

# Fan into Flame (Your Faith and) the Gift of God: A Call to Grow for Brothers and Sisters in the Public Ministry

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## Introduction

Did the manuscript reek of the cell from which it was wrung? Were some of its words smudged from the tears of a spiritual father penning possibly final words to his dear son in the faith? 2 Timothy stands in a unique position among Paul's letters. Some have labeled this Paul's last will and testament. In this second imprisonment in Rome, it seems the house arrest has been replaced by much starker accommodations. The prospect of the favorable outcome of his first stay in Rome (Php 1:25) has become a dawning certainty that his time is very short (2 Ti 4:6). As the book closes, we glimpse the Apostle left almost alone at his preliminary hearing before Caesar (as far as merely human helpers go). The pathos leaps off the page as he pleads with Timothy to make a rapid trip to Rome before winter shuts down shipping on the Mediterranean (2 Tm 4:21).

But what if Timothy can't make it? Then with these inspired words God's apostle makes final preparations to pass the mantle to his most trusted co-worker – giving us a unique glimpse both into his heart as Christ's apostle and into the heart of the public ministry.

With all that wanted to rush to the page from the heart of Paul, what does the Spirit allow to tumble first from his pen? After the opening benediction, Paul launches into a paragraph that singles out two chief thoughts. Paul first gives thanks to God for the sincere (literally: unhypocritical) faith found in Timothy's family for at least the third generation (2 Ti 1:5). And then immediately after that, in fact, because of that sincere faith, Paul urges Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you" (2 Ti 1:7).

Right there, Paul gives us a powerful glimpse into two critical factors in the life of every public minister. First and foremost it is the nurturing of just such an unhypocritical faith as Timothy had been given. Secondly, it is letting that unhypocritical gospel-powered faith display itself in a burning desire to make the most of whatever gifts the Lord has given for ministry.

Eighteen centuries later, another shepherd, C. F. W. Walther, toward the end of his ministry<sup>1</sup> made the same connection as he spoke to the next generation of God's servants.

Would that you, my dear friends, were, first of all, real Christians, filled with ardent zeal for the truth. That is the equipment for becoming, in the course of time, powerful preachers, whose spirit seizes the hearers with irresistible force, as the example of the apostles evidences. The people could not tell why the preaching of these simple men made such a powerful impression on them.

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<sup>1</sup> C. F. W. Walther completed his famous Friday night lecture series only 18 months before he died.

Far from suggesting that great gifts and thorough theological learning are not to be highly esteemed, I should rather claim the contrary to be true. For if to the living faith of the preacher there are added great gifts and thorough learning, he will, in the end, be a mighty, efficient tool in the hands of God, since all natural endowments and whatever we have acquired by our natural zeal is not put aside by God when we enter the ministry, but is purified and pressed into His service.<sup>2</sup>

It is now our time in God's plan to apply to our hearts and ministries what Paul once applied to his young co-worker Timothy in Ephesus, and what Walther once urged on his seminarians in St. Louis. Just as a living, unhypocritical faith and a corresponding zeal to fan into flame God-given gifts was important for leaders in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, so it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As we gather on this day at our conference under the theme Growing in Grace, let's find the strength of that grace to fan into flame our faith and whatever gifts Christ's Spirit has seen fit to give us.

### **Goal #1: Fanning into Flame an Unhypocritical Faith**

I thank God, whom I serve as our forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also (2 Ti 1:3-5 NIV).

One thing stood out as Paul gave thanks for his young co-worker. It was Timothy's "sincere faith." What the NIV translates as "sincere" is really the Greek word from which we derive our English word "unhypocritical." The Greek noun hypocrite originally meant an actor in a play. The verbal root means to "translate" or "interpret," since the actor in the play "interprets" or "translates" the playwright's meaning for the audience.

From that descriptive picture of the actor's work, a negative use of the word developed. "Hypocrite" was used for someone only mouthing statements others had given him, though he didn't believe or live by what he was saying.

With that in mind, can you understand why Paul would begin his letter with thanks that his young co-worker had been given an unhypocritical (an un-actor-like) faith? Timothy's ministry was not about merely mouthing pious sounding phrases and spiritually weighty bromides. Timothy was to profess with his mouth truths the gospel burned into his heart. And what Paul here gives thanks that Timothy possesses, later he repeatedly pleads with Timothy to continue to nourish (2 Ti 1:13-14; 2:8,22; 3:14-17). Paul understood that growth in such sincere faith is an absolute necessity for God's undershepherds. Without unhypocritical faith, some kind of discharging of a duty can still take place in Christ's church, but genuine ministry in the body of Christ ceases.

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<sup>2</sup> Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 112-113

### ***Why is this so critical for public ministers?***

Why is it so critical that above all else those serving in public ministry be fanning into flame an unhypocritical faith? Satan has every believer marked for slaughter (Ro 8:36), but he has you and me in the center of his crosshairs. Satan knows that we are in positions of leadership in God's kingdom. If he can cause us to stumble and even fall from a sincere faith, he may have achieved a multiple victory with a single blow.

Why? When Jesus calls you into the public ministry, he makes you one of his key players in his master plan for his church's welfare. As it goes in faith for those who shepherd his lambs and sheep, so often it goes for those lambs and sheep. Listen as sainted seminary president August Pieper echoes that truth. He is speaking about pastors specifically, but his words resonate for those serving in every form of public ministry.

[The pastor] needs much more of God's Word for his soul than does an ordinary Christian because he is tempted much more. Doubt of the truth, weariness in ministry and depression, despair and fear, pride and a domineering spirit, men-service and hypocrisy, laziness, lust, greed, and worldly pleasure plague him more than ordinary Christians. More than anyone, he needs daily strengthening through doctrine, comfort, power, upbuilding, encouragement, and warning, so that his light is not extinguished in the darkness, so that he does not preach to others and himself be rejected.<sup>3</sup>

Satan understands the truth of these words better than any of us. He has centuries of first hand experience of the havoc wreaked upon the church by public ministers who forfeit an unhypocritical faith. The evidence of that in Scripture is ponderous.

