, education and income levels, social problems, job-related issues, life-style concerns and recreational interests, political make-up, etc.) shape Philosophy of Ministry.

List 5 significant community factors that impact the way your church does ministry.

SESSION THREE: <u>A **THEOLOGY** OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE</u>

I. There must be BIBLICAL Bases for our Ministerial Practice.

    On the basis of each of the following passages, answer the question: *"How does God want us to carry out ministry?"*

    A. II Timothy 1:13-14 and 7-8

    B. Ephesians 4:11-13

    C. Romans 12:4-8

    D. Colossians 3:15-17

    E. I Corinthians 9:22

II. There should be a LUTHERAN Emphasis in our Ministerial Practice.

Rather than let those outside the church or controversies within the church establish the emphases in our message and ministry, we will want to assure that the way we carry out our ministry reflects the emphases of our Lutheran theology. Discuss what that means for each of the following Lutheran themes:

A. <u>Sola Gratia</u>: by grace alone. . . the Lutheran emphasis on Objective Justification.

B. <u>Sola Fide</u>: through faith alone. . . Spirit-worked trust in Jesus, not works and not human reason or will, saves.

C. <u>Sola Scriptura</u>: on the basis of Scripture alone. . . all of the Bible and only the Bible is God's Word, the sole authority for doctrine and practice.

D. "Evangelical:" The Means of Grace alone converts; the Gospel renews and empowers people for Christian life and service. Freedom in the Gospel characterizes our ministry.

E. "Two Kingdoms:" God has established the Church to care for people's spiritual life with the "Sword of the Spirit" - the Word of God; and He has established the state to care for the physical well-being of people - peace, safety, economic and justice issues - with the physical sword of political power.

SUMMARY:

I. When a Church's Practice of Ministry. . .

A. Is Not Aligned With Scripture,
1. Christianity becomes either an academic "what we know" or an activistic "what we do" without the connection God makes between faith and life.

2. Ministry tends to become reactive, institutional and negative.

3. We accept in church members far less than God expects of Christian disciples.

B. Is Not Intentionally Determined,
1. People resist and criticize changes that make them uncomfortable.

2. Competing agendas and diverse viewpoints get in the way of consensus and action.

3. We may be ministering to an audience that no longer exists, in ways that no longer work.

II. Four Questions To Evaluate our Philosophy of Ministry:

A. IS IT BIBLICAL (consistent with Scripture and Lutheran Theology)?

B. IS IT RELEVANT (to our time and place, our ministry context)?

C. DOES IT FULFILL THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

D. DOES IT SERVE PEOPLE?

III. An Application Exercise

Evaluate the following "Philosophy of Ministry" statements. Cross out any you disagree with. Add any you'd like to see. Pick the ONE that, in your mind, is most important.

In groups, with others who've chosen the same "most important" statement, spend 20 minutes creating a list of things your church can do -- or do differently -- if you really practice the philosophy of ministry statement you've prioritized.

Sample Statements Of A Theology Of Ministerial Practice Or Philosophy Of Ministry

1. Faithfulness *to* the Word of God and faithfulness *with* the Word of God will guide every program and decision of this congregation.

2. Involving members in systematic study of Scripture, especially our adult members, is the key to accomplishing this congregation's mission.

3. Strengthening Christian families is the first goal in our program of children's ministry.

4. Worship here will be guided by the twin criteria of *reverence* (focusing on God and his grace and emphasizing Word and Sacraments) and *relevance* (addressing issues of real life and involving people in ways they find meaningful).

5. We will involve people in the congregation's ministry primarily on the basis of their gifts and interests, rather than the church's needs.

6. Fellowship life will seek to connect Christians with one another in relationships and structures that foster authentic support and accountability.

7. Every program and group in this church will seek to engage unchurched people and/or encourage Christians in their personal witness.

8. Ministry to our at-risk members will be personal, persistent and -- as much as possible -- preemptive (seeking to prevent the issues and consequences of poor spiritual health).

9. Because we are an *Evangelical* Lutheran church, we will GO to people with our ministry rather than simply expect or demand that they *come*.

10. This church will challenge and encourage members to grow in their faith, their character and their life of service to the Lord, so that the description of church membership becomes the definition of Christian discipleship.

11. We will foster bonds of mutual trust between leaders and members by communicating openly, honestly, redundantly, positively and lovingly.

12. We will establish goals and priorities chiefly on the basis of the special strengths and blessings God has invested in our church and the unique opportunities he presents to us in our community.

Plus _____

SESSION FOUR: <u>CHANGING PARADIGMS</u>

I. An Object Lesson To Demonstrate the Power of Paradigms

> *The problem to be solved is this: A man had a window in his garage door. He decided that this window was too small, since it was only one foot high and one foot wide. To*

enlarge the window opening, he used a saw to cut out the wood all around it. By doing so he was able to double the size of the window opening -- twice as many square inches as before. But, to his surprise, when he measured the new window opening, it was still just one foot high and one foot wide. How can this be?

A transparency teaches the paradigm lesson. The original window was in the shape of a diamond. The new window was a square. The reason people can't solve the problem is that their "window paradigm" expects windows to be squares or rectangles.

II. A Video: "The New <u>Business of Paradigms</u>" by Joel Barker

   A. Based on what you learned, will a new way to solve the problems and seize the opportunities of the church originate with a pastor or elected leader, in all likelihood? Then, where would you expect to discover new ways to reach people, communicate with people, witness to people, teach people, gather people, etc.

   B. "Paradigm Pioneers" don't invent a new paradigm, they adapt it. Where would you look to discover new ways of approaching ministry?

   C. Discuss how our very terminology may create "paradigm paralysis," with such examples as: "Sunday School," "Voters Meeting," "Youth Group," "Ladies Aid," or "Bible Class."

   D. What major problem or challenge facing the church today can't apparently be solved by using old paradigms? What paradigms in our church may need to change?

III. Historical Examples of Paradigm Shifts in the Church

   A. "Seating" in the church

   Walk through the progression from no seating in a European cathedral, to the "box seats" rented in a New England colonial church, to the separation of men from women and children, to present norms. Observe different paradigms today as to where little children should be seated, as well as different architectural assumptions from one generation to another about how seating should be configured and how much space per person to assume. Pews or chairs? And why do people tend to sit in the same pew each week? What shaped these seating paradigms?

B. Financial Support of ministry

Describe another progression, from the state church established by Constantine, through medieval "business enterprises" of the church, to Luther's support from the elector, to the European state church, to early American practices of "dues" and "pew rent," to offering envelopes and stewardship programs. Reflect on recent changes, such as deferred giving programs, tuition and fees, even direct withdrawal. How much of the church's practices have been shaped by the economic culture around it?

C. The Model of Christian Education

Why are children confirmed in eighth grade? (Think back to the educational model of 1900 and the assumption of educational psychology then that the learning curve peaks in a person's teens.) What was the original intent of the "Sunday School?" Why did churches begin offering significant adult Bible study only in the past four decades? Again, how much of the church's practice has been shaped by the culture around it?

IV. The BIG Paradigm Shift we face

After 16 centuries of marriage between western culture and the Christian Church, a messy divorce occurred somewhere in the mid-to-late 20th century. Christianity has lost its "home field advantage." Churches face neighborhood opposition over building permits. Pastors no longer are accorded respect for their office. People can no longer be assumed to endorse or even know the major tenets of Christianity. How we "do church" is changing because of this sea-change in western culture.

Can we "do church?" Does "go to church" mean what it used to?

V. Generation Theory and Changing Paradigms

The church serves five distinct generations. While generalizations are never valid when describing an individual and the impact of the Christian home and church counter the impact of culture, the following offers a "snapshot" of what makes three generations in the church different. (The "Builder" and "Silent" generations are lumped together because they are very similar. The "Millennial" generation is still in a formative stage.) Identify yourself with the appropriate generation, then ask two questions:

Does the characterization below describe my generation? Does it describe me?

A. "Builders" (Tom Brokaw's <u>The Greatest Generation</u>) and "Silents" -- born before 1946 -- are frugal, loyal, dependable, cautious, private, and intolerant. They respect tradition. They feel a sense of religious obligation. Stability is

important to them in religion. "Reverence" is how they describe worship atmosphere.

B. "Boomers" -- born between 1946 and 1964 -- are idealogues who question authority and criticize institutions (including the church). They are driven by such things as success or achievement, self-realization, and "having it all." They are the ultimate consumers, expecting quality and choices. Boomers tend to be introspective, and they use terms like "personal journey" for their spiritual (the word that replaced "religious") life. For this reason, they have little loyalty to a denomination; instead they go where "their needs are met." They have little patience for ineffective programs or inefficient structure and service roles in a church. They may prefer less formal, more contemporary worship whose atmosphere is "joyful."

C. "Gen-NeXt" -- born between 1964 and 1982 -- is the antithesis of most of what describes the Boomers. "Xers" have the characteristics of postmodernism. They see no "big picture" and are inclined to question the idea of universal truth. They tend not to think in linear, sequential logic, more in vignettes. They aren't joiners; they aren't interested in institutional structure or big causes. They value time over money. They have shorter attention spans than previous generations. They are willing volunteers, but want flexible schedules, small teams and an opportunity to help another human being. They want a sense of family but are afraid of commitments. They expect technological competence, life-related preaching and teaching and casual worship formats (though there are many who want the awe of highly liturgical worship). They are looking for a few close friends.

One thing to look for will be the number of participants from each of the three generations. Expect a smaller percentage of Gen-NeXt, if the characteristics of the generations hold true. Expect also that the Builder/ Silent generation participants will agree that the description pretty well describes their generation AND themselves. Boomers are likely to say that the description fits their generation, but that they aren't exactly like that. Gen X-ers are likely to observe that the description fits their generation but that they aren't like that at all. The lesson is that with each generation, people inside the church have become less like the people outside the church. And that has important ramifications for our mission and the way we do ministry.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF GENERATION THEORY FOR THE WAY IN WHICH CHURCHES ORGANIZE FELLOWSHIP LIFE, SEEK VOLUNTEERS, PLAN WORSHIP, DO EVANGELISM, and GENERATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

VI. Key Paradigm Shifts in Contemporary American Church Life

A. From the institutional to the relational.

B. From homogeneity to diversity.

C. From pastor as chaplain to pastor as leader.

D. From membership to discipleship.

E. From degreed competence to continuing education for called workers.

F. From one size fits all to targeted ministries.

G. From reactive responses to pro-active planning.

H. From church on Sunday to seven-day programming (and from free to fee)

I. From one pastor to multiple staff.

J. From controlling to empowering.

VII. Practical Paradigm Shifts in Specific Areas of Ministry

A. Shifts in FELLOWSHIP LIFE:
   1. From age, gender, and marital status to common interests and needs.
   2. From joining a large group to finding friends in a small group.
   3. From many attending a few events to a few attending many events.

B. Shifts in DECISION MAKING:
   1. From majority vote to broad consensus.
   2. From competing agendas to mission and vision.
   3. From layers of gate-keeping to trusting leaders and empowering members.

C. Shifts in EVANGELISM:
   1. From inviting to worship to addressing a need or interest.
   2. From canvassing neighborhoods to building relationships.
   3. From canned presentations to listening and sharing.

D. Shifts in MEMBER RETENTION:
   1. From chasing delinquents to assimilating new and at-risk brothers and sisters.

2. From <u>elders' visits at 6 months</u> to <u>friends' phone calls after 3 weeks</u>.

3. From "You need to come back to church!" to "What's happening in your life?"

E. Shifts in MEMBER INVOLVEMENT:

1. From <u>filling slots</u> to <u>using gifts</u>.

2. From <u>responsibility without authority</u> to <u>authority with accountability</u>.

3. From <u>standing committees</u> to <u>coordinators and ministry teams</u>.

Conclusion:

The lesson in a cartoon

The cartoon shows a medieval military camp, soldiers in armor with swords and shields, while a salesman wants to demonstrate a machine gun. The commander is too busy preparing for war to consider another way of waging war.

Commentary

<u>SESSION ONE</u>

The object lesson that opens the seminar has an initial purpose of involving participants and loosening them up for an interactive workshop experience. The second purpose is to demonstrate the importance of understanding diverse audiences. As chapter three of this project reported and as authors such as Lyle Schaller, George Barna and others explain, there are ethnic, generational, religious and socio-economic differences that impact how an audience receives a church's ministry. The survey research in five Lutheran churches, as reported in chapter five, showed that declining and troubled congregations tended to have more difficulty in understanding unchurched people than did growing and healthy congregations. A third purpose of the object lesson is to

visualize the difference between a congregation working together as the Body of Christ and one comprised of competing agendas. The importance of understanding the church as Christ's mystical body was introduced in chapter five of this project. A final purpose of the object lesson is to engage people in thinking about how "risk" and "enjoyment" are related to unity of mission. The survey of five churches suggests that churches in trouble are more resistant to change than are healthy and growing churches. The ability to try new approaches to ministry and to enjoy working together is directly related to an understanding of common mission.

The practical examples of worship and church planting seek to involve participants in the practical implications of a theology of ministry practice before presenting theological and philosophical arguments. People can assess for themselves the impact of cultural differences in diverse audiences, as well as the impact of a strong leader on "why a church does what it does the way it does." Chapters three and five of this project have formulated the basis for this exercise. The survey of five churches surfaced the degree of importance people place on pastoral leadership.

The biblical examples of differing ministry practice intend to show that what we can observe in our day is similar to what the early church experienced. While the Bible does not prescribe a philosophy of ministry, it does portray differing philosophies of ministry. The example of Acts 15 invites participants to think through the implications of a Gentile and Jewish "window" on ministry. The cultural "coloring" will be apparent. Acts 15 also demonstrates the danger of disunifying and destructive legalism when one audience for ministry insists that all others must see things the same way. At the end of Acts 15, the apostles demonstrate the principle of "freedom with responsible love" articulated in the overview of adiaphora in chapter two of this project.

The description of the early church in Acts two models how the core values of a congregation and the cultural setting for ministry combine to shape the methodology of that ministry. A reference to Acts nine confirms the point that a changed ministry setting will mean changing methodology, even though the core values may remain the same. The importance of core values to a theology of ministry practice was presented in chapter three of this project, especially on the basis of work by Aubrey Malphurs and George Barna. Chapter five elaborates on the impact of culture and priorities in the shaping of a ministry practice.

The passages from Romans 15 point out that St. Paul had a unique theology of ministerial practice, based on his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. Peter's calling in Acts seems to be primarily teaching Jewish converts to Christianity. Paul's principle that the Gentiles share material blessings with the Jewish Christians who shared their spiritual heritage is obviously not a universal mandate. And participants can wrestle with how the contemporary American practice of sending money with missionaries is culturally based and would likely not be followed by churches in third world countries sending missionaries to the United States.

I Corinthians nine is a wonderful example of a theology of ministerial practice. After making the case for a pastor's compensation with both logic and Scripture, St. Paul renounces his right to financial support. A brief analysis of the religious culture in the Roman world will help people understand the reasons for this "philosophy of ministry." Verses 19-23 are the quintessential statement of a theology of ministerial practice, as was discussed in chapter four of this project.

Chapter four argues the case for an *intentional* theology of ministerial practice. That argumentation lies behind the "model for outlining ministry practice" that closes session one. When a pastor and congregation have not thought through mission, philosophy of ministry, vision

and strategy, the straight line they assume between theology and ministry risks disagreements inside the church and the perception of irrelevance on the part of people outside the church. This "model" invites church members to discuss the components of a comprehensive theology of ministerial practice.

SESSION TWO

An unexamined and unintentional ministry practice is driven by assumptions. Those assumptions are usually the product of experience. Long after the reasons why a church did things the way it did are forgotten, the way it did things continues. When one generation intentionally responds to cultural forces and the next generation does not, "habit" takes on a significance never intended and "the way we've always done things" carries a weight it shouldn't. Chapter four of this project explored such "paradigms." Chapter two and chapter four laid a foundation for understanding the nature of the church, in contrast to the institutional assumptions that challenge seminar participants in session two. The survey results in chapter five demonstrate that the more troubled the church is, the more likely it wants to be "comfortable." This is the basis for the fourth assumption for discussion in this part of the seminar.

The four examples of experience that call for discussion in part II of this session challenge participants to distinguish "ends" from "means" and evaluate the legitimacy of their own feelings about the forms ministry takes. The survey of five congregations demonstrated a generational difference in the way people think about the atmosphere of worship. There was also an apparent correlation between how leaders and members viewed a staff nursery during worship and that

church's sense of community outreach. Participants can debate the degree to which the "one-hour experience" on Sunday morning has made it difficult to get more Lutherans into a Sunday morning Bible class.

Part III of session two further explores the paradigms of congregational practice with "truisms" that were either the perspective of a revered church leader, the tradition people have observed or a policy that has been long employed. In each case, participants will be asked to evaluate whether these truisms are valid. What will be important are the criteria they employ to make such judgments. In most cases it will be "more experience" that either validates or invalidates a way of looking at an aspect of the church's ministry. Participants will have to wrestle with the implications of a pragmatic view of ministry practice. Does it work? This should take them back to chapter two's theological basis for understanding adiaphora.

Chapter four of this project makes "priorities" a major factor in determining a congregation's ministry practice. Included in the discussion of priorities were not only core values, but also a congregation's strengths and resources, needs and opportunities. Part IV of session two asks participants, in small groups, to engage in the difficult task of establishing priorities in two categories: audiences for ministry and programs of ministry. Because no criteria are provided, the exercise provides an inductive way for people to work back to criteria from their priority choices. Like question seven in the survey of five churches, this exercise will not likely produce unanimity in assessing the issues that need attention. What is important is for people to think about whether the church's mission, the needs and problems of the congregation, the opportunities for outreach in the community, or something else will drive their prioritizing. Equally important is that people ask whether the current budget and allocation of staff time in their church reflect the priorities they set in this hypothetical exercise. A discussion of the force that habit and comfort zones have

on ministry practice, even counter to agreed upon mission implications and needs or opportunities, will be valuable.

Part five of this session involves participants in assessing the impact of both broad cultural forces and local cultural themes, just as did chapter four of this project. A reference to the work of Lyle Schaller in chapter three of this project will provide further background to this part of the seminar. The survey responses of five churches, questions 1, 6, 9, and 10, should reflect the cultural understanding of church members. Typically, the responses of growing and healthy churches reflected how people outside the church or at the margins of the church view life, while the members of declining and troubled churches tended to project their worldview and experience without critical thinking. What is important about this part of the seminar is that people begin to draw lines from trends and forces in culture to the methods and programs the church employs to reach and serve people.

SESSION THREE

This portion of the seminar is drawn directly from chapter four of this project, "Primary Directives for our Ministerial Practice: Biblical and Theological Principles."

While there are any number of Scripture passages that could stimulate discussion of the question "How does God want us to carry out ministry," the five chosen challenge participants to evaluate forms and methods of ministry in the light of what God's Word says about the church and about ministry. What will a congregation do to "keep the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus?" Are there evidences of a "spirit of timidity" in the way the congregation approaches its mission and ministry? What are the twin goals of ministry in

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Ephesians 4:11-13, and what design does the apostle provide for achieving those goals? Can a congregation be content to have 30% of its members involved in serving the Lord after studying the Body of Christ passages? How does this church's ethos compare to the description St. Paul offers in Colossians three? What would "all things to all men" mean if the apostle were serving in this church and this community?

What does it mean to be Lutheran in our ministry practice? Chapter four of this project provides practical applications of Lutheran theological distinctives. Challenging members to think about how an emphasis on the Reformation "solas" will impact the way we do ministry can help them see doctrine as much more than abstract truth. A discussion of Lutheran theology's distinction of the two kingdoms will help members understand why their congregation doesn't have a political action committee.

Chapter four of this project begins with theological and cultural examples that demonstrate the dangers there may be when a church's practice of ministry is not aligned with Scripture or intentionally determined. Those examples should be brought to the "summary" segment of the seminar's session three. For all the excuses for reactive and institutional styles of ministry, people need to understand that it is a failure to apply Scripture that produces such negative attitudes. For all the hand-wringing over inactive and uncommitted members, leaders need to wrestle with how their church's practice of ministry may be contributing to what is clearly contrary to God's will for his people and his Church. Participants should, by this point in the seminar, be able to draw connecting lines between an undefined theology of ministerial practice and such problems as resistance to change, competing agendas and irrelevant programs. It would be helpful to share some of the survey responses from five churches at this point, asking participants to analyze *why* people responded the way they did to questions regarding the way ministry is conducted.