Yes, Christ crucified, risen, and ascended is present with his church (Mt 28:20) and rules all things for her benefit (Ep 1:18-23). Yes, nothing can overrule his electing love: "No one can snatch them out of my hand" (Jn 10:28) promises the Good Shepherd. Such glorious truths of God's electing and preserving love comfort us personally when we know that left to us our faith would be extinguished in a moment. Such glorious truths comfort us corporately when the storms in this dying world toss the ship of the church in apparent recklessness from wave to wave. "God is within her, she will not fall" (Ps 46:5).

But we distort God's electing love – and ignore other equally valid portions of Scripture – if we turn that into an excuse to be careless about our faith and if we fail to grasp the spiritual dangers to which we expose God's people when we indulge such carelessness. God has not only elected people, he has elected means to accomplish his saving purpose. That includes both the means of grace in which his saving power resides and the human tools who carry those means to the ends of the earth. While every Christian possesses the keys of the kingdom, God has also ordained and established the public ministry as a special gift to the church to build up the body of Christ (Ep 4:11f).

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<sup>3</sup> Pieper, "Scripture Study as the Special Task of the Pastor," 122-123

God has decided to carry out his eternal plans through human beings. To that end heaven and earth must serve him. In particular, he has instituted the public ministry to gather, care for, and save his church. For that purpose he has given his Word in a fixed, written form that will outlast time and be available to all the world, giving the instructions, "Diligently study the Scriptures" (Jn 5:39). To that end he has given all Christians the ministry of being witnesses with the command, "Preach the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15). To both forms of the ministry he has attached the promise of his Holy Spirit. Through him he intends to accomplish everything that is necessary to perfect his church and bring it to glory. Of both types of ministry he says, "O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!" (Je 22:29) and threatens, "He who scorns instruction will pay for it" (Pr 13:13). "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me" (Lk 10:16).

To us preachers and teachers in particular he has given the admonition to be faithful. He promises us every blessing in this life and in that to come if we are faithful, and threatens us with every curse in this world and the next if we are unfaithful. He speaks as though the welfare of the whole church and of every individual soul depends on this. And that is just as sure and certain as his word that no one will snatch his sheep out of his hand.

For this reason we say: the well-being of the church depends on the faithfulness of its servants.<sup>4</sup>

As pastors, teachers, and staff ministers, we don't choose whether to have a powerful impact on Christ's sheep. The only question is: will our influence be bane or blessing?

Isn't that why Paul begins 2 Timothy by giving thanks to God for the unhypocritical faith that once lived in Lois and Eunice and now lived in Timothy? Sheep bought with God's own blood (Acts 20:28) were entrusted to his care. And sheep bought with God's own blood are entrusted to our care. An unhypocritical faith alive and growing in our hearts is paramount not only for our soul's welfare, but for the welfare of every soul in our care. As we are fed by Christ, so we feed. As we are led by Christ, so we lead. If we would begin this keynote address by moving immediately to discussing growth in ministry skills and abilities our discussion would easily be fruitless if not deadly to both us and the lambs and sheep entrusted to our care. What the flock need most of all are shepherds who themselves are first to feed on the Good Shepherd's green pastures and to drink from his quiet waters. Those who do not care enough to tend to the needs of their own souls will soon not be fit to tend to the needs of anyone's soul.

### ***How are we doing?***

Satan fears nothing more than a servant of the gospel who is growing stronger in the means of grace. So you can be sure that he will erect every barrier in your way to prevent that disaster (as he sees it) from happening. One of his most subtle barriers is to

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<sup>4</sup> Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," 287-288

encourage us to become so busy with our ministry (it looks so good and zealous and faithful!) that we soon fail to busy ourselves with the needs of our own souls. Without being fully aware of what is happening, we get things turned upside down – forgetting who is the Savior and who is in need of saving. As Prof. Deutschlander notes in *The Theology of the Cross*, Satan aims this temptation especially at those new in ministry.

[The pastor– or teacher or staff minister - forgets] that there is only one means of grace - the gospel in Word and sacrament - and there is only one Savior of the world. The pastor is not the means of grace; he is the trumpet, not the tune. It is the sound of the gospel that converts and preserves faith. As important as the trumpet is, it is the tune of the gospel that accomplishes everything. He is not a second messiah either, as though it were his responsibility to save the world by his efforts, his eloquence, his personality, his charisma. There is but one Redeemer of the world, one Savior of each individual whom God has elected.<sup>5</sup>

Falling into a public ministry messiah complex, it becomes easy for us to neglect the soul we must first remember the Messiah came to save, our own.

The pastor in whose heart these temptations take root has almost certainly abandoned a private devotional life. He is busy, so busy. He has looked for ways of saving time so that he can get more work done in the service of the Lord. The first corner to cut is in the time that he spends alone with Jesus in his private devotions. After all, does he really need that? He is always "in the Word" isn't he? He is studying the text for his next sermon. He is preparing for Bible class. He has a devotion in mind for his next round of hospital and shut-in calls. He even conducts family devotions with his wife and children. Why does he need more than that for himself?<sup>6</sup>

If we wonder whether this is painting a real scenario, let me share supporting evidence from a survey I conducted last October. The survey included a randomly selected portion (33%) of three Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduating classes (1983, 1993, and 2003). While the survey focused on continuing education in preaching, a few questions asked about personal devotional life. The difference in devotional use of the Word between the youngest pastors in the survey (those out 5 years) and those who had been serving 15 or 25 years was startling. For those 15 and 25 years into their ministries, 77% and 67% respectively spent at least 5 days a week in personal devotional study. For those five years into their ministries, only 10% spent at least 5 days a week in devotional study. In fact, 50% of the 2003 graduates reported studying only two days a week or less!

The more Satan separates the public minister from feeding on the Word for no other purpose than the welfare of his or her soul, the greater the danger of dissipation of real spiritual energy for ministry. If all our busyness produces outward success, arrogance beckons. If all of our busyness seems in vain, severe discouragement lurks. Paul's warning goes unheeded: "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not

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<sup>5</sup> Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross*, 203

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 204

fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Co 9:26-27). If Paul saw that danger in his life of failing to keep sinful flesh in check by the Word, where does that leave us? And if we fall, what will be the result for the sheep following us?

But busyness is not the only barrier Satan employs. He knows how to make the most of the exact opposite temptation – the natural laziness of the sinful nature within me. Satan doesn’t even mind if we casually peruse a devotional book or even quickly scan an online devotion (as helpful as those can be). What he really fears is if we actually wrestle with the Word. He wants to spare us such hard work.

We American pastors [teachers, staff ministers]...study too little. Only too often we are satisfied with what we learned in school. When we are in the ministry, we do not of our own accord continue the studies we were more or less forced to pursue when we were in school. We read a lot, but we don't study. Reading is entertainment, whiling away the time; study is hard work. We so easily become lazy in the study. Oh, how the reading of newspapers, magazines, and novels makes a person indolent and superficial, how it kills the spirit and pollutes and brutalizes the soul. But theology, which is part and parcel of our sacred office, we do not study. Most days of the week we may even leave the Bible itself unopened on our desk.<sup>7</sup>

Such laziness can be explained from many directions. We live in a culture that is impatient with wrestling to understand anything that doesn’t come to us in a brief sound byte or You Tube video. What is more, our sinful nature hates it when we wrestle with the Word. He must die every day if he is exposed to “the Word of God [that is] living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (He 4:12). Our sinful nature knows that its thoughts and attitudes – its wishes and desires – will be judged and condemned by him who searches the heart. He doesn’t have a death wish.

There can also be a spiritual defense mechanism at work here. In times of discouragement, when we don’t see any results from time in the Word, it becomes easy to drop study altogether, or we just throw God a few crumbs of time to placate conscience – almost as if we are doing God a big favor to pencil him in. In discouragement, brief and surface-level “study” replaces real wrestling with the Word. I stop pleading with God to “open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your [revelation]” (Ps 118:3).

As referenced earlier, we are also not immune to one of Satan’s favorite tricks, rationalization. “After all,” we reason within ourselves, “we spend a lot of time in the Word studying for sermons, Bible classes, catechism and Bible history lessons, devotions, chapel services. It’s not like we aren’t surrounded by the Word of God.”

Two years ago, I began a new final assignment for senior doctrine class at seminary. In place of a final reading log, the students were to get input from several pastors about how

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<sup>7</sup> Pieper, “Anniversary Reflections,” 291

they kept up with their devotional study, as well as their study of different areas of theology. The students were to take that input and develop a personal study plan that fit their preferred ways of learning. One of the first students who got busy with the study sent me a troubling email when he heard back from one pastor (the pastor's name, rightfully, he did *not* share with me). Here is that email:

Thanks for asking. I'll be completely honest ... I don't have any daily devotional plans. I run 5 days a week and pray and meditate while running. I am reading personal growth material that I need at this time in my life. I try to read Luther about 10 min. a day 4 days a week. I read the Quarterlies. I study the Word for class preparation and sermon preparation. While I agree that it's a good thing to have a daily devotional plan, I am also uncomfortable with the guilt trips laid on pastors that if they don't spend X amt. of minutes each day reading a special Scripture portion, they are less than a God-approved pastor. That's my story.

If several students didn't have similar experiences, I would have shrugged it off as a pastor having a bad day. I will cheerfully grant that growth in unhypocritical faith does take place when fresh wrestling with the Word goes into preparing a sermon, Bible class, catechism or Bible history lesson. When we forget about producing a "product" for others for awhile and remember that the first heart to be cut and healed is to be ours, then such study certainly can accomplish the growth in sincere faith so critical for ministry.

But what easily happens even to study for sermons and lessons? The press of deadlines looming over us forces us to think too quickly about the "end-product." Ministering to our hearts is overwhelmed as we watch the clock and fret about what interesting things we can say to hold their attention this time. Sprinkle a pinch (or more) of poor time management that fails to recognize time bandits – add a cup of ministry experience fooling us into thinking we understand so well that portion of the Word that we can (and often do) preach or teach it on spiritual autopilot – and presto! – we have concocted an awful tasting recipe for spiritually stultifying professional handling of the Word. And as awful as it may taste in your mouth, it tastes no better for those in the pews or desks!

And do you want a Postmodern barrier? Who can discount the ploy Satan uses by urging us to get caught up in a culture (borrowing the title of Neil Postman's book) that is *Amusing Itself to Death*? Postman wrote that before most homes had cable or satellite television beaming (in HD) ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN Classic, the Golf Channel, etc. into their home theaters, or before Wii and Xbox had developed life like games begging for us to live large chunks of our lives in cyber worlds, or before the Internet made it possible to lose ourselves in countless fantasy football leagues or endless web sites – from the seemingly harmless to the spiritually destructive - not to mention time spent in social networking sites building our friends list or twittering and frittering away precious hours, or checking our email, again. In an instant information age where streaming video is available even on our cell phones, how hard it is to find that calm place where the quiet waters beckon us to drink deeply and be refreshed. Over all the roar of those selling entertainment to us, is there sufficient quiet left to hear and heed God's still small voice? Is there any time left to "be still and know that [he] is God" (Ps 46:10)? It's not that much

of modern technology can't be turned to serve the cause of the gospel. It can. It's just that the sleek and sophisticated competition for our attention is a 24/7/365 distraction beamed at us broadband.