The closing exercise of session three intends even more practical applications of what has been covered. The twelve sample statements of a philosophy of ministry, and any others offered by participants, provide an example of what it means to articulate a theology of ministerial practice. Just as important, they provide a hands-on opportunity for participants to brainstorm creative possibilities that will translate statements into programs, methods and attitudes. This exercise, further, demonstrates one principle of the Body of Christ analogy for the church. Participants are asked to work creatively in the area where they are most gifted and interested.

SESSION FOUR

Session four of the seminar is drawn directly from the section entitled "The Impact of Paradigms on Ministerial Practice" in chapter four of this project.

The "garage window" object lesson makes the point that we may fail to see what is happening if our frame of reference won't allow us to see. Similarly, the "Business of Paradigms" video presents examples from the business world that reinforce the importance of what Joel Barker calls "paradigm pliancy." A handful of simple principles in the video provide a starting point for discussing what paradigms exist in the church, how they may blind us to better ways of carrying out the church's mission, and what challenges of the church should be addressed with new eyes.

The historical examples of paradigms in the church reflect what are called "cultural cues" in chapter three of this project. They demonstrate that ministry practice is often the blend of theological truths and the prevailing wisdom of a current culture. What the church borrowed or adapted from its culture in the past can be discarded. Question one of Part Two in the survey of five churches will make the point also. Distinguishing the "dare never change" of God's Word"

from the "may change" of culture is the goal of this segment of the seminar.

The brief section of the seminar entitled "The BIG Paradigm Shift We Face" is drawn from Loren Mead's book, The Once and Future Church, as referenced in chapter four of this project. While the section is brief, the implications are huge; and there may be extended discussion of the impact of a post-Christian culture.

Helping participants understand the different characteristics and perspectives of three or four generations provides yet another view of paradigms. Chapter four of this project provides a background to this discussion, based on the work of authors such as David Henderson, Leith Anderson, George Barna and Mike Regele. Participants will in all likelihood discover that with each succeeding generation the gap between Christians and their non-believing peers grows greater. How that affects the way the church carries out its ministry will be a valuable discussion.

The seminar provides some very concrete examples of paradigm shifts in the church. Church consultants such as Lyle Schaller, George Barna, and others have identified many of these shifts. Lutheran churches around the country have modeled these shifts. Some have become widely applied, while others are still emerging. Each can stimulate discussion that reinforces the point that paradigms of ministry practice should be examined, first from the standpoint of the church's theology and mission, then with an understanding of the cultural setting in which the church applies that theology and mission.

The Process for Developing A Theology of Ministerial Practice

The step-by-step process which follows was developed out of the theological study of chapter two and the literature research of chapter three of this project, with refinements based on the

survey of five churches reported in chapter five. It reflects the conclusions drawn in chapter four. The process was created with the intention that it be used by a task force appointed to develop a Theology of Ministerial Practice or Philosophy of Ministry. Such a task force may also be charged with developing a mission and vision for the congregation. The task force would normally present its work to the governing body of the congregation, with the suggestion of an open forum that allows the congregation to respond to the document as well. As has been argued earlier in this project, it is important to engage as many members as possible in the thought process that lies behind a Theology of Ministerial Practice.

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

a step-by-step process for a congregation's task force

1. Review biblical bases for ministry practice:
   A. Jesus' Mission and Vision for His Church:
      Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8
      John 17:13-18 and 20:21-23

      What are the emphases in these passages? Draft a one-sentence statement of mission for your congregation that captures the biblical emphases in memorable words applied to your ministry context.

   B. St. Paul's Pastoral Directives to Timothy:
      Individually read I and II Timothy, jotting down principles for ministerial practice that you discover (e.g. I Timothy 4:4-5, 5:17-22, 6:17-20; II Timothy 1:7 and 13-14, 2:1-2 and 14-16, 3:14-17). Then compare notes and draft a handful of key statements that you believe should guide the way your congregation carries out its ministry.

   C. A New Testament Understanding of the Church and its Ministry
      Romans 12:3-8   Colossians 3:12-17
      Ephesians 4:11-13   I Corinthians 9:22

On the basis of these Bible verses (and other passages you may add), identify basic principles that should guide the way your church carries out its ministry. Then draft as many statements as are necessary to reflect these principles.

2. Analyze the community your congregation serves and specific audiences of people in your community: demographic descriptors such as predominant age groups, ethnic groups, education, income, mobility, marital status, etc.; life-style descriptors such as family grouping, recreational interests, dominant vocations, commuting and shopping patterns, significant values, schedules and weekend habits, religious and political inclinations, etc.; and finally, the important needs, issues and concerns that occupy attention in the community such as child care, health issues, crime, unemployment, senior needs, family concerns, etc.

Boil down what you've discussed in analyzing your community and arrive at five-to-ten statements that characterize your community, with particular emphasis on how the ministry of your congregation is or should be impacted by these descriptors.

3. Discuss what are the congregation's core values, what is most important to members and won't be compromised, what is emphasized in the congregation's theology and history and ministry programs, what makes your congregation a unique vehicle for God's message and mission. You may want to include in your discussion the predominant strengths of the congregation at present, what your church does well.

Summarize the discussion into a brief, prioritized list of core values for your congregation, a list of two-to-seven items.

4. Discuss what you believe should be the outcomes of your congregation's ministry, what will happen in the lives of your members and their families as a result of the Holy Spirit's work through your programs of worship, education, fellowship and service. It may help to think in terms of biblical knowledge, Christian character and spiritual skills.

Summarize the discussion into a brief list of primary outcomes for which the ministry of your congregation should work and pray.

5. Create a short list of priorities for your congregation in the next few years. You may focus on audiences such as families, young adults, the unchurched or inactive members. You may focus on needs such as retaining confirmed youth, improving adult Bible

studies or enhancing the music in worship. Or you may focus on opportunities such as outreach to families with small children, support group ministry for the grieving or cross-cultural evangelism. Ask yourselves, what should receive priority attention in our planning, our budgeting, our staffing?

6. Brainstorm a list of assumptions you have about how best to reach and connect with people today. For example: "We have to touch people at their point of hurt or need." Or "We want to emphasize the unchanging truths and values that link us to our Christian past." Or "We need to communicate more visually and experientially to reach today's audience."

Develop a list of such statements that reflect the consensus of your group and can serve to guide the style or nature of ministry at your church.

7. All of the steps above are important in their own right and should be given to the pastors, principal and elected leaders of your congregation for their reflection and discussion. However, in summary ask one member of your task force to draft a series of statements that incorporate the various themes above into a congregational "Philosophy of Ministry." There is no form or format that must be followed, but here are some sample statements:

A. Building strong Christian families is essential to all our children's ministries.

B. We will strive to involve members at every age in a curriculum of Bible study that leads them to spiritual maturity and produces what Jesus called "fruit." (John 15)

C. We will assist our members in their witness by providing as many "side doors" to the church as possible, from counseling to classes, from programs of children's ministry to retreats for adults, from support groups to recreational events.

D. We will seek to involve members in serving their Lord, both in church and in community, according to their "passion," their gifts, their personality and availability.

E. Our worship has the objective of blending the historic elements of Lutheran liturgy with the up-beat music and less formal warmth of a contemporary audience.

Conclusion

The workshop summarizes, in practical form, what chapters two, three, and four of this project developed. It is a teaching tool that involves lay leaders and members in both theological and practical evaluation of "why the church does what it does the way it does." The step-by-step process distills what chapter four presented into a method for arriving at a theology of ministerial practice that gives priority to a congregation's theology and also gives appropriate attention to its community setting. The process uses three different ways of boiling down the theological and contextual input into statements: core values, outcomes, and priorities. Then the process asks a task force to do a final check of its assumptions, to wrap up the preparation for drafting statements of ministry practice.

Will the workshop and step-by-step process be helpful to a congregation? The next chapter answers the question experientially.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

EVALUATING THIS PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING

A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

The approach described in chapter six was applied to Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in

Marietta, Georgia, a congregation of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The complete

document that resulted is provided in Appendix B to this project. Beautiful Savior will celebrate

its twentieth anniversary next year. It is located in an upper-middle class, northern suburb of

Atlanta. There were nearly 400 baptized members and an average worship attendance of about

200 at the time of this project, fall of 2001. Subsequently, a number of member families have

been "spun off" to create the nucleus of a daughter congregation to the west. The congregation is

served by one full-time pastor and a part-time pastor. Excellent worship and adult spiritual

growth are the church's strengths. An education and office wing was dedicated three years ago,

and the sanctuary has just been remodeled. The size of the campus will probably limit the amount

of growth possible. The membership is a blend of Lutheran "transplants" to the area and native

Georgians, most of whom come from unchurched and other-churched backgrounds. The

congregation is characterized by a commitment to conservative Lutheran theology and yet a

flexible approach to ministry programming. Among the five churches participating in the survey

reported in chapter five of this project, Beautiful Savior was congregation "E."

The context within which this two-phased approach to developing a theology of ministerial

practice was applied is important. Beautiful Savior engaged Parish Assistance, a consulting team

of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, to assist the congregation through three stages of planning: comprehensive analysis, developing a vision and goals for the future, and creating the structure and strategies to achieve those goals. In the second stage of this process, the congregation conducts a "Listening Sunday" to gather broad input from members for the vision and goals; and a task force of five or six members -- representing diverse audiences of the congregation -- is charged with formulating a vision document with goals in five or six areas of ministry. The process for developing a theology of ministerial practice was woven into this vision stage at Beautiful Savior. The seminar was conducted prior to the Listening Sunday. The vision task force was asked to include the development of statements articulating a theology of ministerial practice in its work. The result was a seamless document that articulates a vision statement, guiding principles (the theology of ministerial practice) and broad ministry goals for each area of ministry. An appendix to the document, then, provides specific goals for each of these areas of ministry. The complete document is provided in Appendix E to this project.

While the process for developing a theology of ministerial practice could easily be applied independently of the Parish Assistance sequence, there seems a great deal of value in linking the process to comprehensive analysis and the formulation of vision and goals. Enhancing the Parish Assistance program's ability to help congregations was the underlying goal of this project.

The task force at Beautiful Savior consisted of six men and women, chosen to represent the diverse audiences of the congregation. While the pastors provided input, they allowed the task force to work independently. The task force worked over a period of four months to develop a document that wove its theology of ministerial practice statements together with a vision for the congregation's future. The statements and broad ministry goals were grouped into six major

areas of ministry. The theology of ministerial practice statements were labeled "Guiding

Principles." Those guiding principles are provided here. The full document can be found in

Appendix E.

Beautiful Savior's Theology of Ministerial Practice Statements

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. We will encourage all members of Beautiful Savior to be in the Word, since it is essential for spiritual growth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom." Colossians 3:16.

2. All spiritual instruction will be based solely on the Word of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding." Psalm 111:10.

3. We need to acknowledge that our members are at different levels of faith and knowledge, and that we will have to develop strategies to meet each member at his or her level.

4. Elements of our Adult Discipleship program will be designed with outreach in mind and draw members of our community into our midst.

WORSHIP

1. Worship at Beautiful Savior is a response to God's undeserved love for us. "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." I Chronicles 16:29.

2. In all of our worship, the Word of God -- both Law and Gospel -- will remain our focus and anchor. In the words of the hymn writer: "God's Word is our great heritage."

3. We will conduct all of our worship with a sense of reverence, humility, and awesome wonder. "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Psalm 95:6-7.

4. While recognizing the value and importance of upholding our Lutheran worship traditions, we will not be afraid to try new ways of bringing glory to our Lord's name. The intent will be to make worship a more joyful experience for all. "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Psalm 100:1-2.

5. While worship remains primarily a response of love on the part of believers, we will recognize it is also a point of entry into our congregation for non-believers in our community. Our worship must be designed with visitors and newcomers in mind.

OUTREACH/ EVANGELISM

1. At Beautiful Savior, our primary objective will be to fulfill our Lord's great commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 29:19.

2. While we will continue to enthusiastically support our synod's mission work throughout the world through our prayer and offerings, our energies will be focused on reaching the lost in the communities and neighborhoods surrounding our congregation.

3. In all of our outreach and evangelism efforts, we will communicate Beautiful Savior as a place where the Gospel is preached and taught in truth and purity.

4. All new programs of the congregation will be designed and promoted with outreach in mind and with the intent of spreading God's Word.

5. Yet, we will not be afraid to experiment with new ways of reaching the lost in our community through ways that meet individuals and families at their "point of need."

YOUTH MINISTRY

1. In our ministry at Beautiful Savior the needs of our children and youth will become a high priority and will be reflected not just in our words, but in our actions, as God commands. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children." Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

2. Teaching our youth about Christ's love for them through the Law and Gospel will be pervasive in all of our programs. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6.

3. We will view our ministry to youth not only as a duty, but as a privilege, as Christ himself did. "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14.

4. The needs of youth will be a high priority in all of our outreach efforts. The needs of youth are a main concern for families in our community, and so to be mot effective, any outreach program will be designed to meet those needs in a variety of ways.

ASSIMILATION AND FELLOWSHIP

1. At Beautiful Savior, we are many believers, yet one body working toward a common goal: to spread God's Word. This is not our description, but God's: "So in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to the others." Romans 12:5.

2. We will strive, then, to help newcomers become part of this body, by recognizing their spiritual gifts and finding ways to put them to use for the common good and our common goal. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." I Corinthians 12:4 and 7.

3. We will want to make sure all are welcome into our Beautiful Savior family: ". . . God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." Acts 10:34-35.

4. Fellowship among believers at Beautiful Savior is not voluntary or optional. It is commanded by God. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25.

5. Our program of fellowship should not be for the benefit of our members alone, but should be designed with outreach in mind, to create as many "side doors" to the congregation as possible -- with a variety of activities available for different interests.

GROUP AND SUPPORT MINISTRY

1. In II Corinthians 1:3-4, St. Paul reminds us that it is our privilege and calling as Christians to comfort each other in times of trouble. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

2. All comfort, support, and guidance we offer each other will be based on the Word of God first and foremost, rather than on human wisdom. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." I Corinthians 1:3.

3. Our Group and Support Ministry will be for the benefit not only of members of Beautiful Savior, but of our entire community as well. Our support services will be designed with outreach in mind, to meet people at their "point of need" and to reach the lost with the healing power of the Gospel.

Evaluation of the Seminar and Process

By the Task Force

In a focus group setting of 90 minutes on May 4, 2002, the Beautiful Savior task force

provided critical evaluation of the seminar and process. A digest of their observations follows.

THE SEMINAR

The task force was unanimous in finding the seminar helpful, though the time lapse between

their participation in the seminar and their evaluation of it made their comments rather general.

"It freed our thinking," one member observed. Another said, "It gave us approval to think

outside the box." Among the features of the seminar that were most appreciated were the practical examples, candid discussion, and the paradigm video. One member of the task force pointed to the seminar's clear rooting in Scripture as a strength. Another appreciated the focus on a handful of issues in the break-out discussions. An interesting observation that drew affirmation was that the seminar "got us through the fact that people weren't necessarily going to be happy with some of the changes and goals in our vision document."

When asked to suggest improvements, the task force spent several minutes emphasizing the importance of getting all elected leaders to attend the seminar. They further encouraged a joint orientation of church council and task force to the task of developing a theology of ministerial practice and vision. In fact, they were convinced that the seminar should address the role of elected leaders in the process of vision and change. Their concern was that "a fear of change can paralyze councilmen." A practical suggestion was that the seminar be adapted to a Bible class format, with video clips of presentation, so that more members would participate and so that key concepts can be reviewed.

THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

"It was hard initially to be sure of what we were supposed to do," the chairman of the task force observed, "but after we got into the steps we gained a sense of direction." The chairman provided six pages of typed notes that were the discussion summary of each of the steps, material that would prove helpful to the church council. Step one was assigned for personal Bible study and then shared in a task force meeting. "We spent a lot of time on what the Bible says," was the

comment of a participant. The steps that were most helpful, in the consensus view of the task force, were the prioritized list of core values (step three), the primary outcomes toward which ministry should be directed (step four), and the brainstorming of assumptions that underlie approaches to people (step six). Step two, the community analysis, "seemed superficial but needed to be done," in the opinion of one task force member. When asked what was most helpful about the process, several participants echoed the thought that "this made us look at ministry through others' eyes."

In response to the question, "What would you do differently?" the focus group agreed that they would not spend so much time getting the wording of statements right at first. It would be helpful, they said, if more members of the congregation were involved in discussing the first five steps of the process. The danger which they pointed out is that the guiding principles or statements expressing a theology of ministerial practice can become separated from the study and discussion that produced them. The product without the process loses its ability to redirect people's thinking about ministry. The task force believed that they should have taken the guiding principles or theology of ministerial practice to the church council for discussion prior to developing vision and goals. This, in their opinion, would avoid misunderstanding and develop a context in which the vision can be better understood. The task force would like to see a page of helpful hints that might take others through the process more smoothly. "Help people anticipate some of the frustrations they will experience," said one participant. Another improvement on which all agreed is that the task force should have included a recent convert to Christianity and a teen-aged member of the congregation.

Every member of the task force agreed that this process had broadened his or her understanding of ministry and deepened commitment to the mission of the church. However, each member also expressed frustration at the gap between the task force and the church council in perspective. It seems that the process of study and discussion which produced the guiding principles of Beautiful Savior was largely responsible for that gap. It may also be that the kind of people selected for such a task force tend to be more open to change than the majority of a congregation's members.

Evaluation of the Seminar and Process
by Dr. Ronald Heins

Dr. Heins, the director of WELS Parish Assistance, endorsed the seminar as a valuable component of the Parish Assistance process of leading congregations to a clear sense of mission and vision. His summary analysis is that the seminar "is biblically focused, makes provision for participation and organizes the material in an understandable form." He particularly appreciated session three for "addressing the issue from both a biblical and practical viewpoint."

Regarding the step-by-step process, Dr. Heins was more skeptical. "The process is well done and touches on the key areas for developing a meaningful philosophy of ministry. But I am not sure most congregational leaders would either understand or be able to execute this design. In those congregations where there is a predominance of college-educated people, it would work well. It needs to be simplified for the majority."

Dr. Heins offered specific suggestions for improving the process. Bible study helps for step

one would provide greater focus for the task force. Guidance in obtaining and analyzing the

community factors of step two will keep people from "being overwhelmed by what they don't

know how to accomplish." Illustrations would make steps four and six easier to understand.

After seeing the result of Beautiful Savior's work, Dr. Heins concluded that the document which

that congregation's task force produced would be helpful to other congregations, providing an

example of the outcome toward which they are working.

Author's Evaluation of the Project

This project was carried out in the context of a specialized ministry: consulting with WELS

Lutheran churches in a process designed to help them analyze their ministry, create a vision for

the future, and implement that vision with effective leadership and planning. The measure of the

project, ultimately, is whether it enhanced the author's ability to serve Lutheran churches and

whether it produced resources that will assist those churches in understanding and carrying out

their ministry.

EVALUATION

Consulting with congregations involves more than analyzing what a church does. It requires

some understanding of *why* a church does ministry the way it does. This project has provided the

author a systematic way of understanding what lies behind the attitudes, norms and programs of a church. Consulting with congregations must be more than pointing churches to options and opportunities for their future. It must help the church and its leaders develop a theological and practical mindset with which to see the future and weigh options. This project has developed three tools that the author can use to help a church's leaders develop such a mindset. Chapter four, which provides a comprehensive rationale for and definition of a theology of ministerial practice, will become a stand-alone piece of Parish Assistance to stimulate the thinking of church leaders. The seminar will be a tool to engage members of the congregation in rethinking why their church does what it does the way it does. And the step-by-step process will be useful to churches that have conflict and competing agendas which keep them from building consensus and developing a vision.

The survey reported in chapter five of this project demonstrated measurable differences in theological understanding, cultural awareness, and perspective on ministry. If completed by a sufficient number of members and leaders, the survey can be useful to a church's leaders in assessing the congregation's ethos. Compiling the responses of a greater number of congregations would create a more reliable norm against which leaders could identify divergent issues for analysis and attention in their own congregation. The survey verified that there is a difference between healthy, growing churches and troubled, declining churches in the way members view those outside the church and the ministry of their church. The survey demonstrated a significant gap between elected leaders and members in at least two areas. Leaders are more pessimistic and more institutional in their view of the church. And the survey revealed differences among three generations' viewpoint on ministry. However, the range of

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difference was quite narrow in most cases, suggesting that common faith is stronger than generational difference in shaping people's view of the church's ministry.

The experience of the task force at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church serves as an encouragement to refine and continue to employ the elements of this project. Members of the task force noted how their own view of ministry has been enriched theologically and expanded culturally. And the product of their effort is a document that can provide direction for the congregation. At the same time, the task force experienced some frustration because the elected leaders of their church had not worked through the issues that shape a theology of ministerial practice as had the task force. Their experience exposes a correctable weakness in the process of developing an intentional theology of ministerial practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on this project and making it more useful for other churches will involve several improvements. Some of those improvements have been suggested by those who were involved in the project. Others are the result of the author's observations.