What happens when these and other barriers – weeds Jesus called them - succeed in choking off time for spiritual growth? Don't all of us know from first hand experience what it is like to be a resounding gong or clanging cymbal as genuine love for Christ – which always springs from genuine faith in Christ – begins to wane? Painful has been the walk to my home too many times after a seminary class in which not a word of false doctrine was heard, but my own heart condemned me nonetheless for mouthing truths that I had not first mined fresh for myself. I parroted Pieper and Walther, Brug and Becker, but I merely discharged a duty without the delight that comes from having drunk deeply myself from the water of life before offering it to others. Such are the beginnings of the death of unhypocritical faith for the gospel minister.

All of which would be bad enough, if this only affected us! But we are Israel's teachers! If the shepherds are not growing in the Word, the result can be devastating to the sheep. Again, while Prof. Pieper's words here are spoken to pastors, the application is identical for all called workers even if the setting changes slightly.

In the parsonage, in the pastor's study, in his little den are the sources of the church's strength. If this little den becomes cold and empty, or if it is dedicated to the Old Adam and the spirit of this world, the church's strength will evaporate, and the spirit of the world will overwhelm it. If, on the other hand, the Spirit's fire burns in the pastor's praying and studying, new streams of his Spirit will flow out daily to God's people.

But that is the great evil of the church in our day: we pastors and teachers of the church do not study enough, and we pray even less. We are so busy with ecclesiastical externals, and our spiritual life is all too sterile. The latter ought to be first and foremost and govern the former. We make externals the important thing and forcibly dry up our inner, spiritual life. The result is that we become more and more stunted as far as having the Holy Spirit is concerned, our religion eventually becomes a mere formality, and we drag the church down with us into this maelstrom.

When pastors and teachers have a sluggish nature, the whole life of the church and school becomes a dull outward habit without spirit or life. It accomplishes nothing and finally dies off completely. When, on the other hand, they have an energetic and active nature, it effuses in a lot of outward bustle. They build large, expensive institutions, beautiful parsonages, and club facilities, and settle down mundanely in this world. They deceive themselves with the vain delusion that things are going splendidly in the church because they supposedly still have the pure doctrine. Actually, of course, the spirit of the pure gospel has disappeared and has given way more and more to a superficial sectarian and worldly spirit.



That is our evil, and its source lies in the study, in the pastor's little prayer cell, from which the Spirit has fled because we pray and study only in connection with our work and all too little for the sake of our own soul.<sup>8</sup>

Do we realize how easily we can communicate such satiety with the Word to the souls we serve? In a cynical postmodern world that is hyper-sensitive to people selling products they themselves don't use, peoples' authenticity-meters are very acute. If we send subtle signals that this Word of God stuff is really rather tedious, we end up more than we know contradicting the words coming out of our mouths. Carelessness with the Word doesn't necessarily mean false doctrine suddenly leaps from our mouths, but in ways more caught than taught we easily begin to give a ring of "falsehood" even to the truths we speak. We cease to have the eagerness of the "the owner of the house who brings out of our storehouse new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52). The first ones our sermons and lessons bore are us. And if by sheer force of personality or rhetorical glibness or sharp wit we stave off boredom for our hearers, then we end up fooling ourselves and them by substituting mere entertainment for true edification. We are then in danger of turning people's eyes to faux pearls rather than the pearl of great price.

We often complain about how "confirmation equals graduation from the Word" for so many members, but could it be that they have learned their lesson well from an embarrassing source? We bemoan the tragedy of 18 year old Christians heading off to university campuses with SUVs full of prized possessions but dragging along a frumpy 14 year old faith. All too soon that faith is swamped by winds and waves for which they were unprepared! But it is any less of a tragedy when a 28 or 38 or 48 or 58 year old called worker tries to face life and ministry challenges with a biblical understanding that has progressed all too little since they were 22 or 26 years old?

Yes, the means of grace remain powerful. God's truth remained God's truth even when he opened the mouth of Balaam's donkey. But that was never meant to be a ministry model. It is an anomaly of the kingdom of God when edification occurs from the mouth of someone who himself or herself is not being edified by the Word.

But when a preacher proclaims what he has ever so often experienced in his own heart, he easily finds the right words to speak convincingly to his hearers. Coming from the heart, his words, in turn, go to the hearts of his hearers, according to the good old saying: *Pectus disertum facit*, that is, it is the *heart* that makes eloquent. This does not mean the artificial eloquence acquired in a school of elocution, but the sane spiritual art of reaching the hearts of hearers. For when the hearers get the impression that the preacher is in full and dread earnest, they feel themselves drawn with an irresistible force to pay the closest attention to what the preacher is teaching in his sermon. That is the reason why many simple, less gifted, and less learned preachers accomplish more than the most highly gifted and profoundly learned men.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 293-294

<sup>9</sup> Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 112

If it is the heart that makes eloquent, then, conversely, it is also the heart that makes dull. If I stand in my pulpit or classroom and give the impression I am “selling” something I have not first “bought” myself, one powerful force I am unleashing is apathy. And the opportunity for my hearers to ponder the powerful Word of God is easily lost because I have told them, in subtle but persuasive ways, not to bother. Can the Spirit overcome all of that? Of course he can! And that he often does shows the glory of God’s saving zeal! But is that God’s plan for how he delights to operate through us? Hardly. It is to my shame when I almost dare the Word to work in spite of me.

My dear friends, may I share with you a truth that makes me tremble as a public servant of the Word? The line between faithful undershepherd and damnable hireling is as thin as the line between growth in faith and stagnation in faith in my heart. The warnings that Pieper and Walther and many others before sounded in their day, must be sounded in our day. It is a call to repentance that I can ignore only at the risk of destruction of my own soul – and the souls of those who are following behind me! Kyrie eleison!