A key concern is to engage the pastors and elected leaders of churches more pointedly in the process of analyzing their congregations' philosophy of ministry and intentionally developing a theology of ministerial practice. While doing so will lengthen the process, the time spent will be especially important in churches that are experiencing conflict or decline. Providing chapter four of this project to the leaders of a church as a study document, then discussing the implications of the study document for their church is one recommendation. Chapter four provides a synthesis of

research and experience in a comprehensive rationale for and definition of a theology of ministerial practice. Encouraging the congregation's leaders to administer a revised version of the survey developed for this project, and providing a norm against which to analyze the conclusions from their church, is a second recommendation. Leaders who do not know how the members of their church think, and how that thinking compares with their own perspective, are somewhat handicapped. Greater emphasis on the attendance of leaders at the seminar developed for this project will further engage them in understanding what lies behind the way their church does ministry. A final recommendation is that the task force include at least two elected leaders, and that a debriefing session of the task force and church council be held prior to the drafting of any statements. It will be important at that debriefing to engage the church council in exercises that lead to a list of core values and priorities.

A second concern arising out of this project is that there is not enough connection between a church's theology and its practice of ministry. In fact, the Lutheran Brotherhood survey suggests that church members have an inadequate understanding of theology, period. The challenges of a postmodern and post-Christian culture necessitate better adult Christian education, with the goal of inculcating greater discernment. While session three of this project's seminar does address the importance of connecting theology and practice, more can and should be done. One recommendation is creating a Bible class course on the Augsburg Confession which demonstrates how the articulation and defense of biblical truth has an historical context and practical implications for the way the church carries out ministry. The course would move between the confession and its sixteenth century setting and the issues and setting of the twenty-first century. Another recommendation is to shape elements of the seminar developed for this project into a

course, with video teaching clips, so that a broader audience than those able to attend a seminar may be able to discuss how theology and culture intersect in the development of ministerial practice.

As suggested earlier, the step-by-step process should be enhanced by providing more direction for the Bible study, gathering community information and creating values and priorities lists. With the congregation's permission, Beautiful Savior's document can be a sample that helps other churches and their task force comprehend how the outcome of their labor might look.

The seminar needs to be conducted several times in order to determine what communicates clearly and what needs some revision. It may become apparent that the seminar needs to be abbreviated. It may also become apparent that greater flexibility would increase the seminar's value. Different churches may find sections of the seminar more or less helpful, based on their setting and the issues they face.

The survey may be more useful if it can be abbreviated slightly and brought into closer alignment with the workshop. In the first part, a question that measures people's understanding of what the church is should replace the present question seven. In part two, question three can be eliminated and question eleven can be revised. Perhaps the best way to improve the survey would be to appoint a team of six people to rewrite the survey. One member of the team should represent the church body's division of Parish Services. Another should bring expertise in the field of surveys and polling. Two pastors and two lay leaders chosen for their experience in analyzing ministry could round out the team.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES OF RAW SURVEY DATA

FROM FIVE CONGREGATIONS

STUDY ONE

SIMPLE COMPARISON CHART
Lutheran Brotherhood ~ Composite of Leaders and Members

PART I		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		CLM	LB	CLM	LB	CLM	LB	CLM	LB	CLM	LB
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.	3.0	19.3	21.0	50.5	41.0	18.5	33.0	8.8	3.0	2.9
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	80.0	43.3	17.0	13.4	2.0	19.6	1.0	18.2	.5	15.5
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	76.0	36.9	20.0	10.9	3.0	9.5	1.0	31.3	0	11.4
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	10.5	32.0	21.0	28.5	20.5	6.4	44.0	19.5	4.0	13.6
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	70.0	36.0	28.0	19.8	.5	11.4	1.0	13.8	1.0	16.9
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.	2.0	28.1	12.0	28.2	29.0	8.7	49.0	21.4	8.0	13.6
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.	3.0	1.8	3.0	6.3	40.0	43.1	53.0	44.7	1.0	4.1
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	70.5	57.5	22.0	14.2	1.5	3.4	2.0	8.0	4.0	16.9
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.	1.5	37.8	12.0	29.3	29.0	6.3	55.0	15.6	2.5	10.9
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.	5.0	5.3	3.0	27.1	27.0	38.3	61.0	22.8	4.0	6.5

NOTE: Responses are percentages

STUDY TWO

COMPARISON CHART OF LEADERS AND MEMBERS

PART I		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.	-	3.6	7.0	24.0	46.5	39.2	44.2	29.5	2.3	3.6
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	90.7	77.2	7.0	19.2	2.3	1.8	-	1.2	-	.6
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	76.7	76.0	20.9	19.9	-	3.5	2.3	.6	-	-
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	11.6	10.2	20.9	21.0	18.6	21.0	46.5	43.4	2.3	4.2
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	76.7	68.0	23.3	29.0	-	.6	-	1.2	-	1.2
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.	7.0	.6	7.0	13.7	27.9	29.2	58.1	47.0	-	9.5
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.	4.7	3.0	2.3	3.0	25.6	43.8	67.4	49.1	-	1.2
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	72.0	70.2	20.9	22.2	-	1.8	2.3	1.8	4.6	4.0
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.	-	1.8	9.3	13.0	30.2	28.4	60.5	53.8	-	3.0
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.	9.3	4.1	4.6	2.4	16.3	30.0	67.4	59.4	2.3	4.1

NOTE: Responses are percentages

PART II **Comparison Chart of Leaders and Members**

	Leaders	Members
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values	8.5	7.3
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	74.5	70.0
are looking for a good time	17.0	22.9
B. learn best by hearing	6.3	15.7
learn best by seeing	33.3	43.0
learn best by doing	60.4	41.3
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	27.0	31.9
appreciate some change	58.3	50.3
believe things need to be done differently	14.6	17.8
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	45.8	27.3
are realistic about the church's future	31.3	41.5
are optimistic about the church's future	22.9	31.1
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	17.0	21.6
the perspective of my parents	14.9	27.3
the influence of a pastor	12.8	10.3
my experience as an adult	42.6	28.4
discussions with peers	2.1	3.6
my education	10.6	8.8
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	59.6	58.7
teach new insights from the Bible	34.0	32.3
make sense out of life	6.4	9.0
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	16.7	19.7
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	75.0	76.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	8.3	4.3
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	4.0	6.4
an inspiring experience of worship	18.4	10.6
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	6.1	6.9
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	57.1	58.7
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	12.2	7.9
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs	2.0	9.5

	Leaders	Members
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:	ranking	
evangelism to the lost	5th	3rd
teaching our children	2nd	2nd
regaining members who have drifted away	7th	6th
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	3rd	5th
solving our financial problems	6th	7th
caring for the sick and elderly		10th
building people up in spiritual maturity	1st	1st
counseling and comforting the hurting	9th	9th
retaining our teens and young adults	4th	4th
enhancing our worship	8th	8th
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	77.0	70.0
compassionate Christian counselor		4.8
wise Bible teacher	2.0	9.0
motivating equipper for Christian life	21.0	16.0
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	6.3	14.8
a willing volunteer		3.2
an avid student of the Bible	12.5	10.0
a generous giver		1.0
a committed Christian witness in the community	29.2	33.9
a strong leader who stands up for what is right	2.0	2.6
a moral example of Christian love	50.0	34.4
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	53.0	37.4
an opportunity to help another human being	26.5	39.6
a role on a committee that gets things done	12.2	17.0
a position of leadership that can make things happen	8.2	5.9
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	25.0	17.7
Agree	41.7	35.5
Disagree	23.0	35.5
Strongly disagree	10.4	11.3
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree	16.3	18.0
Agree	58.1	53.5
Disagree	25.6	25.0
Strongly disagree		3.5
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree	21.4	13.9
Agree	50.0	52.4
Disagree	16.7	23.5
Strongly disagree	12.0	10.2

	Leaders	Members
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree	20.0	18.3
Agree	55.0	58.0
Disagree	20.0	22.0
Strongly disagree	5.0	1.7
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree	9.3	10.0
Agree	55.8	44.7
Disagree	34.9	40.3
Strongly disagree		5.0
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	22.4	9.2
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	22.4	12.5
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	8.1	17.4
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	16.3	17.9
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	18.4	25.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	12.2	17.9

STUDY THREE

Comparison Chart - Responses of Three Age Group

PART I

1		I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.		
		Ages	18-35	36-50	51-99
	Strongly agree	3.0	2.0	4.0
	Agree	18.0	23.0	14.0
	Disagree	47.0	46.0	35.0
	Strongly disagree	26.0	28.0	42.0
	No opinion	5.0		6.0

2		God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.		
		Ages	18-35	36-50	51-99
	Strongly agree	6.0	1.0	1.0
	Agree	8.0	13.0	9.0
	Disagree	44.0	26.0	29.0
	Strongly disagree	33.0	59.0	50.0
	No opinion	8.0	1.0	11.0

3		I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.		
		Ages	18-35	36-50	51-99
	Strongly agree		1.0	6.0
	Agree		1.0	6.0
	Disagree	61.0	38.0	36.0
	Strongly disagree	37.0	60.0	51.0
	No opinion	2.0		1.0

4		Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.		
		Ages	18-35	36-50	51-99
	Strongly agree	5.0	2.0	
	Agree	16.0	11.0	13.0
	Disagree	32.0	27.0	30.0
	Strongly disagree	47.0	58.0	55.0
	No opinion		1.0	2.0

5		I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.		
		Ages	18-35	36-50	51-99
	Strongly agree	5.0	5.0	4.0
	Agree	3.0	4.0	1.0
	Disagree	45.0	20.0	23.0
	Strongly disagree	42.0	70.0	68.0
	No opinion	5.0	1.0	5.0

- Responses are percentages

PART II   Comparison Chart - Responses of Three Age Groups

Age	18-35	36-50	51-99
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...			
A. are concerned about truth and values	6.0	6.0	11.0
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	72.0	75.0	64.0
are looking for a good time	22.0	19.0	26.0
B. learn best by hearing	6.0	10.0	24.0
learn best by seeing	31.0	48.0	44.0
learn best by doing	63.0	42.0	32.0
2 Most people in this congregation....			
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	37.0	26.0	30.0
appreciate some change	39.5	52.0	53.0
believe things need to be done differently	24.0	22.0	17.0
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	42.0	47.0	25.0
are realistic about the church's future	21.0	27.0	43.0
are optimistic about the church's future	37.0	27.0	32.0
3 I think a sermon should primarily ...			
reinforce basic Christian truths	54.0	68.0	64.0
teach new insights from the Bible	32.0	26.0	33.0
make sense out of life	14.0	6.0	4.0
4 I would prefer that music in the church be ...			
classical Lutheran hymns	14.0	19.0	20.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	81.0	75.0	78.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	5.0	6.0	2.0
5 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...			
close Christian friends	8.0	5.0	6.0
an inspiring experience of worship	11.0	14.0	7.5
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	5.0	6.0	1.0
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	54.0	58.0	67.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	5.0	12.0	7.5
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs	16.0	5.0	11.0
6 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...			
strong spiritual leader	65.0	73.5	80.0
compassionate Christian counselor	8.0	1.0	5.0
wise Bible teacher	14.0	5.0	4.0
motivating equipper for Christian life	14.0	20.5	11.0

	18-35	36-50	51-99
7 I think a good church member is best described as:			
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	14.0	10.0	19.0
a willing volunteer	3.0	5.0	
an avid student of the Bible	17.0	14.5	6.0
a generous giver	3.0		
a committed Christian witness in the community	36.0	41.0	20.0
a strong leader who stands up for what is right	3.0	1.0	4.0
a moral example of Christian love	25.0	29.0	51.0
8 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...			
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	49.0	51.0	39.5
an opportunity to help another human being	41.0	34.0	38.0
a role on a committee that gets things done	8.0	14.5	18.5
a position of leadership that can make things happen	3.0	1.0	4.0
9 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.			
Strongly agree	11.0	19.0	22.0
Agree	27.0	33.0	35.0
Disagree	46.0	37.0	30.0
Strongly disagree	16.0	11.0	13.0
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.			
Strongly agree	5.0	15.0	32.5
Agree	46.0	52.0	59.0
Disagree	43.0	29.0	7.0
Strongly disagree	5.0	4.0	1.0
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.			
Strongly agree	11.0	17.0	19.0
Agree	38.0	55.0	56.0
Disagree	38.0	18.0	14.0
Strongly disagree	14.0	10.0	11.0
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.			
Strongly agree	8.0	27.0	16.0
Agree	65.0	50.0	63.0
Disagree	19.0	23.0	18.5
Strongly disagree	8.0		2.5
10 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:			
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	22.0	10.0	9.0
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	16.0	19.0	10.0
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	8.0	15.5	21.0
remarkable·harmony among members and loving care for people	27.0	12.0	22.0
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	16.0	29.0	16.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	11.0	15.5	22.0

STUDY FOUR

COMPARISON CHART OF MEMBERS ~ LEADERS (Congregations A,B,C,D,E)

Congregation "A"

PART I

		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.			22.0		45.0	33.0	29.0	33.0	4.0	33.0
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	65.0	100	28.0		2.0		3.0		2.0	
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	65.0	67.0	28.0		5.0		2.0	33.0		
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	12.0	33.0	27.0		24.0		34.0	67.0	3.0	
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	59.0	100	36.0				2.0		3.0	
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.	2.0		12.0		31.0	67.0	47.0	33.0	9.0	
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.	7.0	33.0	3.0		44.0		42.0	67.0	3.0	
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	67.0	67.0	23.0		3.0		3.0		3.0	33.0
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.	3.0		18.0		37.0	33.0	38.0	67.0	3.0	
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.	2.0		3.0		30.0		60.0	100	5.0	

NOTE: Responses are percentages

Study Four - A

PART II   Comparison Chart of Leaders and Members
Congregation "A"

	Members	Leaders
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values	14.0	
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	57.0	33.0
are looking for a good time	29.0	67.0
B. learn best by hearing	30.0	
learn best by seeing	39.0	33.0
learn best by doing	31.0	67.0
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	36.0	33.0
appreciate some change	37.0	33.0
believe things need to be done differently	27.0	33.0
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	39.0	33.0
are realistic about the church's future	41.0	67.0
are optimistic about the church's future	20.0	
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	21.0	33.0
the perspective of my parents	34.0	
the influence of a pastor	7.0	
my experience as an adult	26.0	33.0
discussions with peers	3.0	
my education	9.0	33.0
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	66.0	67.0
teach new insights from the Bible	32.0	33.0
make sense out of life	2.0	
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	23.0	33.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	74.0	67.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	3.0	
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	5.0	
an inspiring experience of worship	13.0	33.0
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	5.0	
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	58.0	67.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	11.0	
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs	7.0	

	Members	Leaders
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:	ranking	
evangelism to the lost	3rd	4th
teaching our children	1st	2nd
regaining members who have drifted away	6th	
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	4th	5th
solving our financial problems	8th	
caring for the sick and elderly	10th	
building people up in spiritual maturity	2nd	1st
counseling and comforting the hurting	7th	
retaining our teens and young adults	5th	2nd
enhancing our worship	8th	
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	73.0	33.0
compassionate Christian counselor	5.0	
wise Bible teacher	9.0	
motivating equipper for Christian life	13.0	67.0
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	19.0	
a willing volunteer	2.0	
an avid student of the Bible	7.0	67.0
a generous giver		
a committed Christian witness in the community	30.0	
a strong leader who stands up for what is right	6.0	
a moral example of Christian love	37.0	33.0
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	34.0	67.0
an opportunity to help another human being	45.0	
a role on a committee that gets things done	15.0	33.0
a position of leadership that can make things happen	6.0	
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	8.0	
Agree	34.0	67.0
Disagree	40.0	33.0
Strongly disagree	19.0	
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree	16.0	
Agree	56.0	67.0
Disagree	20.0	33.0
Strongly disagree	7.0	
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree	17.0	
Agree	52.0	67.0
Disagree	21.0	33.0
Strongly disagree	10.0	

	Members	Leaders
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree	15.0	
Agree	61.0	67.0
Disagree	22.0	33.0
Strongly disagree	2.0	
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree	6.0	
Agree	55.0	100.0
Disagree	35.0	
Strongly disagree	4.0	
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	8.0	
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	8.0	
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	26.0	
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	22.0	33.0
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	18.0	67.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	18.0	

PART II Comparison Chart of Leaders and Members
Congregation "B"

	Members	Leaders
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values		40.0
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	76.5	60.0
are looking for a good time	23.5	
B. learn best by hearing	17.0	
learn best by seeing	12.0	20.0
learn best by doing	71.0	80.0
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	23.5	60.0
appreciate some change	76.5	40.0
believe things need to be done differently		
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	7.0	
are realistic about the church's future	53.0	20.0
are optimistic about the church's future	40.0	80.0
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	28.0	20.0
the perspective of my parents	17.0	
the influence of a pastor	6.0	20.0
my experience as an adult	33.0	40.0
discussions with peers	11.0	
my education	6.0	20.0
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	39.0	40.0
teach new insights from the Bible	44.0	60.0
make sense out of life	17.0	
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	22.0	20.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	72.0	80.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	6.0	
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	6.0	
an inspiring experience of worship	28.0	
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	11.0	20.0
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	56.0	80.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses		
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs		

	Members	Leaders
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:		
evangelism to the lost	4th	2nd
teaching our children	5th	2nd
regaining members who have drifted away	6th	
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	3rd	
solving our financial problems		
caring for the sick and elderly		
building people up in spiritual maturity	1st	1st
counseling and comforting the hurting	7th	4th
retaining our teens and young adults	1st	
enhancing our worship	7th	
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	67.0	80.0
compassionate Christian counselor		
wise Bible teacher	11.0	20.0
motivating equipper for Christian life	22.0	
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	28.0	
a willing volunteer		
an avid student of the Bible	6.0	
a generous giver		
a committed Christian witness in the community	33.0	100.0
a strong leader who stands up for what is right		
a moral example of Christian love	33.0	
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	6.0	
an opportunity to help another human being	50.0	
a role on a committee that gets things done	28.0	20.0
a position of leadership that can make things happen	17.0	80.0
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	33.0	80.0
Agree	56.0	20.0
Disagree	6.0	
Strongly disagree	6.0	
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree		
Agree		
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree		
Agree		
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		

	Members	Leaders
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree		
Agree		
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree		
Agree		
Disagree		
Strongly disagree		
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	12.0	20.0
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	12.0	20.0
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	18.0	
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	18.0	
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	29.0	40.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	12.0	20.0

COMPARISON CHART OF MEMBERS AND LEADERS

Congregation "C"

PART I

		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.	4.0		31.0		31.0	64.0	25.0	36.0	8.0	
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	73.0	79.0	17.0	21.0	2.0		6.0		2.0	
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	79.0	64.0	17.0	36.0	4.0					
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	8.0		21.0	29.0	25.0	29.0	38.0	36.0	8.0	7.0
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	65.0	57.0	33.0	43.0			1.0			
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.		14.0	10.0	7.0	40.0	36.0	38.0	36.0	13.0	7.0
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.			2.0		42.0	43.0	56.0	57.0		
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	63.0	50.0	290	43.0			2.0		6.0	7.0
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.	2.0		19.0	14.0	29.0	43.0	46.0	43.0	4.0	
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.	4.0			7.0	38.0	14.0	56.0	79.0	2.0	

NOTE: Responses are percentages

PART II   Comparison Chart of Leaders and Members
Congregation "C"

	Members	Leaders
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values	5.0	8.0
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	64.0	54.0
are looking for a good time	32.0	38.0
B. learn best by hearing	7.0	8.0
learn best by seeing	45.0	38.0
learn best by doing	48.0	54.0
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	39.0	21.0
appreciate some change	57.0	71.0
believe things need to be done differently	4.0	8.0
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	17.0	43.0
are realistic about the church's future	54.0	50.0
are optimistic about the church's future	28.0	7.0
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	13.0	25.0
the perspective of my parents	35.0	7.0
the influence of a pastor	13.0	25.0
my experience as an adult	31.0	33.0
discussions with peers		
my education	8.0	7.0
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	53.0	57.0
teach new insights from the Bible	36.0	36.0
make sense out of life	11.0	7.0
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	23.0	29.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	75.0	64.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	2.0	7.0
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	2.0	
an inspiring experience of worship	4.0	21.0
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	9.0	7.0
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	66.0	57.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	9.0	7.0
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs	11.0	7.0

	Members	Leaders
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:	ranking	
evangelism to the lost	5th	5th
teaching our children	1st	2nd
regaining members who have drifted away	6th	8th
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	3rd	4th
solving our financial problems	7th	7th
caring for the sick and elderly	10th	
building people up in spiritual maturity	2nd	1st
counseling and comforting the hurting	9th	
retaining our teens and young adults	3rd	3rd
enhancing our worship	8th	6th
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	64.0	93.0
compassionate Christian counselor	8.0	
wise Bible teacher	11.0	
motivating equipper for Christian life	17.0	7.0
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	17.0	14.0
a willing volunteer	2.0	
an avid student of the Bible	9.0	
a generous giver	2.0	
a committed Christian witness in the community	37.0	21.0
a strong leader who stands up for what is right		
a moral example of Christian love	33.0	64.0
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	49.0	57.0
an opportunity to help another human being	26.0	29.0
a role on a committee that gets things done	19.0	14.0
a position of leadership that can make things happen	6.0	
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	2.0	
Agree	15.0	7.0
Disagree	68.0	64.0
Strongly disagree	15.0	29.0
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree	9.0	7.0
Agree	64.0	64.0
Disagree	26.0	29.0
Strongly disagree	2.0	
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree	8.0	14.0
Agree	58.0	64.0
Disagree	23.0	14.0
Strongly disagree	10.0	7.0

	Members	Leaders
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree	8.0	
Agree	60.0	64.0
Disagree	27.0	29.0
Strongly disagree	4.0	7.0
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree	5.0	14.0
Agree	25.0	21.0
Disagree	61.0	64.0
Strongly disagree	9.0	
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	2.0	7.0
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	17.0	21.0
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	23.0	14.0
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	19.0	21.0
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	23.0	14.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	17.0	21.0

COMPARISON CHART OF MEMBERS AND LEADERS

Congregation "D"

PART I

#		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.	5.0		31.0	9.0	33.0	45.0	31.0	45.0		
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	88.0	95.0	12.0			5.0				
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	81.0	82.0	17.0	18.0	2.0					
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	8.0	18.0	16.0	23.0	18.0	18.0	55.0	41.0	3.0	
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	73.0	82.0	24.0	18.0	3.0					
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.		5.0	17.0	9.0	24.0	23.0	49.0	64.0	10.0	
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.	2.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	54.0	23.0	39.0	68.0		
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	74.0	82.0	21.0	14.0				5.0	5.0	
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.			2.0	9.0	23.0	27.0	75.0	64.0		
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.	10.0	18.0	5.0	5.0	24.0	23.0	56.0	50.0	5.0	5.0

NOTE: Responses are percentages

PART II Comparison Chart of Members and Leaders
Congregation "D"

	Members	Leaders
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values	5.0	5.0
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	88.0	90.0
are looking for a good time	7.0	5.0
B. learn best by hearing	8.0	9.0
learn best by seeing	59.0	30.0
learn best by doing	33.0	61.0
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	36.0	27.0
appreciate some change	40.0	50.0
believe things need to be done differently	24.0	23.0
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	53.0	68.0
are realistic about the church's future	25.0	14.0
are optimistic about the church's future	22.0	18.0
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	29.0	13.0
the perspective of my parents	21.0	17.0
the influence of a pastor	13.0	4.0
my experience as an adult	21.0	52.0
discussions with peers	6.0	4.0
my education	10.0	9.0
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	54.0	57.0
teach new insights from the Bible	30.0	33.0
make sense out of life	15.0	10.0
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	16.0	4.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	77.0	82.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	7.0	14.0
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	11.0	4.0
an inspiring experience of worship	11.0	22.0
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving	9.0	4.0
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	46.0	48.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	4.0	22.0
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs	20.0	

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	Leaders	Members
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:	ranking	
evangelism to the lost	3rd	2nd
teaching our children	5th	2nd
regaining members who have drifted away	6th	7th
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	2nd	1st
solving our financial problems	6th	6th
caring for the sick and elderly	10th	
building people up in spiritual maturity	1st	4th
counseling and comforting the hurting	9th	
retaining our teens and young adults	3rd	5th
enhancing our worship	8th	8th
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	70.0	68.0
compassionate Christian counselor	4.0	
wise Bible teacher	7.0	
motivating equipper for Christian life	20.0	32.0
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	9.0	4.0
a willing volunteer	6.0	
an avid student of the Bible	11.0	9.0
a generous giver	2.0	
a committed Christian witness in the community	39.0	27.0
a strong leader who stands up for what is right	4.0	4.0
a moral example of Christian love	30.0	55.0
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	38.0	52.0
an opportunity to help another human being	40.0	39.0
a role on a committee that gets things done	18.0	9.0
a position of leadership that can make things happen	4.0	
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	25.0	32.0
Agree	43.0	64.0
Disagree	25.0	
Strongly disagree	7.0	4.0
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree	13.0	14.0
Agree	46.0	59.0
Disagree	39.0	27.0
Strongly disagree	2.0	
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree	14.0	24.0
Agree	45.0	38.0
Disagree	29.0	19.0
Strongly disagree	12.0	19.0

	Leaders	Members
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree	30.0	36.0
Agree	47.0	50.0
Disagree	23.0	9.0
Strongly disagree		5.0
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree	22.0	9.0
Agree	49.0	73.0
Disagree	29.0	18.0
Strongly disagree		
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	18.0	35.0
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	7.0	22.0
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	7.0	9.0
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	13.0	17.0
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	31.0	9.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	24.0	9.0

COMPARISON CHART OF MEMBERS AND LEADERS

Congregation "E"

PART I

		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
		M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L	M	L
1	I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.	10.0	25.0			52.0		38.0	75.0		
2	Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.	90.0	100	10.0							
3	A child is sinful already at birth.	90.0	100	10.0							
4	The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.	14.0		14.0		10.0		62.0	100		
5	Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.	90.0	100	10.0							
6	God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.			19.0		10.0		67.0	100	5.0	
7	I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.					29.0		71.0	100		
8	God is one divine essence, but three persons.	90.0	100	5.0				5.0			
9	Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.			5.0		14.0		76.0	100	5.0	
10	I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church.					24.0		71.0	100	5.0	

NOTE: Responses are percentages

PART II Comparison Chart of Leaders and Members
Congregation "E"

	Members	Leaders
1 Most people in this community who don't go to church ...		
A. are concerned about truth and values	5.0	
are trying to figure out how to make their life work	76.0	100.0
are looking for a good time	19.0	
B. learn best by hearing	10.0	
learn best by seeing	45.0	50.0
learn best by doing	45.0	50.0
2 Most people in this congregation....		
A. would prefer that everything stayed the same	5.0	
appreciate some change	71.0	100.0
believe things need to be done differently	24.0	
B. are pessimistic about the church's future	4.0	
are realistic about the church's future	13.0	50.0
are optimistic about the church's future	83.0	50.0
3 My outlook on the church has been shaped primarily by ...		
my experience as a child	23.0	
the perspective of my parents	14.0	50.0
the influence of a pastor	14.0	25.0
my experience as an adult	41.0	25.0
discussions with peers		
my education	9.0	
4 I think a sermon should primarily ...		
reinforce basic Christian truths	77.0	100.0
teach new insights from the Bible	18.0	
make sense out of life	5.0	
5 I would prefer that music in the church be ...		
classical Lutheran hymns	9.0	25.0
a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	87.0	75.0
up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs	4.0	
6 What people want most to get out of membership in a church is ...		
close Christian friends	9.0	25.0
an inspiring experience of worship	4.0	
an opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving		
growing in their understanding of God and his Word	74.0	75.0
help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses	13.0	
the ministry of a caring pastor to their situations and needs		

	Members	Leaders
	ranking	
7 I believe that the top three issues this church needs to address are:		
evangelism to the lost	1st	1st
teaching our children	2nd	3rd
regaining members who have drifted away	6th	
getting more members involved in fellowship and service	5th	5th
solving our financial problems		
caring for the sick and elderly		
building people up in spiritual maturity	4th	4th
counseling and comforting the hurting		
retaining our teens and young adults	3rd	2nd
enhancing our worship	7th	
8 I think a pastor's role should primarily be ...		
strong spiritual leader	81.0	100.0
compassionate Christian counselor		
wise Bible teacher	5.0	
motivating equipper for Christian life	5.0	
9 I think a good church member is best described as:		
an eager participant in worship every Sunday	4.0	
a willing volunteer	4.0	
an avid student of the Bible	21.0	50.0
a generous giver		
a committed Christian witness in the community	29.0	
a strong leader who stands up for what is right		
a moral example of Christian love	42.0	50.0
10 When people volunteer, most would prefer ...		
a physical task that they complete with satisfaction	46.0	100.0
an opportunity to help another human being	46.0	
a role on a committee that gets things done	8.0	
a position of leadership that can make things happen		
11 A. Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship.		
Strongly agree	46.0	25.0
Agree	50.0	50.0
Disagree	4.0	25.0
Strongly disagree		
B. The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence.		
Strongly agree	50.0	75.0
Agree	42.0	25.0
Disagree	8.0	
Strongly disagree		
C. Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters.		
Strongly agree	17.0	50.0
Agree	54.0	50.0
Disagree	21.0	
Strongly disagree	8.0	

	Members	Leaders
D. Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.		
Strongly agree	25.0	
Agree	67.0	50.0
Disagree	8.0	50.0
Strongly disagree		
E. The average church should have twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered.		
Strongly agree	9.0	
Agree	52.0	50.0
Disagree	30.0	50.0
Strongly disagree	9.0	
12 In my estimation an effective church is best defined by:		
a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer services	8.0	25.0
growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community	25.0	50.0
a high percentage of members attending worship each week	8.0	
remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people	17.0	
a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study	29.0	25.0
a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry	13.0	

APPENDIX B

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF

SURVEYS FROM FIVE CONGREGATIONS

A Comparison of Surveys With the Lutheran Brotherhood
"Survey of Lutheran Beliefs and Practices"

While the Lutheran Brotherhood survey switched between five responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and No Opinion) and six (Agree, Probably Agree, Not Sure, Probably Disagree, Disagree and No Opinion), the ten questions directed to members of five churches retained the five-response format throughout. As a result, correlation is not absolute between the Lutheran Brotherhood survey and that administered to members of the five congregations, in seven of the ten questions. Comparison in these seven questions equated the Lutheran Brotherhood survey's "Agree" with "Strongly Agree," "Probably Agree" with "Agree," "Probably Disagree" with "Disagree," "Disagree" with "Strongly Disagree," and both "Not Sure" and "No Opinion" with "No Opinion." A more significant difference in survey responses is that the Lutheran Brotherhood respondents were a combination of active members, not-so-active members and nominal members, while in the five congregations participating in the survey for this project, only active members completed surveys.

Question one ("I think a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church.") measures the value people place on church attendance, while also subtly determining whether the application of the third commandment made to worship attendance in confirmation instruction has survived the changed perspective of the world around Christians. 19% of the LB respondents strongly agreed, 50.5% agreed, and 2.9% had no opinion. A composite of the 240 responses from five congregations demonstrated that 3% strongly agreed, 21% agreed and 3% had no opinion. A pronounced difference between elected leaders and members is apparent in this question. None of the 48 leaders marked "strongly agree" and only 7% marked "agree," while among members 3.6% marked "strongly agree" and 24% marked "agree." A less pronounced difference exists among the three age cohorts. 3% of 18 to 35 year-olds marked "stongly agree" and 18% marked "agree." 2% of 36 to 50 year-olds marked "strongly agree" and 23% "agree." Among those over fifty, 4% marked "strongly agree" and 14% "agree."

Speculation about why people agree with this statement might range from the influence of secular thinking to rationalizations associated with close relatives who've drifted from the church. It seems apparent that members are far less inclined to measure their spiritual life by regular worship attendance than are the church's leaders. Another conclusion seems to be that those Generation X members who've remained faithful to the church are more like their grandparents in their conservative commitment to practicing the faith than the Baby Boomers. The way this first survey question was framed has a slightly institutional ring that could have been avoided by using the term "worship" for "church." Nonetheless, it seems important that pastors and leaders more pointedly connect corporate worship with the practice of the Christian faith, or else the seductive subjectivism of contemporary culture will continue to erode a core value of the church.

Question two ("Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior can go to heaven.") pits the central teaching of Christianity against the pluralism and political correctness of current

culture. In the LB tabulation, 43.3% agreed and 13.4% probably agreed. In contrast, 80% of those surveyed in the five congregations strongly agreed and another 17% agreed. 90.7% of leaders strongly agreed and 7% agreed, while among members 77.2% strongly agreed and 19.2% agreed. The difference between leaders and members is in the intensity of their commitment. The most apparent lesson to be drawn is that active members tend to maintain a clear understanding of the distinctive and exclusive claim of Jesus Christ, while people who drift to the margins of the church are likely to lose the very essence of the Christian faith. George Barna and George Gallup might point out that those who have drifted still maintain that they are Christians. The data makes efforts to reclaim inactive members even more urgent in this generation.

Question three ("A child is sinful already at birth.") affirms the doctrine of original sin, in the face of secular humanism and popular sentiment. 36.9% of respondents to the LB survey agreed and another 10.9% probably agreed. The composite of surveys in the five congregations showed that 76% strongly agreed and 20% agreed. There was virtually no difference between leaders and members in their responses. Once more, there appears to be a marked difference between active and inactive members in the polling. It further appears that the Law has been well communicated to those who attend worship regularly. Perhaps it is the striking nature of this statement that makes people remember the biblical answer, or it may be that pastors have pointedly contrasted the viewpoint of secular humanism with the biblical doctrine and thereby taught discernment.

Question four ("The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living.") addresses one of the primary distinctives of Lutheran theology. Unless people understand the distinction between Law and Gospel, however, this question seems to subtly invite a wrong response. It is, therefore, not really surprising that in the LB tabulation only 19.5% disagreed and another 16.4% probably disagreed. In other words, 2/3 of those calling themselves Lutheran don't make the essential distinction between Law and Gospel. In the composite of five congregations' responses, 44% strongly disagreed and another 20.5% disagreed. Thus, about 2/3 of active members understood the Law-Gospel distinction. There was virtually no difference between the responses of leaders and those of members. That may be a bit disconcerting to pastors who look to elected leaders for theological maturity in their role of assisting him in maintaining doctrine and practice. The data suggests that making clear theological distinctions must be taught with greater attention to the wrong answers. One likely consequence of contemporary culture is that reasoning skills are diminished and discernment ought not be assumed.

Question five ("Money and material things belong to God. We only manage them for God.") is the "bottom line" statement of stewardship training. It is a jarring contrast to the materialism of western society. 36% of those responding to the LB survey agreed, and another 19.8% probably agreed. The rest haven't heard a stewardship sermon for a while, apparently. Responses from the five congregations showed that 70% strongly agreed and 28% probably agreed. Those numbers suggest that the stewardship message came across loud and clear to those who are regular in worship attendance. In fact, the combined positive responses are slightly higher than for question two, the heart of the Christian faith. Leaders show only a slightly higher positive response than members, though leaders gave a nearly 9% higher response to "strongly agree." In the light of

these numbers, one wonders why giving remains at something between 2% and 3% among Lutherans. Perhaps the principle has been well taught, but the practical implications of that principle haven't been discussed as candidly as could be.

Question six ("God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he or she can.") pits the opinio legis of human nature against the clear scriptural teaching that God's Law demands perfect compliance. In the LB survey, 21.4% disagreed and 8.7% probably disagreed. Less than 1/3 of these Lutherans recognize how this statement erodes both Law and Gospel. The composite of five congregations demonstrated that 49% strongly disagreed and 29% disagreed. Here, more than 2/3 saw the error in the statement. Leaders' responses were 10 percentage points higher in recognizing the error than members, virtually all of those points in the "strongly disagree" column. 18-35 year-olds were far less likely to check "strongly disagree" than the other age cohorts (33% to 59% for those 36 to 50 and 50% for members over 50), though their total of "strongly disagree" and "disagree" was only two percentage points below the oldest cohort. It appears that younger adults are less likely to "think theologically," while leaders more readily caught the implication of this statement. This question may highlight the tendency to disconnect salvation from sanctification and devalue the importance of Christian life. It may also reflect the relative view of morality espoused by popular culture. It would take follow-up questioning to determine what lies behind these responses; and that follow up would be valuable to pastors who are concerned about law and gospel, as well as the relationship of faith and works.

Question seven ("I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life.") addresses a concern of our pragmatic culture. Is Christianity abstract ideology or real-life power and love? In the LB survey, 44.7% strongly disagreed with the statement and 43.1% disagreed. That's a strong endorsement of the church by people, many of whom aren't sure what the doctrine of the church is and some of whom are not active in their church. Among the five churches surveyed, 53% strongly disagreed and 40% disagreed. After the rather large gaps between LB respondents and members of the five churches, this narrow gap is somewhat surprising. Comparing leaders and members demonstrates virtually no difference when combining the two "disagree" responses. However, leaders "strongly disagreed" by a margin of 67.4% to 49.1% over members. Not surprisingly, the more ownership and involvement in the church, the stronger the conviction that one personally benefits from his or her church.

Interestingly, the oldest cohort (those over fifty) were less likely to see the church as helpful with daily life than those younger. 6% strongly agreed and another 6% agreed with the statement, while the figures for those 35 to 50 were 1% and 1%; no one under 35 checked either "strongly agree" or "agree." On the other hand only 37% of those under 35 strongly disagreed, while 60% of those 35 to 50 and 51% of those over 50 strongly disagreed. Younger adults, apparently, are less passionate about their church or less inclined to check "strong" responses. The data raises questions. Is it that the longer a person is a member of a church, the more likely there will be disappointment or disillusionment? Are younger adults responding in general terms, while older adults have specific feelings about their church's helpfulness? At least, the overall responses indicate a significant level of satisfaction with the connection between the church's ministry and

people's personal lives.

Question eight ("God is one divine essence, but three persons.") restates the historic creeds of Christendom. Once more, this is essential Christian doctrine. In the LB survey, 57.5% agreed and 14.2% probably agreed. Those quite positive statistics pale in comparison with the responses of active members in the five churches. There, 70.5% strongly agreed and 22% agreed. There was little difference in responses between leaders and members or among the age cohorts. The only question here is why more than a quarter of the LB respondents either disagreed or weren't sure. The most likely assumption is that those who are inactive or barely active in a church no longer recognize the trinitarian identity of God or no longer believe it.

Question nine ("Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God.") expresses the pluralism, syncretism and/or universalism of popular religion. Will Christians see through this falsehood? In the LB survey, 37.8% agreed and another 29.3% probably agreed, while 10.9% weren't sure. That leaves less than a quarter of these Lutherans standing with Jesus, who said "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) In contrast, 55% of the members of the five churches checked "strongly disagree;" and another 29% checked "disagree." Once more, the farther one moves from the center of the church, the less likely that person is to discern truth from error; and the more likely the person is to be influenced by the religious notions of secular culture. It is possible that some people, deeply rooted in the Christian Church, read "denominations" rather than "religions in the world" and therefore answered positively.

Leaders were more likely than members to recognize the error of this statement by almost 9 percentage points, most of those in the "strongly disagree" column. A comparison of age cohorts demonstrates the following: 47% of those 18 to 35 marked "strongly disagree" and 32% "disagree;" 58% of those 35 to 50 marked "strongly disagree" and 27% "disagree;" 55% of those over 50 marked "strongly disagree" and 30% "disagree." The total of the two negative responses does not vary much among the age cohorts; but once more the younger adults are less likely to take a strong stand. 21% of the youngest age cohort marked a positive response to this statement, while only 13% of the two older cohorts did so. It would appear that the impact of the world around them has been greater on younger Christians than those older. And it may well be that theological discernment is more difficult for younger adults.

Question ten asks for a response to the statement: "I think a person should do what he or she thinks is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of the church." That statement captures the subjectivism, moral relativism and situational view of ethics that characterizes popular culture. It closely parallels the argument that "what's right is what's right for me." At the same time, this statement raises the question of the church's authority. Some observers have written about American Roman Catholics' willingness to disagree with Rome, but there has been little study of how Protestants and Lutherans view the teaching authority of their church. It would be interesting to determine which teachings of their church people are willing to ignore. In the LB survey, 5.3% strongly agreed with this statement, and 27.1% agreed. In

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contrast, 5% of those responding in the five churches surveyed marked "strongly agree," while another 3% marked "agree." It is interesting that more feel strongly about disregarding the church's teaching than merely agree with the statement in the responses of the five churches.