But God’s promise once made to Jeremiah still stands! “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Je 3:15). That is not only the LORD’s unchanging promise to his people, that is the promise our patient LORD is at work to fulfill through you every day, my dear brothers and sisters called by Christ into the holy ministry. It wasn’t just about Jeremiah that God could say, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart” (Je 1:5). The Savior has known you by name from before the foundation of the world – and he chose you in his own blood to be his very own. The LORD who has “loved you with an everlasting love” is still at work each day to draw “us with loving kindness” (Je 31:3) into his Word to learn his heart. There we learn that his heart is full of thoughts of your salvation, thoughts of having redeemed us from every wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yes, thoughts of having redeemed us also from ministry wickedness, rebellion, and sin that no one may know about except God and you. Such thoughts of the heart of God are known only by the Spirit of God – and he has revealed them to us in the Word! He offers to us richly and freely every day the rich resources of his grace and mercy that have the power to obliterate every barrier Satan wants to throw up between us and our Savior. Remember this, my dear brothers and sisters in ministry: our personal devotional life is not some legal demand we fulfill to keep God happy. It is the winsome invitation of our heavenly bridegroom who seeks to win us anew as his bride each day by revealing to us ever new depths and spectacular heights of his saving love for us.

There, and there alone, is the answer to what fans into flame an un hypocritical faith. And there, and there alone, comes the real zeal and joy to preach and teach as God’s heralds. Jesus’ words are still true, “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Lk 6:45). When in daily contrition and repentance we experience afresh the spectacular Son-rise as “the day dawns and the morning star arises in our hearts” (2 Peter 1:19), then we learn again how to speak, not as resounding gongs and clanging cymbals, but as living echoes of the message of law and gospel that has first cut and healed us. Then preaching and teaching becomes again a sacrifice of joyful praise to “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 Corinthians 2:3-4). And perhaps right there, we may be catching a glimpse of why God uses frail and fragile jars of clay like us as his usual messengers of the gospel and not his perfect angels. They may rejoice over one sinner who repents, but they have never known first hand the pain and pleasure of being cut and healed by the redeeming Word of the Incarnate Word. He did not become their brother, but ours!

“Lord, we do believe, help us overcome our unbelief!” We cry out with the father of the demon possessed boy. As our “professional” study remains devotional study, and as our devotional study forges beyond surface perusing of the Word, the Savior will not fail to hear our prayer. He is the one about whom the Father boasts, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (Isaiah 42:3). He begs you to trust him. He knows how to fan our all too often dying embers of faith into a white hot blaze!

And lay delegates here today, I promised not to ignore you! Ask yourself, and when you get back to your congregation, ask your other lay leaders, whether your congregation is making it easier or harder for your public ministers to devote themselves “to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Do you remember the context of those words? The first Christian congregation in Jerusalem had the apostles as their public ministers. So busy were they with all the details of congregational life that they were in danger of neglecting the ministry of the Word. If that first congregation in Jerusalem, with Christ’s own apostles as public ministers, could get priorities all confused, what congregation today can claim immunity from that temptation in the busyness of parish life? Pray for your called workers! Pray that they remain men and women of the Word personally and “professionally.” And then ponder how God might at least in part answer that prayer through you! Be a voice that reminds your brothers and sisters that a congregation that begrudges its public ministers plenty of quiet time for thorough study of the Scripture is risking the spiritual health of every sheep in that flock!

## **Goal #2: Fanning Into Flame Our Other Gifts for Ministry**

We might think all really essential growth for public ministers of the gospel has been discussed when we finish talking about growth in unhypocritical faith. Such growth is indeed the sine qua non of kingdom service. But as indispensable and foundational as growth in faith is for every called worker, that is not the end of the growth equation. “To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it” (Ep 4:7). Just as Christ gifts each one of his sheep, so he who loves his sheep equips the shepherds with gifts for ministry to care for his lambs and sheep – gifts for which the greatest thanks is to humbly cultivate them and then to wisely use them. It matters not whether the apportionment of talents is one, two, or five (Mt 25:14f). The task is the same: to pour every grace inspired effort into maximizing those gifts for furthering the gospel ministry of his church.

So Paul urged Timothy. “I have been reminded of your sincere faith...For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Ti 1:5-8). Did you note how Paul draws a tight connection between unhypocritical faith and a special gift for ministry given to Timothy? “For this reason...” Paul begins his encouragement about Timothy’s gift. Because God’s grace had worked

sincere faith in Timothy, the door was open for rich ministry - if only Timothy would find strength through that faith to put his God-given gift fully to work.

What was that gift? It is not mentioned specifically. Rest assured that the Lord Jesus who perfectly apportions to each of us gifts as needed had given to Timothy just this particular gift to meet the particular ministry challenge before him. But regardless of what it was, the direction was clear. “My dear son, God has blessed you with a special gift for ministry. Timothy, like a bellows blows oxygen on a fire to cause it to burn hot, so fan into flame that gift God has given you. Make the most of that gift in service to him who loves you!” Perhaps one reason the gift is left unmentioned is so we can more easily write our names and our gifts into this passage. Whatever gift package for ministry the loving Lord of the church has given us – or may add in the face of new challenges – Paul’s encouragement is clear: fan those gifts into flame for the cause of the gospel!

### ***Why is this also so critical for public ministers?***

Why is this also so critical? As Lutherans, we thank God for clear teaching on the inherent power of the means. We know all growth in faith and power for sanctified living comes only by the power of the Spirit in the gospel. Our knowledge, skills, and abilities cannot in themselves convert an unbeliever or strengthen a single child of God.

But right there we must be careful that we don’t draw an unbiblical conclusion that would actually make us quite imbalanced in our theology and approach to ministry. I will use an analogy from the Apostles’ Creed. We want a full three article approach to ministry. The heart of our ministry is the gospel of Jesus Christ confessed in the creed’s Second Article. Lutherans strive to match Scripture in being Christocentric (Jn 5:39). When it comes to what makes the difference between damnation and salvation, with Paul we strive to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Co 2:2). Our confidence as we proclaim that gospel is in the truths of the creed’s Third Article. We believe the gospel in Word and sacraments always carry with them the Spirit’s power to convert and empower. Real church growth internally and externally is always and solely accomplished by the Spirit through the gospel.