Even more striking is that among leaders, 9.3% strongly agreed with this statement and 4.6% agreed, while among members the figures were 4.1% strongly agree and 2.4% agree. Why leaders are twice as likely to go against the teaching of their church than members deserves some follow up. Perhaps they are more aware of the less popular positions of their church. In all likelihood they have thought a good deal more about the positions of their church. And they probably are less likely to be "blind followers." Still, the data is somewhat troubling. Once more, those age 18 to 35 are far less likely to check "strongly disagree" (42% compared to 70% for those 35 to 50 and 68% for those over 50), though the disparity when combining negative responses is minimal. Young adults seem generally to offer more moderate responses than older members.

Survey, Part Two: A Comparison of Responses by Elected Leaders and Members

The first question in Part Two asks for assumptions about "most people in the community who don't go to church." Point A intends to measure perceptions about the primary issues or goals for the unchurched. Is there a stereotype ("looking for a good time") with which churched people write off the unchurched? Nearly 75% of the leaders and 70% of members chose "trying to figure out how to make their life work" over "concerned about truth and values" (8.5% of leaders and 7.3% of members) and "looking for a good time" (17% of leaders and 23% of members). The responses suggest a fairly accurate perception of the unchurched, if a synthesis of authors and pollsters on the subject is to be believed. Leaders seem a bit more on target than members, a bit less cynical.

Point B is an attempt to determine the most appropriate mode of learning. Members were more likely than leaders to see "hearing" as the best mode (15.7% to 6.3%) and also "seeing" (43% to 33%). Leaders, by a wide margin of 60.4% to 41.3%, identified "doing" as the best mode of learning. Traditionally, the church's primary mode of teaching has been auditory. The survey clearly suggests that both leaders and members find "learning by hearing" the least effective method of reaching people. Will they embrace visual tools such as Power Point and video clips in sermons? Will they accept more break-out group discussion and self-study in adult education? Will they encourage revamping confirmation instruction to incorporate more visual and "discovery" methods of learning? That leaders, by such a wide margin, marked "learn best by doing" would seem to say that they want more active, less passive, approaches to ministry. However, the survey doesn't frame the question in such a way that one could be sure about what leaders and members want to see in their church. It is also possible that there is a "cognitive disconnect" here, that church members haven't made the connection between what they think is the best methodology for learning and what is the preferred methodology of the church -- especially on Sunday morning.

Question two asks for assumptions about the outlook of "most people in this congregation." Point A attempts to measure openness to change. 32% of members and 27% of leaders indicated that most members "would prefer that everything stayed the same." 50% of members and 58% of leaders checked "appreciate some change." 17.8% of members and 14.6% of leaders said most members "believe things need to be done differently." The significance of this question is that the perception of resistance to change can keep congregations from exploring more effective ways to accomplish their mission. The response "believe things need to be done differently" could very well indicate a restlessness and dissatisfaction with the present. The responses, especially of the leaders, suggest that people perceive a fairly healthy attitude toward change in their church. Wide deviation from this data in an individual congregation could signal trouble.

Point B of question two asks for an evaluation of members' attitude regarding the future. That 45.8% of leaders checked "pessimistic about the future" (compared to 27.3% of members) is a red flag. Is this an indication of burnout, frustration experienced by leaders who wrestle with problems and may lose sight of joys? Or does this reflect a gap between leaders and the rest of the congregation, leaders misinterpreting the attitude of members and becoming cynical? 31.3% of leaders and 41.5% of members marked "realistic about the church's future." 22.9% of leaders and 31.1% of members marked "optimistic."

In question three, respondents were given six choices and asked to indicate which "primarily shaped their outlook on the church." The lowest response (2.1% of leaders and 3.6% of members) was "discussions with peers." Does this suggest that neither leaders nor members spend significant time discussing the issues and direction of their church? The highest response (42.6% of leaders and 28.4% of members) was "my experience as an adult." It may not be surprising to see such a gap between leaders and members, since the elected leaders spend considerably more time in meetings and tasks intended to advance the church's ministry. The data supports the premise that to develop more ownership on the part of members will require greater involvement in the church's ministry. Members, far more than leaders, were likely to say that their "experience as a child" (21.6% of members, 17% of leaders) and "the perspective of my parents" (27.3% of members, 14.9% of leaders) shaped their outlook on the church. The importance of parents on the retention of their children is reinforced here, as is the value of an effective ministry to children. It would be interesting to see parallel statistics from adults who've left the church. "My education" received only an 8.8% response from members and 10.6% response from leaders. Perhaps surprisingly, "the influence of a pastor" was marked by only 10.3% of members and 12.8% of leaders. One might hope that working closely with leaders would make a pastor's influence greater. One might expect that the way a member viewed the church was largely conditioned by his or her relationship with the pastor. Yet, the data suggests otherwise. Of course, the categories are not mutually exclusive, and the pastor's influence may show up as part of a person's experience as a child or an adult in the church. The information in this question might be helpful to a congregation in shaping a positive outlook among members.

There was little deviation in responses of members and leaders to question four, which offered three choices as to what respondents "think a sermon should primarily do." Nearly 60% of people in both groups checked "reinforce basic Christian truths." Leaders were slightly more

inclined to check "teach new insights from the Bible" (34% to 32.3%); and members were more likely to say "make sense out of life" (9% to 6.4% for leaders). While the question isn't framed to allow generalizations, the data here doesn't seem to square with the literature which suggests that life-relatedness is the primary criterion by which people measure preaching. The data may point out that active members, at least in these five churches, have a stronger preference for the "Bible basics" than do people who are less committed to a church. One conclusion that could be drawn from the data is that a strong program of adult Bible study will be necessary if members are to be brought to greater understanding of Scripture and to spiritual maturity. Hebrews 5:11 to 6:3 comes to mind.

Question five asked respondents whether they preferred music in church that was "classical Lutheran hymns," "a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs," or "up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs." The clear winner was "a blend of hymns and spiritual songs." 75% of leaders and 76% of members checked this response. Members were slightly more likely to check "classic hymns" than leaders (19.7% to 16.7%); and leaders were more likely to opt for the spiritual songs (8.3% to 4.3%). Though there may be an inclination for people to choose the middle-of-the-road response when there are three choices, the statistics seem to confirm that so-called "blended worship" is a clear preference. In none of the five congregations polled are people likely to experience real blended worship. While definitions are imprecise without actual examples, the data indicates that worship leaders should consider either incorporating more blended worship into their church's schedule or offer convincing arguments for the style of worship in use presently.

Why do people join a church? Responses to question six would seem to suggest a gap between long-time church members and the unchurched who are considering a church, at least if the literature about the unchurched is right. Six possible responses were offered to complete the sentence "What people want most to get out of membership in a church is. . ." By far the most common choice, and with little difference between leaders and members (57% leaders, 59% members), was "growing in their understanding of God and his Word." That response establishes that active members see the primary purpose of church membership as "vertical" rather than "horizontal." The option "close Christian friends" was selected by only 4% of leaders and 6.4% of members. "An opportunity to develop and use their spiritual gifts in serving" attracted only 6% of leaders' responses and 7% of members'. Greater disparity between leaders and members was apparent in the remaining responses. 18.4% of leaders answered "an inspiring experience of worship," while only 10.6% of members checked this. It may be that leaders who agonize over dwindling attendance have judged that the emotional or experiential quality of worship is the primary reason people have stopped coming, while active members have commitments that are deeper than this. That 9.5% of members and only 2% of leaders checked "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs" suggests some need for a "reality check" on the part of leaders. The relational dimension of the church's ministry and the relationship of a pastor and his members -- the primary subject of complaint in many congregations -- is far more important than leaders may realize. Leaders were more likely than members to check "help to develop Christian

character and overcome weaknesses," by 12.2% to 7.9%. To reiterate, the Christian's relationship with his God is by far the most important reason for membership to active church members, while Christian community and personal growth and service are considerably less significant. It seems likely that members are reflecting the priority established by the pastor and by the emphases of the church.

Question seven asked people to rank "the top three issues this church needs to address." When the responses are reverse-weighted and tabulated, a remarkable consistency between leaders and members appears. Both ranked "building people up in spiritual maturity" first, "teaching our children" second, and "retaining our teens and young adults" fourth. Interestingly, members ranked "evangelism to the lost" number three, while leaders placed this only fifth. In turn, leaders rated "getting more members involved in fellowship and service" third; members ranked this fifth. Do members see the Great Commission more clearly than leaders do? Are leaders too caught up in trying to staff programs and successfully involve members? The data doesn't justify conclusions, but it does raise the concern that leaders do not sufficiently prioritize evangelism. Declining membership and low conversion statistics in too many churches would seem to validate this conclusion. The rankings clearly place "nurture" over "outreach."

The remainder of the priority list in question seven continues to demonstrate close parallels between leaders and members. While members placed "regaining members who've drifted away" sixth, leaders ranked this seventh. Leaders placed "solving our financial problems" sixth, while members ranked this seventh. Both put "enhancing our worship" at number eight, "counseling and comforting the hurting" ninth, and "caring for the sick and elderly" last. Blending the needs of the present with the priorities of the church is a significant challenge. Leaders and members seem to be on the same page in meeting that challenge, with the somewhat glaring exception of evangelism.

A great deal has been written about pastoral leadership recently. Question eight verifies that spiritual leadership is the number one quality people are looking for in their pastor. When asked what "I think the pastor's role should be, primarily," 77% of leaders and 70% of members chose "strong spiritual leader" above three other options. Another 21% of leaders selected "motivating equipper for Christian life," while 16% of members chose this option. No leaders and only 4.8% of members chose "compassionate Christian counselor;" and only 2% of leaders and 9% of members checked "wise Bible teacher." Clearly, both groups and especially elected leaders opted for strength and charisma over wisdom and caring. What may be surprising is the degree to which this is true. Earlier both leaders and members made "growing in their understanding of God and his Word" a significantly clear choice in what people want to get out of church membership, so it might be expected that "wise Bible teacher" would rate higher in evaluating the pastor's role. The emphasis on a pastor's people skills that shows up in interviews with members would suggest a higher ranking for "compassionate Christian counselor." Perhaps the large number of plateaued or declining congregations and the challenge of a culture no longer supportive of the church's values have made spiritual leadership so important to people today that they quickly selected "strong spiritual leader" as their primary qualification in a pastor.

Question nine was one attempt to determine how Christians measure a church's ministry. Two of seven choices stood out in completing the statement, "I think a good church member is best described as. . ." 50% of leaders and 34.4% of members selected "a moral example of Christian love." 29.2% of leaders and 33.9% of members answered, "a committed Christian witness in the community." Four of seven pastors also chose "a committed Christian witness." While 14.8% of members gave the answer, "an eager participant in worship every Sunday," only 6.3% of leaders chose this answer. Two of the seven pastors chose worship attendance as their answer. "An avid student of the Bible was the choice of 12.5% of leaders, 10% of members and the remaining one pastor. No leaders chose "a willing volunteer" or "a generous giver." Only 2% of leaders selected "a strong leader who stand up for what's right." Members ignored these three responses largely also. Question nine reinforces an earlier observation that members rank evangelism higher than elected leaders; and though the sampling of pastors is too small to draw meaningful conclusions, pastors see personal witness as the best functional measure of a church's ministry. How Christians live their life outside the church rather than what they do in the church is, by far, how leaders and members evaluate the outcome of ministry. And yet, observation suggests that few churches, by program or preaching, demonstrate the same emphasis. Churches tend to be more "institutional" than their members. The dominant response of leaders reinforces Jesus' words in John 13:34 and John 15:9-16 about the importance of brotherly love and obedience.

Leaders in many churches agonize over their inability to involve more volunteers in the church's work. Question ten provided four options to complete the statement, "When people volunteer, most would prefer. . ." Again, leaders and members aren't on the same page. The choice of 53% of the leaders was "a physical task that they can complete with a sense of satisfaction," with "an opportunity to help another human being" a distant second at 26.5%. Members made the opportunity to help others their first choice at 39.6%, with physical tasks second at 37.4%. Four out of seven pastors chose "an opportunity to help another human being." Only 8.2% of leaders and 5.9% of members selected "a position of leadership that can make things happen." 12.2% of leaders and 17% of members answered, "a role on a committee that gets things done." Members (and pastors) tend to see Christian service in relational, rather than institutional terms to a greater degree than leaders apparently; and that may suggest one answer to leaders' quest for more involvement. While many congregations fret over the inability to fill roles on boards and committees, both leaders and members indicate that this isn't what most people want to do. Leaders apparently value property maintenance more highly than members do, too highly it would appear. This portion of the survey seems to reinforce the notion that leaders are more institutionally oriented than members in their understanding of the church's ministry.

Five different issues were put before respondents in question eleven, each to evaluate the response of leaders and members to issues that literature on church growth and church culture raise.

To the statement, "Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship," leaders responded significantly more positively than members. 25% of leaders

marked "Strongly Agree" and another 41.7% "Agree," while among members the statistics were 17.7% "Strongly Agree" and 35.5% "Agree." If it is true that a staffed nursery shows up on surveys among the unchurched as one of the top three things they're looking for, 2/3 of elected leaders have gotten the message but only half of the members.

There is little difference between leaders and members in their response to the statement: "The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence." Only a quarter of those responding disagree, with no leaders and only 3.5% of members marking "Strongly Disagree." It will be interesting to measure generational differences in response to this question. Because the nature of this question did not give any alternative, such as "joyful experience," it isn't possible to evaluate comparatively. However, the strong positive response to "quiet reverence" does seem to paint one picture of "church culture."

Some observers of the church have suggested that the "unified budget" of the seventies, which emphasized trust in church leaders and homogeneity in church thinking, has been supplanted by the contemporary desire for personal choice in matters of giving and a diminished trust in leaders. Responses from the five churches surveyed disagree. To the statement, "Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters," 21.4% of leaders marked "Strongly Agree" and 50% marked "Agree." That was a bit higher than members' responses: 13.9% "Strongly Agree" and 52.4% "Agree." One might expect a bigger gap, with leaders seeing the value of a unified budget in their efforts to balance the budget. Apparently, active church members in these five churches still have a high level of loyalty to the church and a willingness to trust the "system."

Any number of church consultants have suggested that a significant issue in any congregation's ability to reach new people and retain members drifting toward the margins is a willingness of long-term and at-the-core members to stretch their "comfort zone." Some 3/4 of both leaders and members agreed in responding to the statement, "Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church." One might have expected that leaders would more clearly than members see the need for flexibility. However, 5% of leaders and only 1.7% of members marked "Strongly Disagree" at this statement. While the difference isn't large, it reinforces the suspicion that leaders may be too invested in the status quo to BE the leaders that can help turn around declining churches.

Church Growth literature of the eighties pointed out that churches needed more fellowship or "face-to-face" groups in order to involve members meaningfully. So-called "church health" literature of the nineties emphasizes the need for more service role matched to the gifts and interests of members. When leaders and the core of active members see an expanded infra-structure as merely greater demands on their time, new roles and events or groups are not easily initiated. Leaders have largely gotten the message, and members are coming to the same viewpoint, in the five congregations surveyed. To the statement, "The average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered," 9.3% of elected leaders responded "Strongly Agree" and 55.8% marked "Agree," for a total of nearly 2/3

positive responses. 10% of members checked "Strongly Agree" and another 44.7% "Agree." While 5% of members indicated "Strongly Disagree," no leaders checked this option.

Question twelve was an attempt to determine how people in the church measure the results of the church's ministry. While the question did not try to mirror question nine, respondents did not apparently measure the effectiveness of their church in the same way that they evaluated a good church member. Six options were offered to complete the statement, "In my estimation an effective church is best defined by. . ." Answers were divided rather evenly by both leaders and members. There was a tie for the top choice of leaders between "a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer service" and "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community" at 22.4%. (Recall that "a willing volunteer" received no votes from leaders in describing a good church member, and "a committed Christian witness" was a distant second in their description of a good church member.) Only 9.2% of members chose involvement in leadership and service, and 12.5% chose growth through aggressive evangelism. In contrast, 25% of members selected "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study" as the best measure of an effective church. This was the third choice of leaders at 18.4%. Three of seven pastors chose "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study," and two selected "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism." Again, leaders seem to value the health of the institution more highly, while members (and pastors) value individual spiritual health more highly. While not surprising, this conclusion won't please those who believe that only spiritually healthy members can create a healthy congregation. Do members see the importance of Bible study more clearly than leaders?

Among members, there was virtually a three-way tie for second place in defining an effective church. "A reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry" received 17.9% of the responses (12.2% among leaders), as did "remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people" (16.3% among leaders). Recall that 50% of leaders and 34.4% of members answered "a moral example of Christian love" when describing a good church member in question nine. There is considerably more congruence in the response of members than in the responses of leaders. The third item virtually tied for second among members (with 17.4% of responses) was "a high percentage of members attending worship each week." Surprisingly, this was dead last, with only 8.1% of responses, among leaders. Why leaders do not value worship attendance more highly as a measure of their church's effectiveness, especially since this is the most frequently quantified measure, is a bit mystifying. This does suggest that leaders have probably not prioritized efforts to increase worship attendance; and that may be one reason that there has been a general decline in percentage of members attending each week, over the past two decades.

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Survey, Part Two: A Comparison of Responses by Age Cohorts

When respondents expressed their opinion about how people learn best (question 1,B), a generational pattern emerged. Only 6% of those age 18-35 marked "by hearing," while 10% of those 36-50 and 24% of those over 50 did so. In contrast, 63% of those in the youngest cohort answered "by doing," while 42% of the middle age cohort and only 32% of the oldest cohort chose this response. (In both the middle-age and oldest group, "by seeing" scored highest.) It would appear that auditory-only styles of communicating have diminishing effect as the audience gets younger. It would also appear that active learning styles will better engage a younger audience. Perhaps this explains why, when a pastor uses break-out discussion methods in a Bible class, older members tend to resist and younger members tend to embrace the experience.

Responses to the question regarding change in the church (question 2,A) demonstrated that the youngest cohort is most likely to think that the majority in their church "believe things need to be done differently" (24% compared to 22% of those 35-50 and 17% of those over 50). Young adults also appear a bit cynical in evaluating their church's response to change. 37% said that most people in their congregation "would prefer that everything stayed the same." In contrast, 26% of those 35-50 and 30% of those over 50 marked this response. Because the question asked for an estimation of majority opinion rather than personal opinion, it isn't possible to isolate a generational outlook on change accurately. It seems likely that the youngest cohort, a statistical minority, is expressing some frustration at the status quo, however.

Part B of question 2 indicates that those age 35-50 are the most inclined to feel that members are pessimistic about the church's future (47%), with those 18-35 close behind (42%). Only 25% of those over 50 concurred. The youngest cohort most often chose the response "are optimistic about the church's future" (37%), compared to 27% for the middle age cohort and 32% for the oldest. Whether older members are simply more inclined to choose the middle of three choices or have been tempered by time, 43% selected the response "realistic." Only 27% of the middle group and 21% of the youngest group did so. Again, the question asks for an opinion about "most people in this congregation." Whether members were offering their own attitude or their sense of the congregation's mood, the responses of those under 50 are a reason for concern.

While the differences aren't dramatic, the youngest age cohort tended to view sermons a bit differently from the other two. 14% said that sermons should, primarily, "make sense out of life," while only 6% of the middle age group and 4% of the oldest chose this response. The oldest and youngest age cohorts were more likely to choose "teach new insights from the Bible" than the middle age group (33% oldest, 32% youngest, 26% middle). While the response "reinforce basic Christian truths" was the dominant choice for all three groups, the fact that only 54% of the youngest age cohort (compare to 68% of the middle and 64% of the oldest) chose this response suggests that reaching and retaining young adults with preaching will require greater depth and more life application. This would seem to reinforce generational studies, but at the same time suggest that generational differences are moderated when active church members are polled.

It might surprise some people that there is little difference among generations in their preference regarding music in the church. The youngest cohort was least likely to favor "classical Lutheran hymns" (14% to 19% of those 35-50 and 20% for those over 50). However, "a blend of classic hymns and easy-to-sing spiritual songs" was the clear choice of all three age groups. 81% of the youngest and 78% of the oldest members chose this response (75% of the middle age group). There was little enthusiasm for "up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs" as the sole musical fare of worship. Only 6% of the Baby Boom generation chose this response, 5% of Generation X and 2% of the Builder and Silent generations. The survey doesn't provide a basis for speculation about the preference of people who are not active members, but one might hypothesize that frequent worship together over-rides generational differences in the way that people view music in the church.

Question six, "What people want most to get out of membership in the church," did not demonstrate huge distinctions among the generations. However, the relational answers were more likely to be selected by the youngest age cohort, while inspiration and character development were more likely to be the choice of the middle age cohort. "Close Christian friends" and "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs" gathered a combined 24% of the responses from those age 18 to 35, compared to a combined 10% of 36 to 50 year-olds and 17% of those over 50. "An inspiring experience of worship" and "Help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses" received a combined 26% of responses from the middle age cohort, compared to 16% of the youngest and 15% of the oldest. Once more, the data confirms generational expectations, but not by large margins. "Growing in their understanding of God and his Word" was the clear favorite for all age groups, but especially the oldest (67% to 58% for the middle group and 54% for the youngest).

While each age group indicated their preference of "strong spiritual leader" for the pastor's role, the level of support for this response dropped incrementally as respondents became younger. 80% of the oldest age cohort chose this response, 73.5% of the middle age cohort and 65% of the youngest. "Compassionate Christian counselor" drew only a 1% response from the middle age group, 5% of the oldest and 8% of the youngest. This seems to confirm that the youngest members are more relational in their outlook, followed by the oldest. 14% of the youngest chose "wise Bible teacher," compared with 5% of the middle age group and 4% of the oldest. Does this confirm a greater interest in spiritual depth among the youngest members? 20.5% of the middle age group marked "motivating equipper for Christian life," compared with 14% of the youngest and 11% of the oldest age group. Recall the responses to inspiration and character development in question six. There is a fair degree of consistency in the responses of the age groups.

When asked what best described a good church member, the three generations responded with a significant degree of difference. 51% of those over 50 chose "a moral example of Christian love" (29% of those 35-50 and 25% of those 18-35 chose this response). The primary choice of both the middle age group (41%) and the youngest age group (36%) was "a committed Christian witness in the community." (Only 20% of the oldest age cohort chose this response.) The statistics support the hypothesis that in conservative Lutheran churches, younger members are

inclined to push for more community involvement while older members tend not to see this as important. The oldest age group was more likely to value "going to church" than younger members, as generational theory would expect. However, the youngest age group supported this "loyalty" response to a greater degree than would be expected. 19% of those over 50 chose "an eager participant in worship every Sunday" as the best description of a good church member, compared to 10% of those between 35 and 50 and 14% of those under 35. The youngest age group chose "an avid student of the Bible" most often, 17% compare to 14.5% for the middle age group and only 6% of the oldest. One might speculate that the relatively recent emphasis on adult Bible study in many churches has more "inertia" or "behavior pattern" to overcome the older a church member is.

The literature suggests that Generation X is more likely to volunteer for a role in helping another person, less likely to commit to the organizational structure, than previous generations in the church. This relational theme of young adults is borne out by the responses to question ten, though not by a huge margin. 41% of young adults said that people would prefer "an opportunity to help another human being," while 34% of middle-aged adults and 38% of those over 50 chose this response. Another theme confirmed is that the oldest and youngest age cohorts are more alike than either of them is like the middle age cohort. Four options were available to complete the statement: "When people volunteer, most would prefer. . ." 18.5% of the oldest age group, 14.5% of the middle group and only 8% of the youngest chose "a role on a committee that gets things done." While three of the oldest members polled answered "a position of leadership that can make things happen," only one in each of the other two age cohorts chose this response. In each age group the response most often chosen was "a physical task that they can complete with a sense of satisfaction." 51% of those 35 to 50 chose this response, 49% of those 18 to 35 and 39.5% of those over 50. The surprise here is that it is often assumed that it is the Builder and Silent generation that is willing to assemble newsletters and paint rooms at the church, to a much greater degree than the next two generations. That the question asks members to evaluate "people's" preference rather than their own may have an impact on the percentages; but it is also probable that active members are more like each other across generational lines than are less active or inactive church members.

Question eleven of the survey might anticipate considerable difference in generational perspective. The literature suggests that young couples (at least those unchurched) are looking for a staffed nursery in any church they would consider. The surprise in the survey was that the youngest age cohort was more likely than the other two to *disagree* with the statement: "Churches should have a quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship." 46% of those 18-35 marked "Disagree," and another 16% "Strongly Disagree." Just as surprising, the oldest age cohort was least likely to disagree with this statement: 30% "Disagree" and 13% "Strongly Disagree." (Among those 35 to 50 the statistics were: 37% "Disagree" and 11% "Strongly Disagree.") Looking at the data from the other side, 22% of those over 50 marked "Strongly Agree," while 19% of those 35 to 50 and only 11% of those under 35 chose this response. One of two hypotheses might explain this surprise. The first is that active church members aged 18 to 35 are considerably different from their unchurched or marginally active

peers, more like their grandparents in the church. The other is that Generation X is more conservative, more inclined than the previous generation to want one parent to stay at home with their young children. This generation has also read more negative stories about child care.

Preferences in worship atmosphere among the three age groups seemed to follow assumptions. To the statement, "The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence," 48% of those 18 to 35 chose a negative response. In comparison, only 8% of the oldest age group and 33% of the middle age group chose a negative response. The statistically wide gap between older members and younger members in assessing the "mood" of worship suggests a need for more study. It may be that older members have retained a perspective that they were once taught, while younger members were not taught this. It may be that in the balance between the transcendence and immanence of God, culture shifts have influenced generations in the church. Whatever the explanation, the mood created by lighting, sound, the style of leading worship and the demeanor of worshipers will be perceived differently by older and younger members.

Generational literature would lead one to expect that younger adults are less likely to trust the institution and its leaders than older adults. This was borne out in responses to the statement: "Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters." 75% of the oldest age cohort chose an affirmative response, 72% of those 35 to 50, but only 48% of the youngest age cohort. Younger members, apparently, want the freedom to determine where their offerings go.

The final survey question provided six options to define what is an effective church. As earlier responses would lead one to expect, the youngest age group chose above all others "remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people." The 27% response to this choice among the youngest cohort compares to 12% for the middle age group and 22% among the oldest members. That 22% represented a tie for first place among the oldest respondents with "a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry." (15.5% of the middle age group and 11% of the youngest chose "reputation.") These percentages could be seen as verifying the premise that the Builder and Silent generations care a great deal more about appearances, image or reputation than does Generation X. Not surprisingly, a close second for those over 50, at 21%, was "a high percentage of members attending worship each week." This "loyalty" choice was dead last among those under 35. That the youngest age group's second choice -- with 22% of the responses -- was "a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer service" matches the interest in serving people that characterizes Generation X. This response was dead last for the other two age groups. By far the primary choice of those age 35 to 50, with 29%, was "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study." This isn't really consistent with the middle age group's response to question nine, although some might see this as corresponding to the spiritual quest of the Baby Boomers. "Growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community" was, at 19%, the second choice of the middle age group. If "success" characterizes the goals of Baby Boomers, this response would be expected. 16% of those under 35 and only 10% of those over 50 chose this response.

An Analysis of Surveys by Congregation

CONGREGATION "A"

This congregation has experienced internal conflict and statistical decline. Will the survey responses reflect the situation? Note that there were 60 member responses from congregation "A," nearly one-third of the total member responses from all congregations. This means that where there is deviation from the norm, that deviation is actually larger than would be the case if this congregation's responses were removed from the norming total.

Part One of the survey suggests that the members of this congregation are not as theologically well grounded as the other churches. Questions two and three, statements about salvation only in Jesus Christ and about original sin, demonstrated less certainty in this congregation than in the composite of congregations. 12% fewer marked "Strongly Agree" in question two, 11% in question three. Question four looks for a clear distinction between law and gospel. Wrong responses from congregation "A" were 8% higher than the norm. Question nine expresses pluralistic universalism and was recognized as wrong by 82.2% of respondents overall. In congregation "A" only 75% of those responding recognized the statement as wrong.

In Part Two, question one, members of congregation "A" viewed the unchurched in their community somewhat differently than did others. While 70% overall checked "are trying to figure out how to make their life work," only 57% checked this response in congregation "A." "Are concerned about truth and values" and "are looking for a good time" split the deviating responses. Members in congregation "A" were twice as likely to believe that unchurched people "learn best by hearing." One might conclude that this congregation is less sensitive to the unchurched in the community, more inward turned, than the norm.

In question two this congregation's members were significantly more likely to indicate that "most people in this congregation. . . believe things need to be done differently," 27% to the norm of 17.8%. And members of congregation "A" were more pessimistic about the church's future, 39% of respondents to 27.3% in the composite. Again, because this congregation represents nearly one-third of responses, the deviation is actually greater. One could read trouble in this congregation simply by taking its "temperature" with these responses.

In question four, only 2% of the members of this congregation believed a sermon should "make sense out of life," whereas 9% marked this response in the composite of congregations. In question five, 23% preferred classical Lutheran hymns, compared to 19.7% in the composite. In question eleven, members of this congregation were more inclined to reject a "quality staffed nursery for infants and toddlers during worship," 59% to the composite of 46.8%. These responses reinforce the hypothesis that this congregation is more inward turned, less sensitive to its mission field, than the other churches surveyed.

That hypothesis and the sense of hurt this congregation is experiencing seems reflected in responses to question seven. While "teaching our children" was, overall, the second choice when

members identified the top three issues their church needed to address, congregation "A" made teaching their children number one. (That they are trying to hang onto a rapidly declining Christian elementary school explains this.) "Counseling and comforting the hurting" ranked ninth overall, but seventh (and almost sixth) in congregation "A."

Question twelve asked for the best definition of an effective church. This congregation made "a high percentage of members attending worship each week" its top choice, whereas this response ranked fourth overall. Ranking second in this congregation was "remarkable harmony among members and loving care for people" with 22% of the vote, compared to 17.9% overall. This data is not surprising in a church that is losing members and experiencing conflict. Conversely, "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community" (8% compared to the norm of 12.5%) and "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study" (18% to the norm of 25%) ranked lower. It is ironic that the very things that can lift a congregation out of its depressed mood and conflicted climate, spiritual growth and evangelism in the community, are not high on the list of things members prize.

Because only three elected leaders completed surveys in this congregation -- and that, together with the fact that the pastor did not complete a survey, may be an indicator of ill health -- comparing their responses to the responses of members risks speculation. That one of the three leaders missed the Part One questions on original sin and the distinction between law and gospel skews statistics. That one of the three marked "Strongly Agree" to the statement "I don't think any church is much help when it comes to dealing with daily life" suggests frustration. A sampling of three is inadequate, however, for drawing any conclusions.

Two of the three elected leaders marked "are looking for a good time" when evaluating unchurched people. That 67% compares to 17% in the composite of all elected leaders surveyed. Not surprisingly, the elected leaders ranked evangelism fourth among issues to address, while members and leaders in other churches ranked evangelism third. None of the three chose "committed Christian witness in the community" as the best description of a "good church member," though this was the second among seven choices for elected leaders as a whole. It would take much more study to verify the conclusion that in troubled churches, the leaders are more inward turned even than members. Clearly, however, in this congregation the leadership has something less than a clear sense of mission.

CONGREGATION "B"

71% of the members who responded checked that people in their community learned best by doing (compared to the composite figure of 41.3%). 76.5% felt that most people in the congregation "appreciate some change" (compared to the composite of 50.3%). 40% believed that most members were optimistic about the future of the church (31.1% composite), and only 7% marked "pessimistic about the church's future" (27.3% composite). 17% thought that a sermon should, primarily, "make sense out of life" (9% composite of members); and 44% checked "teach new insights from the Bible" (32.3% composite). The picture painted by this data is of an

active, optimistic, aggressive congregation that seems more sensitive and adaptable to the community it hopes to reach with the gospel than is the norm. Members appear less rooted to "the way we've always done things."

That hypothesis is reinforced by responses to questions ten and eleven. The question regarding a staffed nursery during worship demonstrated the following: 33% of the members in congregation "B" marked "Strongly Agree" (17.7% in the composite of members), and 56% marked "Agree" (35.5% in the composite). The markedly stronger support for a staffed nursery would seem to reflect a greater understanding of and openness to unchurched young families. Where 37.4% of members overall said that most people would prefer to volunteer for a physical task, only one member of congregation "B" marked this response. 50% of the responses in congregation "B" were "an opportunity to help another human being" (compared to a 39.6% composite response). 28% said, "a role on a committee that gets things done" (17% norm); and 17% said, "a position of leadership that can make things happen" (5.9% norm). This church not only seems to better understand the nature of volunteers today, but members seem more willing to get involved in the planning and leadership that will make things happen.

In question six, members of congregation "B" were much more likely to choose "an inspiring experience of worship" as what people most want to get out of church membership than were members of other churches (28% to 10.6%). In question seven, "retaining our teens and young adults" tied for the number one "issue this church needs to address" (this response was #4 in the composite of member responses). Close behind was "getting more members involved in fellowship and service" (this response was #5 in the composite). Once more, the data suggests a church that understands the audience it hopes to reach and a church that intends to expand the corps of workers which will reach that audience. This congregation is more aware than others of the "demographic hole" caused by the absence of young adults in most churches.

Leaders in this congregation were even more optimistic and mission-minded than the members. Four of the five checked "optimistic about the church's future, compared to a two in five among members. Two of the five thought that people in the community who don't go to church "are concerned about truth and values" (none of the members did), an indication that the leaders believe that what their church has to offer matches what others are looking for. (The other three chose "are trying to figure out how to make their life work.") In question seven, evangelism tied for second (with "teaching our children") among issues the church needs to address (members ranked this fourth). In question nine, all five leaders chose "a committed Christian witness in the community" as the best description of a good church member. (One third of the members chose this response. 29% of elected leaders from all five congregations chose this response.) Four of the five leaders marked "Strongly Agree" and the other "Agree" in response to the statement about a staffed nursery during worship.

Both pastors, one middle-aged and the other semi-retired, completed surveys. Their responses differed more often than agreed in Part Two, reflective of their different generations and experiences.

<u>CONGREGATION "C"</u>

Part One, the doctrinal portion of the survey, showed slightly less discernment among the members of congregation "C" in comparison with the composite of members from five churches. 35% responded positively to the statement that a person can be a good Christian even if they don't attend church, in contrast with 27.6% in the composite of members. 21% checked a positive response to the statement that most religions in the world lead to the same God, while only 14.8% of members overall selected a positive response to this statement. That there are few college graduates among the members of this congregation might explain this slightly less discerning response. The stable nature of the church and community might mean that members don't like to think badly about friends and relatives who've stopped coming to church.

Members of congregation "C" were more likely to view the unchurched as merely "looking for a good time" (32% to the 22.9% composite figure). Evangelism ranked only fifth among issues the church needs to address, compared to the composite ranking of third. 83% of the members of this church responded negatively to the idea of a staffed nursery during worship. Perhaps it is not surprising that a small town or rural church would demonstrate less sensitivity to the unchurched and less interest in reaching them. The congregation views its mission field as a nearby town of some 5,000 that is growing in population, but would like new members to be pretty much like the present members.

This first-hand observation is backed by a few more responses in Part Two of the survey. 39% of the members responding said that most people in the congregation "would prefer that everything stayed the same," compared to the composite figure of 31.9%. Similarly, only 4% in this church indicated that "things need to be done differently," in contrast to the 17.8% figure from the composite of members. In this church people were more likely to see the future with a middle-of-the-road response. 54% said people were "realistic about the church's future," compared with 41.5% among all members surveyed. Only 17% checked "pessimistic," in contrast with a 27.3% response to "pessimistic" across all five congregations. To the statement, "Members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church," 31% of the people at congregation "C" responded negatively (the norm was 23.7%). 70% responded negatively to the statement, "The average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered." (The norm was a 45% negative response, bumped up by the members of this congregation.)

One more survey response fills out the picture of a congregation quite content with the way things are and inclined more toward institutional preservation than relational outreach. 49% of the members marked "a physical task" as what most volunteers prefer, only 26% "an opportunity to help another human being." (For comparison, the composite figure was 37.4% "task" and 39.6% "help another human being.")

For the most part leaders and members responded similarly to the doctrinal statements of Part

One. The one exception came in response to the statement, "God is satisfied if a person lived the best life he or she can." Two of the fourteen leaders marked "Strongly Agree," while none of the members did. The 21% positive response to this statement among leaders was higher than the 10% of members. In several questions of direct Christian doctrine, such as the Trinity and original sin, the leaders of this congregation were less likely to check "Strongly Agree" than were the leaders of other churches. In fact, while total positive responses were similar, leaders of congregation "C" were 16% less likely to mark "Strongly Agree." One concern of the pastor in this congregation is the relatively low number of elected leaders who attend the Sunday Bible class.

In several questions the leaders of this church were even more likely than the members to mark responses that are counter to aggressive outreach. For example, 38% felt that the unchurched were "looking for a good time," compared to the composite figure for leaders of 17%. 93% responded negatively to a staffed nursery, compared to 33.4% of all elected leaders. (And the gap would be more pronounced if this congregation's responses were removed from the composite.) Only 21% of the leaders chose "a committed Christian witness in the community" as the best description of a good church member, while 37% of the members and 29.2% of all elected leaders chose this option. Leaders and members of this congregation saw the issues that need to be addressed in remarkably similar terms, which included a number five ranking for evangelism.

Leaders seem more likely to resist change than the members of this congregation as well. 29% preferred "classical Lutheran hymns," in contrast with 23% of the members and only 16.7% of elected leaders across all five congregations. 78% gave a positive response to the statement, "Members should give their offerings to a unified budget determined by the voters." Only 66% of the members responded to this statement positively, 71.4% of all elected leaders. 57% of the leaders felt that volunteers wanted a physical task to complete, compared to 49% of the members.

In keeping with the trend that leaders are more pessimistic than members, 43% of the leaders and only 17% of the members checked "pessimistic about the church's future." Only 7% of the leaders marked "optimistic," while 28% of the members did so.

Two other significant gaps between leaders and members appeared. 21% of the leaders felt that "an inspiring experience of worship" was what most people want to get out of church membership, while only 4% of the members chose this response. 64% of the leaders believed that the best description of a good church member was "a moral example of Christian love," while only 33% of the members chose this response.

CONGREGATION "D"

41 members and 22 elected leaders completed surveys. There were more young adults and teens completing the survey in this congregation than in the other four. The two pastors, one who just arrived and the other who has served this church for nearly 20 years, gave differing responses

on many of the questions in Part Two. While the longer tenured pastor is a bit older than the pastor who just arrived, the response differences seem more reflective of differences in ability to respond to change than simply generational perspective. And the older pastor seems to reflect the wear of persisting frustration.

Members of this congregation are culturally aware. 88% indicated that they think most unchurched people in the community "are trying to figure out how to make their life work." (70% of members across the five churches chose this response.) 59% said that people in the community learn best by "seeing," compared to 43% of all members. 15% said that a sermon should "make sense out of life" primarily, while only 9% of members chose this response across the five churches. 20% felt that what people most want to get out of church membership is "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs." (Only 9.5% of members chose this response in the composite of members surveys.) 68% responded positively to a staffed nursery (compared to 53% for all members). 41% responded negatively to the statement that "The atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence," compared to 28.5% in the composite of members. Similarly, the members of congregation "D" were 7.3% more likely to respond negatively toward giving to a unified budget.

The members of this congregation place a high value on involvement. "Getting more members involved in fellowship and service" ranked second among issues the church needs to address, compared with a ranking of fifth in the composite of five churches' members. 71% of the members responded positively to the statement that "the average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered. (The norm was 54.7%.) In question twelve, 18% indicated that the best definition of an effective church is "a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer service," compared to a 9% response to this option among members overall.

The tension in the congregation at present is, no doubt, reflected in the fact that 53% of the members indicated that they were "pessimistic about the church's future," virtually twice the percentage across the membership of five churches. And 24% said that most people in the church "believe things need to be done differently," in contrast with a composite figure of 17.8%. While the congregation's situation may explain responses that differ significantly from the norm, it is also likely that the higher number of teens and young adults completing the survey had an effect.

Leaders in this congregation are less theologically discerning than members. To the fourth question in Part One on Law and Gospel, 18% of the leaders strongly agreed with the wrong statement and 23% agreed. Only 8% of members marked "Strongly Agree" and 16% "Agree." To question nine's universalistic statement, 9% of elected leaders gave a positive response compared to only 2% of members. And 18% of the leaders strongly agreed with question ten's subjective statement about right and wrong, compared with only 10% of the members. This is another congregation with too few of its leaders in Bible study.

In Part Two of the survey there were a number of significant differences between leaders' responses and those of members. Leaders are more pessimistic about the church's future, with 68% choosing this option among three, compared to 53% of members. Members are quite a bit more relational than leaders in their view of the church. 20% of the members said that what people most want to get out of church membership is "the ministry of a caring pastor to their situation and needs." None of the 22 elected leaders chose this option. The top choice of members when asked what volunteers prefer was "an opportunity to help another human being," while the top choice of leaders was "a physical task they can complete with a sense of satisfaction." The number one choice of members in describing a good church member was "a committed Christian witness" at 39%; only 27% of leaders chose this option.