But we dare not, in our zeal to be Christocentric and confident in the power of the means, ignore the First Article. There too we find a whole host of gifts of God to be summoned for service to the gospel. As Luther so wonderfully summarized that article in the Small Catechism, “I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, ***my mind and all my abilities***....For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.” Also First Article blessings are there for us to use to the honor and glory of our God. Nowhere can that be done more gloriously than when those gifts are used to the fullest in the direct service of the gospel.

To sum it all up: we use First Article gifts, to proclaim Second Article truths, with Third Article confidence. The gospel and the means of grace, the Second and Third Articles, stand in magisterial position within the church. The gifts of the First Article stand in a ministerial position to the gospel and the means. Whatever those gifts may be that he has given us, they are to be used to the fullest to make sure the gospel gets out and is heard.

As good Lutherans you ask, “What does this mean?” For instance, when it comes to proclaiming Christ from the pulpit or in front of a class, we know that what we are doing is much more than exercising good communication skills (First Article). As we proclaim the gospel (Second Article) we are unleashing the power of the Spirit (Third Article) on the hearts of our hearers. But while proclaiming the gospel is much more than good communication, it is certainly not intended to be less. God has chosen to communicate his saving truth in the same outward form as any other human communication comes to us. So with Paul we work hard to set “forth the truth plainly...to every man’s conscience” (2 Co 4:2). We work hard to imitate Jesus in how he summoned the simplest truths of nature or current events (Lk 13:4) to illuminate gospel truth. With Paul we study the Athenians to try to understand what this “spiritual” age is all about, and what language we can use that will not be distorted or misunderstood. We ignore how messages are wisely transmitted from person to person in any culture to the hindrance of the gospel. Just as we harm the gospel if our confidence in changing hearts is our charisma and power of persuasion (shifting our confidence from Third Article to First Article) so we end up causing distortions to the gospel if we truncate our theology and ignore the importance of God-given First Article gifts. To distort John Milton: those gifts also serve that only stand and wait on the gospel. We are, after all, the spiritual children of a man who walked marketplaces around the Wartburg Castle so as to translate the Bible into a language his dear German people would easily grasp.

We do well and act wisely when we seek to take these First Article gifts and fan them into flame in gospel service to God’s glory. As Prof. Jim Tiefel remarked in an opening service for seminary, “There is room on this campus for a variety of gifts, but there is not much room for a variety of effort.”<sup>10</sup> There is room in the ministry for many and varied sets of First Article gifts. Christ has distributed gifts according to his wisdom in the multi-faceted beauty of his giving (1 Pe 4:10). But there is no room in the public ministry for a variety of effort. Gifts received are to be fanned into flame for zealous use.

### ***How are we doing?***

How easily I can turn good theology (a strong grasp on the power of the means) into a cloak to cover the evil of my laziness and apathy! As one of those I interviewed for my project so eloquently put it, “This is not a means of grace issue. It is a stewardship issue.” If we fail to develop communication skills, we may still be speaking the truth, but no one besides us may have any clue what we are talking about. If we fail to use our minds to grasp how the ever old lies are being brewed into an intoxicating new potion in the rapidly shifting culture around us, we may still be talking but we will long ago have ceased to communicate to anyone but the thoroughly initiated. If we pepper our language with abstractions and theological code rather than learning to speak with all the concrete beauty and imagery of Scripture, we become illusionists performing the most astounding stunt ever performed: we make the always relevant Word of God appear irrelevant. If we preach and teach the Word in ways that those hearing cannot give answers to “What does this mean?” we are unwittingly in league with the one who plucks seeds off of paths. Yes, those whose own apathy leads them to fail to wrestle with the “What does

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<sup>10</sup> Tiefel, “Men of God, Do Your Best!,” 243

this mean”? are responsible to God for that. But so are we who were charged to “teach with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tm 4:2).

In order to save our pride or hide our discouragement, let’s not deny one biblical truth (Christ gave gifts to his ministers to be used to the fullest) in order to maintain another (Christ’s means of grace are the only power to change hearts). As Prof. Mark Paustian said so beautifully in his article on Christian vocation at the 2006 WLS Symposium, we often must say two things to avoid the serpent’s lies on either side of Biblical truth.

I find reason for personal and corporate repentance to whatever degree the Ad Hoc Commission was justified in writing this in their final report.

Does our system lack a consistent emphasis on and acknowledgment of excellence in academics? If so, this can easily result in a tacit acceptance of mediocrity. Coupled with our lack of emphasis on creating lifelong learners, a cultural and historical aversion to accountability, the absence of a program for continuing education for called workers, and the lack of a system to ensure the implementation of such a program, we face numerous hindrances to the pursuit of excellence in ministry among us. We believe that excellence should be pursued by all who are preparing for ministry, as well as by those already serving in the ministry.<sup>11</sup>

I do not blame the Ad Hoc Commission in the least for raising the issue. What saddens me is to look at my ministry and see all too much supporting evidence.

Doesn’t it trouble us that many other professions seem to be way ahead of us in promoting continued growth beyond graduation? Continuing education is taken for granted in almost any profession that deals with the public. Isn’t it to our shame that we seem to be trailing the continuing education parade when we have every reason to be leading it for reasons far more compelling than just the bottom line or avoiding lawsuits for malpractice? Even though there are multiple reports available documenting the flaws of most mandatory continuing education programs, at least in their stumbling they are working toward a coordinated program to make sure those to whom people entrust their health and children are competent. What about us to whom are entrusted people’s souls?

In no calling is anyone less a master after completing his apprenticeship than in the holy ministry. To be sure, not every candidate believes that; but the conscientious and humble young pastors very soon recognize daily how much they still lack in knowledge and ability for properly carrying out their ministry. The three years of theological study could only offer them that which is most necessary in doctrine and practical skills. Therefore our candidates are never released into the ministry without the earnest admonition to diligently continue their studies. For the faithful pastor, study is not suspended when he enters the ministry; rather, it first properly begins....