Leaders are more open to change than members generally. 36% of members felt that the majority of the congregation would prefer that everything stay the same, only 27% of leaders. 14% of the leaders preferred "up-beat and easy-to-sing spiritual songs as their music preference, only 4% "classical Lutheran hymns." In contrast, only 7% of the members preferred spiritual songs as their number one choice, while 16% preferred hymns. (For both the clear winner was a blend of the two.) 86% of the leaders responded affirmatively to the statement that "members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church," while 77% of the members chose positive responses. 22% of the leaders said that what people want most to get out of church membership is "help to develop Christian character and overcome weaknesses;" only 4% of members chose this option. 94% of the leaders agreed that churches should have a staffed nursery during worship; 68% of members agreed.

Involvement is, not surprisingly, a major concern of leaders. "Getting more members involved in fellowship and service" was their number one issue needing to be addressed. Members also rated this highly, at number two. Leaders ranked the top definition of an effective church as "a high percentage of members involved in leadership and volunteer service," with 35% of the tally. Members ranked this number three, with an 18% response. 82% of leaders agreed that "the average church should have at least twice as many fellowship and service opportunities as are presently offered," while 71% of members concurred.

There is little congruence when leaders and members assess what defines an effective church. Members chose "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study" as the best definition, with a 31% response. Only 9% of the leaders chose this option. The second choice of members was "a reputation in the community for religious integrity and high quality ministry," at 24%. Again, only 9% of the leaders chose this option. In contrast, the number two choice of leaders, with 22% of the vote, was "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community. Only 7% of the members agreed. While leaders are preoccupied with the institutional concerns that dominate their meeting agendas, members are more focused on spiritual growth issues and relationships.

One final difference is in responses to question three, about what has primarily shaped people's outlook on the church. 52% of the leaders said, "my experience as an adult," only 21% of the

members. In contrast, the number one choice of members was "my experience as a child," with 29% of the tally. Only 13% of the elected leaders chose this option.

CONGREGATION "E"

21 members and 4 elected leaders completed surveys. The two pastors, though 20+ years apart in age, responded similarly to the survey, with slight differences reflecting their personalities. Both chose evangelism as the number one issue in need of attention.

This is a congregation that has a clear understanding of doctrine. To the statements in Part One regarding Jesus as the only way to heaven, original sin, stewardship and the Trinity, 90% marked "Strongly Agree" -- from 13% to 20% above the composite norm. One member got the statement about the Trinity wrong; but in the other cases those who didn't strongly agree marked "Agree." While 14.8% of members across five congregations missed the universalism in question nine, only one person or 5% did so in congregation "E." Whereas 6.5% agreed with the subjective statement of right and wrong in question ten, no one in congregation "E" did. And though 27.6% agreed that a person can be a good Christian without going to church in the composite data, only 10% of the members of congregation "E" did. The survey confirms what might be expected in this congregation, where excellence in adult Bible study is a hallmark and the room where the class is held is filled to capacity on Sunday morning.

This is a healthy church, flexible and optimistic, prioritizing evangelism. Only 5% felt that most people in the congregation "would prefer that everything stayed the same," in contrast with the member composite of 31.9%. 83% of the members indicated that most people in the church "are optimistic about the church's future" (the composite figure is 31.1%). Evangelism is the number one issue to address in this church, number three in the composite. Members ranked "growth in numbers as a result of aggressive evangelism in the community" a close second (at 25%) to "a high percentage of members involved in spiritual growth through Bible study" (29%) in defining an effective church. (Growth through evangelism ranked fifth, with only 12.5%, in the composite of congregations.) Only 4% (compared to the composite 46.8%) disagreed with the statement about a staffed nursery during worship. Only 8% (compared to 23.7%) disagreed with the statement that members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done at their church.

Because a significant number of members in this church joined as adult confirmands, it is not surprising that 41% indicated that their outlook on the church was shaped primarily by their experience as an adult. The composite shows only 28.4% selecting this option. That adult experience and the quality of their pastoral leadership probably explain why 81% thought the pastor's role should be, primarily, "strong spiritual leader." (The composite number is 70%.) Again, because this church in suburban Atlanta has a significant number of members who did not grow up in a Lutheran church, 87% preferred a blend of hymns and spiritual songs for worship (compared to 76% overall).

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Still, there are some indicators that members of this church respect tradition. 77% said that the sermon should, primarily, "reinforce basic Christian truths" -- significantly higher than the norm of 58.7%. 74% said that what people want most out of church membership is "growing in their understanding of God and his Word," significantly higher than the norm which was again 58.7%. Only 8% disagreed with the statement that "the atmosphere in worship should be characterized by quiet reverence," whereas 28.5% of the members across five congregations disagreed with this traditional position.

The leaders of this church, in every question of Part One except one, all chose the "strongly" response that affirmed Christian doctrine. One leader agreed that a person could be a good Christian without attending church.

Leaders and members were, for the most part, similar in their responses. They nearly paralleled each other in responding to the question about issues the church needs to address. The exceptions confirm what was true in the other churches, that elected leaders have a more "institutional" view of the church. 100% of the leaders thought volunteers would prefer a physical task they could complete, while 46% of the members marked "an opportunity to help another human being." While members' second choice in describing a good church member (at 29%) was "a committed Christian witness in the community," none of the leaders chose this option. Leaders all agreed that members should give their offerings to a unified budget; 29% of the members disagreed. 50% of the leaders, only 8% of the members, disagreed with the premise that members should never get too comfortable with the way things are done. And half of the leaders seemed content with the fellowship and service opportunities offered in their congregation, while 61% of the members believed there should be twice as many.

APPENDIX C

THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

WORKSHOP/ SEMINAR

OUR THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

SESSION ONE: <u>THINKING THROUGH OUR MINISTRY PRACTICE</u>

I. An Object Lesson to demonstrate different windows on reality

II. Practical Examples of Differing Ministry Practice:

A. Two WELS churches in a large urban setting, located a little more than a mile apart, have very different experiences of worship on Sunday. Both have existed for more than a century and worship in beautiful, old Gothic-style churches. Both have top-notch preaching and pastoral ministry. Both are growing significantly, especially with young adults. In one, the service is highly liturgical, with full vestments, procession, chant and beautiful music -- chiefly in the style of Bach, but with variations on the liturgical songs. In the other, the service has liturgical elements but is more informal, with greeting and clapping. The pastor may or may not preach from the pulpit. The music may be traditional or contemporary or "Gospel." <u>What explains the differences?</u>

B. Three WELS home missions on the East Coast began with radically different strategies. One followed the "normal" path of bringing together a nucleus of transplanted confessional Lutherans, organizing worship and educational programs, canvassing the community and searching for land on which to build. The second (in a New York City borough) rented space on a well-traveled street and hung out a "Christian Counseling" shingle. The space was also used for multiple worship experiences, small-group Bible studies and support groups. The third (in suburban Washington D.C.) rented space in a shopping mall and launched a Christian Child Care ministry, with worship on Sunday and adult Bible studies on weekday evenings in the same space. <u>What explains the differences?</u>

III. Biblical Examples of Differing Ministry Practice:

A. Read Acts 15:1-5.
    1. What created this tension in the early church's practice of ministry?

    2. When is "different" wrong? When does tradition become legalism?

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B. Read Acts 2:42-46.

        1. How did the early church in Jerusalem carry out ministry? What <u>core values</u> shaped this method of ministry? What <u>cultural forces</u> shaped this method of ministry?

        2. Peter's ministry changed dramatically (cf. Acts 9:32) shortly hereafter. Why? (Acts 8:1, 4-5, and 14)

        3. How did St. Paul's practice of ministry differ from Peter's? Why?

C. Read Romans 15:20, Romans 15:27 and I Corinthians 9:14-15.
        Describe unique characteristics of the Apostle Paul's "Philosophy of Ministry" from these passages.

IV. One Model for Outlining Ministry Practice:

THEOLOGY is _____

MISSION is _____

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY is _____

_____

VISION is _____

STRATEGY is _____

MINISTRY is _____

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY IS <u>WHY</u> WE DO <u>WHAT</u> WE DO <u>THE WAY</u> WE DO IT.

SESSION TWO: <u>DEFINING "PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY"</u>

I. Our Philosophy of Ministry is driven by ASSUMPTIONS about ministry.
>   For each of the following statements, decide whether you <u>agree</u> or <u>disagree</u>. (You may also want to answer the question, "Does this statement describe our church's practice of ministry.) If you disagree, explain why and offer a substitute statement.

A. Ministry is what the pastor does.

B. The biggest problem the church faces is meeting its budget.

C. Ownership of this congregation's ministry is expressed best by attending voters' meetings.

D. The church's ministry is most effective when its members are comfortable with the way things are done.

II. Our Philosophy of Ministry is driven also by our EXPERIENCE of ministry.
>   Think about the experiences and habits of the members of your church, and complete the sentences based on what experience has taught people.

A. Sunday morning at church is a _____ - hour experience.

B. Christian education means . . .

C. On Sunday morning, little children should be . . .

D. The atmosphere of worship should be . . .

III. A Philosophy of Ministry may be expressed in unchallenged "truisms" or unspoken value judgments, such as:

A. A church should never get bigger than what one pastor can handle.

B. Every worship service should include the Lord's Supper.

C. Children get confirmed when they are in eighth grade.

D. When people haven't been to communion for six months, they are delinquents.

IV. A Philosophy of Ministry reflects a church's PRIORITIES.

In groups of four-to-six, discuss the following <u>audiences</u> for ministry and <u>programs</u> of ministry. Debate which is the MOST IMPORTANT audience to address at this point in the history of your church, and arrive at a consensus priority you can report. Then debate which program of ministry should receive TOP PRIORITY in your church's allocation of resources today, and arrive a consensus choice to report. (Determine what <u>should be</u>, not what is. You cannot combine audiences or programs; you must decide on one.)

<u>AUDIENCES</u>	<u>PROGRAMS</u>
Teenagers	Reclaiming inactive members
Families	Worship
Children	Fellowship life
Seniors	School or Sunday School
Non-members	Stewardship
Young Adults	Missions abroad
Empty-nesters	Adult Spiritual Growth
People with special needs	Evangelism in the community
Men	Assimilation of (new) members
Women	Maintenance of our facilities

V. A Philosophy of Ministry is shaped by the church's culture.

A. Forces at work in the contemporary culture of our nation.

Discuss how each of the following cultural forces impacts the ministry of your church.

1. We are a <u>relational</u> culture today (not "confrontational").

2. We are a <u>spiritual</u> culture today (not "religious").

3. We are an <u>informational</u> culture today (visual and technological).

4. We are a <u>pluralistic</u> culture today (many "truths," many "ways").

5. We are a <u>subjective</u> and <u>pragmatic</u> culture today ("It works for me.").

B. Characteristics of our community's culture (e.g. historical factors, demographic issues, education and income levels, social problems, job-related issues, life-style concerns and recreational interests, political make-up, etc.) shape Philosophy of Ministry.

List 5 significant community factors that impact the way your church does ministry.

SESSION THREE: A **THEOLOGY** OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

I. There must be BIBLICAL Bases for our Ministerial Practice.

On the basis of each of the following passages, answer the question: *"How does God want us to carry out ministry?"*

A. II Timothy 1:13-14 and 7-8

B. Ephesians 4:11-13

C. Romans 12:4-8

D. Colossians 3:15-17

E. I Corinthians 9:22

II. There should be a LUTHERAN Emphasis in our Ministerial Practice.
Rather than let those outside the church or controversies within the church establish the emphases in our message and ministry, we will want to assure that the way we carry out our ministry reflects the emphases of our Lutheran theology. Discuss what that means for each of the following Lutheran themes:

A. Sola Gratia: by grace alone. . . the Lutheran emphasis on Objective Justification.

B. Sola Fide: through faith alone. . . Spirit-worked trust in Jesus, not works and not human reason or will, saves.

C. Sola Scriptura: on the basis of Scripture alone. . . all of the Bible and only the Bible is God's Word, the sole authority for doctrine and practice.

D. "Evangelical:" The Means of Grace alone converts; the Gospel renews and empowers people for Christian life and service. Freedom in the Gospel characterizes our ministry.

E. "Two Kingdoms:" God has established the Church to care for people's spiritual life with the "Sword of the Spirit" - the Word of God; and He has established the state to care for the physical well-being of people - peace, safety, economic and justice issues - with the physical sword of political power.

SUMMARY:

I. When a Church's Practice of Ministry. . .
  A. Is Not Aligned With Scripture,
    1. Christianity becomes either an academic "what we know" or an activistic "what we do" without the connection God makes between faith and life.

    2. Ministry tends to become reactive, institutional and negative.

    3. We accept in church members far less than God expects of Christian disciples.

  B. Is Not Intentionally Determined,
    1. People resist and criticize changes that make them uncomfortable.

    2. Competing agendas and diverse viewpoints get in the way of consensus and action.

    3. We may be ministering to an audience that no longer exists, in ways that no longer work.

II. Four Questions To Evaluate our Philosophy of Ministry:
  A. IS IT BIBLICAL (consistent with Scripture and Lutheran Theology)?

  B. IS IT RELEVANT (to our time and place, our ministry context)?

  C. DOES IT FULFILL THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

  D. DOES IT SERVE PEOPLE?

III. An Application Exercise

    Evaluate the following "Philosophy of Ministry" statements. Cross out any you disagree with. Add any you'd like to see. Pick the ONE that, in your mind, is most important.

    In groups, with others who've chosen the same "most important" statement, spend 20 minutes creating a list of things your church can do -- or do differently -- if you really practice the philosophy of ministry statement you've prioritized.

Sample Statements Of A Theology Of Ministerial Practice
Or Philosophy Of Ministry

1. Faithfulness *to* the Word of God and faithfulness *with* the Word of God will guide every program and decision of this congregation.

2. Involving members in systematic study of Scripture, especially our adult members, is the key to accomplishing this congregation's mission.

3. Strengthening Christian families is the first goal in our program of children's ministry.

4. Worship here will be guided by the twin criteria of *reverence* (focusing on God and his grace and emphasizing Word and Sacraments) and *relevance* (addressing issues of real life and involving people in ways they find meaningful).

5. We will involve people in the congregation's ministry primarily on the basis of their gifts and interests, rather than the church's needs.

6. Fellowship life will seek to connect Christians with one another in relationships and structures that foster authentic support and accountability.

7. Every program and group in this church will seek to engage unchurched people and/or encourage Christians in their personal witness.

8. Ministry to our at-risk members will be personal, persistent and -- as much as possible -- preemptive (seeking to prevent the issues and consequences of poor spiritual health).

9. Because we are an *Evangelical* Lutheran church, we will GO to people with our ministry rather than simply expect or demand that they *come*.

10. This church will challenge and encourage members to grow in their faith, their character and their life of service to the Lord, so that the description of church membership becomes the definition of Christian discipleship.

11. We will foster bonds of mutual trust between leaders and members by communicating openly, honestly, redundantly, positively and lovingly.

12. We will establish goals and priorities chiefly on the basis of the special strengths and blessings God has invested in our church and the unique opportunities he presents to us in our community.

SESSION FOUR: CHANGING PARADIGMS

I. An Object Lesson To Demonstrate the Power of Paradigms

II. A Video: "The New Business of Paradigms" by Joel Barker

    A. Based on what you learned, will a new way to solve the problems and seize the opportunities of the church originate with a pastor or elected leader, in all likelihood? Then, where would you expect to discover new ways to reach people, communicate with people, witness to people, teach people, gather people, etc.

    B. "Paradigm Pioneers" don't invent a new paradigm, they adapt it. Where would you look to discover new ways of approaching ministry?

    C. Discuss how our very terminology may create "paradigm paralysis," with such examples as: "Sunday School," "Voters Meeting," "Youth Group," "Ladies Aid," or "Bible Class."

    D. What major problem or challenge facing the church today can't apparently be solved by using old paradigms?

III. Historical Examples of Paradigm Shifts in the Church
    A. "Seating" in the church

    B. Financial Support of ministry

    C. The Model of Christian Education

IV. The BIG Paradigm Shift we face

    After 16 centuries of marriage between western culture and the Christian Church, a messy divorce occurred somewhere in the mid-to-late 20th century. Christianity has lost its "home field advantage." Churches face neighborhood opposition over building permits. Pastors no longer are accorded respect for their office. People can no longer be assumed to endorse or even know the major tenets of Christianity. How we "do church" is changing because of this sea-change in western culture.

    Can we "do church?" Does "go to church" mean what it used to?

V. Generation Theory and Changing Paradigms

The church serves five distinct generations. While generalizations are never valid when describing an individual and the impact of the Christian home and church counter the impact of culture, the following offers a "snapshot" of what makes three generations in the church different. (The "Builder" and "Silent" generations are lumped together because they are very similar. The "Millennial" generation is still in a formative stage.) Identify yourself with the appropriate generation, then ask two questions:

Does the characterization below describe my generation? Does it describe me?

A. "Builders" (Tom Brokaw's The Greatest Generation) and "Silents" -- born before 1946 -- are frugal, loyal, dependable, cautious, private, and intolerant. They respect tradition. They feel a sense of religious obligation. Stability is important to them in religion. "Reverence" is how they describe worship atmosphere.

B. "Boomers" -- born between 1946 and 1964 -- are idealogues who question authority and criticize institutions (including the church). They are driven by such things as success or achievement, self-realization, and "having it all." They are the ultimate consumers, expecting quality and choices. Boomers tend to be introspective, and they use terms like "personal journey" for their spiritual (the word that replaced "religious") life. For this reason, they have little loyalty to a denomination; instead they go where "their needs are met." They have little patience for ineffective programs or inefficient structure and service roles in a church. They may prefer less formal, more contemporary worship whose atmosphere is "joyful."

C. "Gen-NeXt" -- born between 1964 and 1982 -- is the antithesis of most of what describes the Boomers. "Xers" have the characteristics of postmodernism. They see no "big picture" and are inclined to question the idea of universal truth. They tend not to think in linear, sequential logic, more in vignettes. They aren't joiners; they aren't interested in institutional structure or big causes. They value time over money. They have shorter attention spans than previous generations. They are willing volunteers, but want flexible schedules, small teams and an opportunity to help another human being. They want a sense of family but are afraid of commitments. They expect technological competence, life-related preaching and teaching and casual worship formats (though there are many who want the awe of highly liturgical worship). They are looking for a few close friends.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF GENERATION THEORY FOR THE WAY IN WHICH CHURCHES ORGANIZE FELLOWSHIP LIFE, SEEK VOLUNTEERS, PLAN WORSHIP, DO EVANGELISM, and GENERATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

VI. Key Paradigm Shifts in Contemporary American Church Life

    A. From the <u>institutional</u> to the <u>relational</u>.

    B. From <u>homogeneity</u> to <u>diversity</u>.

    C. From <u>pastor as chaplain</u> to <u>pastor as leader</u>.

    D. From <u>membership</u> to <u>discipleship</u>.

    E. From <u>degreed competence</u> to <u>continuing education</u> for called workers.

    F. From <u>one size fits all</u> to <u>targeted</u> ministries.

    G. From <u>reactive responses</u> to <u>pro-active planning</u>.

    H. From <u>church on Sunday</u> to <u>seven-day programming</u> (and from <u>free</u> to <u>fee</u>)

    I. From <u>one pastor</u> to <u>multiple staff</u>.

    J. From <u>controlling</u> to <u>empowering</u>.

V. Practical Paradigm Shifts in Specific Areas of Ministry

    A. Shifts in FELLOWSHIP LIFE:
        1. From <u>age, gender, and marital status</u> to <u>common interests and needs</u>.
        2. From <u>joining a large group</u> to <u>finding friends in a small group</u>.
        3. From <u>many attending a few events</u> to <u>a few attending many events</u>.

    B. Shifts in DECISION MAKING:
        1. From <u>majority vote</u> to <u>broad consensus</u>.
        2. From <u>competing agendas</u> to <u>mission and vision</u>.
        3. From <u>layers of gate-keeping</u> to <u>trusting leaders and empowering members</u>.

    C. Shifts in EVANGELISM:
        1. From <u>inviting to worship</u> to <u>addressing a need or interest</u>.
        2. From <u>canvassing neighborhoods</u> to <u>building relationships</u>.
        3. From <u>canned presentations</u> to <u>listening and sharing</u>.

D. Shifts in MEMBER RETENTION:
   1. From <u>chasing delinquents</u> to <u>assimilating new and at-risk brothers and sisters</u>.
   2. From <u>elders' visits at 6 months</u> to <u>friends' phone calls after 3 weeks</u>.
   3. From "You need to come back to church!" to "What's happening in your life?"