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<sup>11</sup> *Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission*, BORAM p. 184

Specifically the theories of the homiletical and catechetical arts, which cause so much trouble for the beginner, need basic study if one wants to perform somewhat capably in practice. The daily need to care for souls will again and again drive him anew into the study of the individual parts of pastoral theology, so that he becomes clear on how he should act and why just so and not otherwise. In brief, the daily practical demands of the ministry necessitate of themselves basic theoretical study, if one does not want to change from a beginning dabbler into a superficial bungler.<sup>12</sup>

Is this another place where I must humbly ponder the truth of Jesus' parable of the dishonest steward? Don't we need to confess here also that "the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Lk 16:8)?

How else can we explain why our seminary, which states as one of its two reasons for existing to promote post-graduate continuing education, does not have even a single professor called to devote even a quarter of his time to focusing on this task? Many professors have spent many hours over the years in producing solid material in their spare time. But as the chairman of our Continuing Education Committee, I will admit that our efforts are hit and miss and fall short of a coordinated program with a long term plan. Similarly, our synod's Committee for Continuing Education for Called Workers has existed in one form or another for twenty-one years. Yet under-funded and understaffed (and therefore undervalued, since even in tight budget times we give money and manpower to what we truly value) this committee has often gone *years* between meetings. Wonderful fits and starts of activity have bubbled up, but there has been little sense of urgency among our leadership or our called workers, and so good ideas are put on shelves to collect dust. Certainly the establishment of a part time position at MLC devoted to continuing education, and the establishment on that same campus of a new master's program, are encouraging signs. But even in difficult times to claim that this is the best we can do as a synod should make us blush.

As with devotional study, there are unique challenges for the various "ages" of ministry. For those just out of school, freedom from required courses and assignments may lead many to forget reminders professors gave about continuing growth. To quote my own line in homiletics class: "A master's of divinity degree does not a master preacher make!"

As the years continue to pass in ministry, and "education" retreats more and more into the rear view mirror, it may become even more difficult to change our outlook and see ministerial education as a continual and not a terminal task.

One barrier to lifelong learning in ministry is the view that theological education is preparation for ministry. Eduard C. Lindeman...observed that 'Education conceived as preparation for life locks the learning process within a vicious circle.' When education is conceived as preparation for life, or for ministry, it becomes something to be endured because it leads to something more satisfying. Learning becomes painful rather than joyful, and, once completed, is often viewed

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<sup>12</sup> Pieper, "Scripture Study as the Special Task of the Pastor," 119-120

as no longer being necessary. Lindeman believed that within a decade of graduating an adult formed by this understanding of education, 'will be out of touch with the world of intelligence, or what is worse, he will still be using the intellectual coins of his college days; he will find difficulty in reading serious books; he will have become inured to the jargon of his particular profession and will affect derision for all 'highbrows'; he will, in short, have become a typical adult who holds the bag of education - the game of learning having long since slipped by him.' One does not need to look far to find clergy whose bookshelves are lined with books whose copyrights do not extend more than a year or two beyond the date of their graduation from seminary or whose pastoral counseling methods are so far out-of-date as to border on malpractice.<sup>13</sup>

For those drawing close to retirement, there is the temptation to ride at anchor while waiting for "the end." There is a greater tragedy than retiring too early and needing to continue work in another form to fund retirement, and that is retiring but not telling anyone as we continue to collect a check. "When John A. McKay retired as the president of Princeton Theological Seminary, he went to England to study linguistic philosophy. Unlike McKay, many ministers retire from learning before they retire from ministry."<sup>14</sup> We dare not repeat the tired old adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. The wonder of the human mind God gave us exposes that for the deception it is. "The great cellist Pablo Casals was once heard practicing when he was well into his 80s, and someone asked him why at his age and level of accomplishment he was still practicing. He said, 'I think I'm noticing some improvement.'"<sup>15</sup>

There are "two things" to be said here as well. Fanning gifts into flame can begin with the goal of glorifying God in service to the gospel, but it can subtly morph into a quest to gain the praise of men (with corners cut on clear confession). When fanning into flame God given gifts, here is a critical question for self-reflection: "How do I do all of this without giving into my own naked ambition to the standards of success that other people set for me?"<sup>16</sup> This is one reason our faculty urges graduates to serve in ministry first before beginning to pursue further degrees. Bearing the cross in the ministry helps us fight sinful pride, and the daily reminder that the ministry is about delivering the gospel to souls keeps future study focused not on "self-actualization" but on soul evangelization.

With traps of Satan again on both sides of the narrow biblical middle ground, how thankful we can be also here that God's gospel power is as near as heart and mouth (Ro 10). How wonderful to ponder the grace upon grace that is ours also here. Each of us can say with the Apostle Paul, that our dear Lord has not only sent the Holy Spirit to call us to faith, but in addition "He has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I..." (1 Tm 1:12f) have at times shown myself lazy, apathetic, or desirous of vain glory. By sheer grace, washed in the blood of Christ, he declares us faithful – that's astounding! And provides the promise of the strength

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, "Lifelong Learning and Ministry.," 160-161

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 164

<sup>15</sup> Brouwer, "Called to Be a Loser? A theology of self-improvement for pastors.," 32

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



needed to live out in our ministry that faithfulness he declared already to be ours! There is the grace of God to “forget what is behind” (Php 3:13) and press on, not only in unhyprocritical faith toward heaven, but in burning gospel zeal to redeem the time of our ministry in the use of our gifts wherever he calls us.

And please, do not get sidetracked from the sharp focus needed to fan gifts into flame by glancing to the left or right and noticing in envy or arrogance that your gifts don’t seem to be the same as this or that brother or sister. Christ was far too wise to hand out the same bland and generic gift package to each of us when he had specific ministry tasks in specific callings in mind for each of us from before we were born. Besides, all those gifts of others are really yours as well – and your gifts belong to them – since we all together belong not to ourselves but to him who loves us. “No more boasting about [or envying in regard to] men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Instead of envy or arrogance which both yield fruitless civil war, why not partner with your fellow called workers by enlisting them as allies in the quest to fan gifts into flame? The image of the solo scholar slaving away by candle light at his reading desk may be charming, but when it comes to growth in ministry skills and abilities what is more fruitful for most learners is to remember what Solomon once said: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man [or woman] sharpens another” (Pr 27:17). Find a partner in the area, or use the blessing of technology to partner with a friend hundreds of miles away. Find an older mentor who radiates gospel-empowered flame fanning and bask in the glow!