E. Shifts in MEMBER INVOLVEMENT:
   1. From <u>filling slots</u> to <u>using gifts</u>.
   2. From <u>responsibility without authority</u> to <u>authority with accountability</u>.
   3. From <u>standing committees</u> to <u>coordinators and ministry teams</u>.

Conclusion:

   The lesson in a cartoon

APPENDIX D

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS
FOR DEVELOPING
A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE
a step-by-step process for a congregation's task force

1. Review biblical bases for ministry practice:
   A. Jesus' Mission and Vision for His Church:
      Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8
      John 17:13-18 and 20:21-23

      What are the emphases in these passages? Draft a one-sentence statement of
      mission for your congregation that captures the biblical emphases in memorable
      words applied to your ministry context.

   B. St. Paul's Pastoral Directives to Timothy:
      Individually read I and II Timothy, jotting down principles for ministerial practice
      that you discover (e.g. I Timothy 4:4-5, 5:17-22, 6:17-20; II Timothy 1:7 and 13-
      14, 2:1-2 and 14-16, 3:14-17). Then compare notes and draft a handful of key
      statements that you believe should guide the way your congregation carries out its
      ministry.

   C. A New Testament Understanding of the Church and its Ministry
      Romans 12:3-8
      Ephesians 4:11-13
      Colossians 3:12-17
      I Corinthians 9:22

      On the basis of these Bible verses (and other passages you may add), identify basic
      principles that should guide the way your church carries out its ministry. Then
      draft as many statements as are necessary to reflect these principles.

2. Analyze the community your congregation serves and specific audiences of people in
your community: demographic descriptors such as predominant age groups, ethnic
groups, education, income, mobility, marital status, etc.; life-style descriptors such as
family grouping, recreational interests, dominant vocations, commuting and shopping
patterns, significant values, schedules and weekend habits, religious and political
inclinations, etc.; and finally, the important needs, issues and concerns that occupy
attention in the community such as child care, health issues, crime, unemployment, senior
needs, family concerns, etc.

Boil down what you've discussed in analyzing your community and arrive at five-to-ten statements that characterize your community, with particular emphasis on how the ministry of your congregation is or should be impacted by these descriptors.

3. Discuss what are the congregation's core values, what is most important to members and won't be compromised, what is emphasized in the congregation's theology and history and ministry programs, what makes your congregation a unique vehicle for God's message and mission. You may want to include in your discussion the predominant strengths of the congregation at present, what your church does well.

Summarize the discussion into a brief, prioritized list of core values for your congregation, a list of two-to-seven items.

4. Discuss what you believe should be the outcomes of your congregation's ministry, what will happen in the lives of your members and their families as a result of the Holy Spirit's work through your programs of worship, education, fellowship and service. It may help to think in terms of biblical knowledge, Christian character and spiritual skills.

Summarize the discussion into a brief list of primary outcomes for which the ministry of your congregation should work and pray.

5. Create a short list of priorities for your congregation in the next few years. You may focus on audiences such as families, young adults, the unchurched or inactive members. You may focus on needs such as retaining confirmed youth, improving adult Bible studies or enhancing the music in worship. Or you may focus on opportunities such as outreach to families with small children, support group ministry for the grieving or cross-cultural evangelism. Ask yourselves, what should receive priority attention in our planning, our budgeting, our staffing?

6. Brainstorm a list of assumptions you have about how best to reach and connect with people today. For example: "We have to touch people at their point of hurt or need." Or "We want to emphasize the unchanging truths and values that link us to our Christian past." Or "We need to communicate more visually and experientially to reach today's audience."

Develop a list of such statements that reflect the consensus of your group and can serve to guide the style or nature of ministry at your church.

7. All of the steps above are important in their own right and should be given to the pastors, principal and elected leaders of your congregation for their reflection and discussion. However, in summary ask one member of your task force to draft a series of statements that incorporate the various themes above into a congregational "Philosophy of Ministry." There is no form or format that must be followed, but here are some sample statements:

A. Building strong Christian families is essential to all our children's ministries.

B. We will strive to involve members at every age in a curriculum of Bible study that leads them to spiritual maturity and produces what Jesus called "fruit." (John 15)

C. We will assist our members in their witness by providing as many "side doors" to the church as possible, from counseling to classes, from programs of children's ministry to retreats for adults, from support groups to recreational events.

D. We will seek to involve members in serving their Lord, both in church and in community, according to their "passion," their gifts, their personality and their availability.

E. Our worship has the objective of blending the historic elements of Lutheran liturgy with the up-beat music and less formal warmth of a contemporary audience.

APPENDIX E

VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES and MINISTRY GOALS

DEVELOPED BY
BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

Adult Spiritual Growth

Our Vision

By 2007, all members of Beautiful Savior will have ample opportunity to grow in faith through a variety of Bible class offerings within a systematic curriculum. All will be eager to attend instruction in the Word, knowing there is something for everyone.

Guiding Principles

1. We will encourage all members of Beautiful Savior to be in the Word since it is essential and necessary for spiritual growth. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom." Colossians 3:16.

2. All spiritual instruction will be based solely on the Word of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding." Psalm 111:10.

3. We need to acknowledge that our members are at different levels of faith and knowledge - and that we will have to develop strategies to meet each member at his or her level .

4. Elements of our Adult Discipleship program will be designed with outreach in mind and draw members of our community into our midst.

Ministry Goals

1. Adhering to our first principle, Beautiful Savior will encourage and support individual and family bible study for members and prospects alike. We will encourage individual bible study through a variety of resources including devotionals, libraries and on-line study groups.

2. Adhering to our first principle, Beautiful Savior will eliminate any and all obstacles that keep people from the Word. In addition, we will create more opportunities to make the Word more available to current and perspective members both inside and outside of the four walls of the church.

3. Adhering to our third principle, additional Bible study formats will be created (in addition to current bible study formats) to appeal to more members regardless of their spiritual growth. The additional variety of topics would be supported by the use of audio visual aids such as PowerPoint, tapes, maps and slides to make the Word come to life for our members and prospects.

4. Adhering to our fourth principle, Beautiful Savior will design our Bible studies to draw in as wide an audience as possible, especially through the topics offered. We will also distribute the Word to as wide an audience as possible through a range of technologies including, but not limited to: internet and web streaming, audio and video tapes.

Worship

Our Vision

By 2007, we see Beautiful Savior as a place where all people - including members and non-members, young and old - will be eager to attend services knowing they will be uplifted both by the Gospel and their worship experience.

Guiding Principles

1. Worship at Beautiful Savior is a response to God's undeserved love for us. "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." I Chronicles 16:29

2. In all of our worship, the word of God - both law and Gospel - will remain our focus and anchor. In the words of the hymn writer: "God's word is our great heritage."

3. We will conduct all of our worship with a sense of reverence, humility, and awesome wonder. "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Psalm 95: 6-7.

4. While recognizing the value and importance of upholding our Lutheran worship traditions, we will not be afraid to try new ways of bringing glory to our Lord's name. The intent will be to make worship a more joyful experience for all. "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Psalm 100: 1-2.

5. While worship remains primarily a response of love on the part of believers, we will recognize it is also a point of entry into our congregation for non-believers in our community. Our worship must also be designed with visitors and newcomers in mind.

Ministry Goals

1. Adhering to our first and third principles, Beautiful Savior will maintain a worship environment that is consistent with and in response to God's undeserved love for us. To that end, there will be a continuing effort to beautify our sanctuary.

2. Adhering to our fourth principle, Beautiful Savior will continue to enhance our worship services to make worship a joyful experience for all. We will strive to utilize the varied gifts of our members in worship. We will make a special effort to encourage our youth to participate.

3. Adhering to our second, fourth and fifth principles, Beautiful Savoir will take the necessary, and immediate steps to add a "contemporary" service to our schedule - and to increase worship options for members and non-members alike.. While the word of God - both law and Gospel - will remain our anchor, it is important to recognize that the delivery of the Word can and should be directed to all people regardless of their background, heritage and level of faith.

4. Adhering to our fourth principle, Beautiful Savior will embrace technology as a means to both enhance our worship services and deliver our message of salvation to more people, more often.

Outreach/Evangelism

Our Vision

By 2007, all members of Beautiful Savior will demonstrate a concern for the "lost" and understand that Christ calls us all to spread the Gospel, not just our pastors or evangelism committee.

Guiding Principles

1. At Beautiful Savior, our primary objective will be to fulfill our Lord's great commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:19

2. While we will continue to enthusiastically support our synod's mission work throughout the world through our prayers and offerings, our energies will be focused on reaching the lost in the communities and neighborhoods surrounding our congregation.

3. In all of our outreach and evangelism efforts, we will communicate Beautiful Savior as a place where the Gospel is preached and taught in truth and purity.

4. All new programs of the congregation will be designed and promoted with outreach in mind and with the intent of spreading God's word.

5. Yet, we will not be afraid to experiment new ways of reaching the lost in our community through ways that meet individuals and families at their "point of need".

Ministry Goals

1. Adhering to our first principle, Beautiful Savior will immediately take steps to make "The Great Commission" our most urgent and important priority, and it will be emphasized that there is a role in outreach for each and every member at Beautiful Savior. To that end, the congregation will be trained and given every opportunity to carry out God's Great Commission, according to their individual level of desire, faith and comfort.

2. Adhering to our fourth principle, Beautiful Savior will immediately begin the development of a comprehensive outreach program that is supported by an appropriate budget. The program goals will be structured to "have more people deliver the gospel to more people in the community more often". Programs will employ a rich assortment of mediums such as mailing, cable, Internet and visitations.

3. Adhering to our third and fourth principles, sharing the Gospel in its truth and purity will be the "essence" of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church. We will communicate its truth and purity through a variety of venues - not just in worship and Bible study - but in a wide range of programs designed to meet the needs of the community.

4. Adhering to our fifth principle, our outreach efforts will focus on the youth of our community that we have identified as the most significant and viable "point of need" in the immediate community. In recognition of the need, we will continue in our efforts to increase our current staff of called workers to focus on this opportunity.

Youth Ministry

Our Vision

By 2007, Beautiful Savior will become a safe, Christ-centered place of activity, learning, and experience for youth of our church and community - not just on Sunday morning, but throughout the week.

Guiding Principles

1. In our ministry at Beautiful Savior the needs of our children and youth will become a high priority and will be reflected not just in our words, but in our actions as God commands. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children." Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

2. Teaching our youth about Christ's love for them through the Law an Gospel will be pervasive in all of our programs. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6.

3. We will view our ministry to youth not only as a duty, but as a privilege as Christ himself did. " Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14.

4. The needs of youth will be a high priority in all of our outreach efforts. The needs of youth are a main concern for families in our community, and so to be most effective, any outreach program will be designed to meet those needs in a variety of ways.

Ministry Goals

1. Adhering to our first and second principles, we will seek to strengthen and improve existing programs for youth such as Sunday School, confirmation, teen Bible class, etc.

2. Adhering to our third principle, we will seek to promote ongoing opportunities for encouraging and assisting parents in their high calling of being Christian parents entrusted by God with their children's spiritual welfare.

3. Adhering to our first and third principles, we will seek to actively recruit our youth for service, fellowship, and worship in this congregation.

4. Adhering to our fourth principle, we will seek to develop specific outreach opportunities designed to reach the youth of our communities. Opportunities will include, but will not be limited to, some form of a Lutheran elementary school.

Assimilation and Fellowship

Our Vision

By 2007, Beautiful Savior will still count among its greatest blessings its warm, friendly and caring membership. However, we see a church, which has in place a more systematic approach to welcome new members and quickly including them in the life of the congregation than currently exists.

Guiding Principles

1. At Beautiful Savior, we are many believers, yet one body working toward a common goal: to spread God's word. This is not our description, but God's: "So in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to the others." Romans 12:5.

2. We will strive, then, to help newcomers become part of this body, by recognizing their spiritual gifts and finding ways to put them to use for the common good and our common goal. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." 1 Corinthians 12:4 and 7.

3. We will want to make sure all are welcome into our Beautiful Savior family: "...God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." Acts 10:34-35.

4. Fellowship among believers at Beautiful Savior is not voluntary or optional. It is commanded by God: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10: 24-25.

5. Our program of fellowship should not be for the benefit of our members alone, but should be designed with outreach in mind to create as many "side doors" to the congregation as possible - with a variety of activities available for different interests.

Ministry Goals

1. Adhering to our first and second principles, by 2002 Beautiful Savior will have an assimilation program in place that is developed to:

    a. Identify needs of the congregation
    b. Identify talents of its members
    c. Align the talents with those needs

2. Adhering to our third principle, Beautiful Savior will adopt a two-part fellowship process to:

    - Identify all new members and increase the congregation's awareness of them.
    - Inform the new members about our congregation and quickly integrate them into its congregational life.

3. Adhering to our Second principle ... We will make a special effort to assimilate our youth (teens and college age) into the service of the congregation through a variety of means and services.

4. Adhering to our Fifth principle ... Beautiful Savior will develop fellowship opportunities that appeal to the unique interests of member and visitor groups. In so doing we promote a diverse fellowship that is nurtured by our mutual Christ-centered interests.

Group and Support Ministry

Our Vision

By 2007, we envision that Beautiful Savior will be a place where members will feel ready and open to share their hurts as well as their joys. It will be a place where all can expect to receive comfort, care and support.

Guiding Principles

1. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, St. Paul reminds us that it is our privilege and calling as Christians to comfort each other in times of trouble: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

2. All comfort, support, and guidance we offer each other will be based on the word of God first and foremost, rather than on human wisdom. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." 1 Corinthians 1:3.

3. Our Group and Support Ministry will be for the benefit not only of members of Beautiful Savior, but of our entire community as well. Our support services will be designed with outreach in mind, to meet people at their "point of need" and to reach "the lost" with the healing power of the Gospel.

Group and Support Ministry Opportunities

1. Adhering to our First principle ... We will identify the emotional needs of our members and our community, and meet those needs with a variety of programs that include, but not limited by:

    - Support groups: those with similar needs for support will be encouraged to meet together at church or elsewhere and to organize groups on their own.

    - Seminars: we will conduct on a regular basis, seminars or workshops to support specific needs within our congregation and the community, i.e. parenting, dealing with troubled teens, etc.

    - Counseling: pastors or other trained professional will be available at all times to handle needs on a one-on-one basis.

2. Adhering to our Third principle ... For those with special needs that we are unable to accommodate either through personal counseling or group support, we will strive to find other Christian sources outside of Beautiful Savior that can be of help and encouragement.

APPENDIX F

TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

While the law/gospel model of Lutheran theology helps to clarify the doctrine of justification and provides a worthwhile "template" for preaching, it may not be the best model for understanding the Christian life of sanctification. Dr. Charles Arand explains why this is so:

> "The way in which law and gospel are often construed turns the distinction into an antithesis. At that point, the distinction between law and gospel turns into an opposition in which the gospel triumphs over the law itself, and not only the wrath of God. Any talk about good works is automatically understood to be talk about works righteousness. Furthermore, when this distinction is treated as a conceptual framework within which the coherence of the Christian faith is thought out, then whatever does not fit under the category of gospel is regarded as part of the law. Even the doctrine of creation becomes law for no other reason than that it is not gospel. This does not allow the theological space needed to speak positively about the Christian life within a world where the Judaeo-Christian ethic -- that could once be taken for granted -- is crumbling."[192]

Another paradigm or framework for understanding Christian faith and life was used by Martin Luther.[193] That paradigm is "Two Kinds of Righteousness." The first kind of righteousness is coram deo. It is passively received and vertically oriented, from God and establishing the Christian's relationship with God. This Christian righteousness is attributed to the Christian by God and is the Christian's identity before God. The second kind of righteousness is coram hominibus. It is actively achieved and horizontally oriented, recognized by and benefitting other human beings. This ethical righteousness is performed by the individual and earns a reputation before others.

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[192] Charles P. Arand, "Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework for Law and Gospel in the Apology," Lutheran Quarterly, Volume XV, Number 4, pages 417-418.

[193] Luther's 1519 sermon, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," distinguishes the "alien" righteousness God attributes to believers for Jesus' sake from the "proper" righteousness of life that a believer pursues as a grateful response of faith. (LW 31:297-306.)

St. Paul describes the two kinds of righteousness in Romans 4:2-5. "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about -- but not before God (coram deo). What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now when a man works, his wages (coram hominibus) are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

Parallel to the distinction between two kinds of righteousness, Luther taught the distinction between two kingdoms: the kingdom of God or the kingdom of his right hand, and the kingdom of this world or God's left-hand kingdom.[194] Rather than pitting the two kinds of righteousness against each other, Luther's theology recognized an appropriate realm for each. The righteousness that is before God belongs to the kingdom of God. The righteousness that is before men belongs in the kingdom of this world.

Furthermore, rather than denigrating the righteousness coram hominibus in order to maintain the primacy of the coram deo righteousness that is by grace through faith, Scripture views the active righteousness of the Christian positively. Because Christians live out their faith in this world -- coram hominibus, their active righteousness is attractive to the non-Christian audience that is the church's mission field. (Cf. Matthew 5:16; John 13:34-35; Colossians 4:3-6.) Because Christians obey God's will as a response of faith, in gratitude for his saving grace, their active righteousness is pleasing to God. (Cf. Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-14; John 14:15.)

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[194] Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," LW 45:81-129.

In Philippians 3:12 St. Paul put it this way: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have

already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of

me." Jesus took hold of Christians, first, to give them the righteousness <u>coram deo</u> which he

achieved for them with his life and death and, secondly, to make them his light in the world with a

righteousness <u>coram hominibus</u>. It is that second righteousness that the apostle "presses on to

take hold of."

Lutheran theology uses the term "third use of the law" to describe how the Christian's willing

and joyful obedience is guided by God's law while motivated and empowered by the gospel. The

"two kinds of righteousness" model allows the law to be seen in symbiotic service to the gospel in

the Christian's life of sanctification, while retaining the antithetical nature of law and gospel in

justification.

As the term "third use of the law" suggests, there are two other uses. The first has been

described as a curb, restraining unregenerate humankind. This "natural law" written into the

human conscience by God (Romans 2:14-15) can produce a "civil righteousness" that is <u>coram</u>

<u>hominibus</u> or what has been called "philosophical righteousness" because this is the realm of

ethical philosophy. The second and primary purpose of God's law is as a "mirror," to expose sin

and condemn the sinner, and thus to prepare him for the gospel. (Romans 3:10-20)

To parallel the three uses of the law and provide an expanded understanding of the term

"righteousness" in the writing of Luther and Melanchthon, Dr. Joel Biermann proposes a tripartite

model. There is a "governing" righteousness or "righteousness of reason" that corresponds to the

use of the law as curb. There is a "justifying righteousness" or righteousness by faith that is the

gospel's answer to the law as mirror. And there is a "sanctifying righteousness" or "righteousness

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in Christian life" that corresponds to the law's use as guide.[195] The advantage of this three-fold approach is that it not only distinguishes coram deo righteousness from that which is coram hominibus, but it further distinguishes the civil righteousness performed by any human being from the sanctified life only the Christian can offer to God.

Whether two or three kinds of righteousness, this model is helpful in developing a theology of ministerial practice. Just as first article (creation) gifts of God are not in competition with third article (spiritual) gifts, so also the righteousness that is before men is not in competition with the righteousness that is before God. Just as the first article gifts such as communication tools and marketing principles can be applied in service to the gospel, so also can the pursuit of excellence which characterize the righteousness coram hominibus be utilized in support of the gospel and the righteousness coram deo it offers.

In developing a path and program of discipleship for its members, a church will affirm that Christians have the righteous identity of Christ. But the church will also exhort Christians to live out that identity in active righteousness; it will provide the direction of the law in its third use; and it will encourage the use of programs or "habits" that foster active righteousness. Just as the righteousness coram deo must be passive, so the Christian's life of sanctification -- the righteousness coram hominibus -- must be active. There is no virtue in passive church membership that lacks any practical significance or a Christian life that has no purpose or direction.

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[195] Joel Biermann, Virtue, Ethics, and the Place of Character Formation Within Lutheran Theology, a 2002 doctoral dissertation for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, page 177.

In shaping a program of outreach to the community, a church will utilize the "righteousness of reason" <u>coram hominibus</u>. Call it "best practice" or "excellence in ministry," such "rightness" makes a positive impression on those who do not yet know Christ. Just as the "sanctifying righteousness" that makes Christians "lights of the world" is an attraction to the lost, so also is this "righteousness of reason" that pursues excellence a way in which the church attracts an audience for the gospel. Rather than pitting sociology and psychology against theology in a misused law/gospel paradigm, the church can view these human tools under the category of righteousness <u>coram hominibus</u> and in service to the gospel which alone conveys the righteousness <u>coram deo</u>.

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