Such partnering accomplishes many wonderful purposes. In evaluating our ministry we may strive to follow the ancient Greek proverb, “Know yourself!” But our own natural hearts are deceitful beyond cure (Je 17:9), so we don’t always clearly or honestly analyze our strengths and weaknesses in ministry. Solomon was again right when he said: “Wounds from a friend can be trusted” (Pr 27:6). How even more wonderful when such friends who wound us know how to lead us to the wounds of Christ for forgiveness and fresh courage in ministry! What is more, when friends in ministry plan out some joint efforts in their study, they can help one another process and put to work the reading or study they are doing. Listen to the encouraging words that one of our district presidents wrote in an essay soon to be published in the Quarterly: “I would be remiss if I did not give credit to a few close friends...who encouraged me to join them in the pursuit of expanding knowledge and honing skills. The encouragement that they gave along the way kept me buoyed up to keep seeking ways to look beyond the status quo.”<sup>17</sup>

And don’t just scan the ranks of pastors, teachers, or staff ministers for those who can be of assistance to you in fanning gifts into flame. In the royal priests of God whom we serve there is a ready army of helpers available. They are directly affected by our ministry, and we labor side by side with them in the great gospel task entrusted to every Christian. They have a unique perspective to share that can help us a great deal in knowing where to focus our efforts in fanning our gifts into flame.

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<sup>17</sup> Glaeske, “Continuing Education for Called Workers.”

That means, of course, finding the strength of God to grow in the humility needed to accept their input without defensiveness. Yes, we may need to help them grow in their grasp of what Scripture means by faithful gospel ministry. This isn't the same as the job evaluations that take place at GM or Citibank (or that should have taken place!). But we lose too much if we leave them out of the equation. One of two bad things happens whenever we do not seek feedback from those we serve: 1) We miss the encouragement that may be given for work that is appreciated, affirming gifts that are burning brightly; or 2) we remain ignorant where our service is missing the target.<sup>18</sup> If we resist carrying out a transparent ministry before God's blood bought people, we need to ask ourselves whether we are guarding our theological integrity or our personal pride. If our concern is the former, then the answer is training those who will evaluate us by teaching them God's standards. If our concern is the latter, the answer is repentance for self-focused arrogance.

And dear lay leaders, allow me to ask you to ponder another question as you head back to your congregations. Does your congregation understand how you may be hindering the work of the gospel if there is little or no value assigned to continuing education for called workers? Many in your congregation take it for granted at work that ongoing training is part of doing their job. If we fail to translate that to our congregation and its workers by valuing their continued growth, we make a giant leap of logic and display very poor stewardship of some of God's richest gifts to your congregation, his public ministers. And you know how value is spelled. It has two spellings: the first is m-o-n-e-y and the second is t-i-m-e. Continuing education costs should at least be shared, if not covered by the calling body. Remember also: time spent in study is not the same as vacation.

What does it cost a congregation *not* to help its called workers fan their gifts into flame?

I impart the following basic philosophy of continuing education to every congregation I serve: *Continuing education is not a perk of the ministry profession; it is basic nourishment for the health and integrity of mind and soul.* Integrated minds and souls are prepared to face new perspectives and challenges. New perspectives and challenges lead to new life for both minister and congregation. And new life is God's will for us; the alternative is death and decay. This sounds hyperbolic, but almost without exception when I have met with a colleague who has long refused or been denied continuing education I have been reminded of Ezekiel's valley of bones. For lo, they were very dry.<sup>19</sup>

And now a story from the other side! I still thank God for the forward thinking leaders of the congregation God privileged me to serve in Oklahoma City. In the midst of annual budget tensions, they included in the budget sufficient funds to send me to three weeks of Summer Quarter at the seminary – with one of my weeks of vacation added on at the end.

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<sup>18</sup> Who could imagine an army carrying out target practice by discharging their weapons but never checking to see if they actually hit anything? If the target of our ministry is human hearts, might it not be wise to check, with different measuring criteria than the world, whether we are actually hitting the target?

<sup>19</sup> Purdum, "Sanctifying Ministers through Lifelong Education.," 277

They brought in a second year seminary student for that month to serve as a “summer vicar.” Other than my travel (which was taking my family on vacation), I do not recall having to cover anything else other than being willing to redeem the time and expense by working hard and growing. Did the congregation reap any return on their investment? On the Sunday on which I preached my first sermon after returning from Summer Quarter, a member made this comment as he vigorously shook my hand, “Pastor, you must have really enjoyed it up there at seminary!” The congregation received back a pastor reenergized by time devoted to study of the Word and growth in ministry. God always proves we cannot out-give him!

I end this section with some positive encouragement I have received from my research – and some focus it has given me on where we need to go from here. In reading and rereading survey results and about 300 pages of interview transcripts, I am thankful to God for the many different ways many pastors are trying to pursue growth in preaching. Most encouraging are the number of brothers meeting regularly with others to wrestle with texts – do you hear the sound of iron on iron? All this leads to the conviction that one of the things most needed is helping all called workers see the broad vista of what they are already doing or could be doing in continuing education. It is much more than attendance at workshops or taking courses for credit (although those can be exceedingly helpful). We must help more called workers get past thinking that formal schooling is the only continuing education game in town.

One does not need to register for a class or to enroll in a degree program in order to learn. While continuing education may be one way to engage in lifelong learning in ministry, it is not the only means available. [There is] a richly diverse pattern of lifespan learning which ranges from reading and travel to the use of tutors, small group discussion, and observation. While some of the patterns involve formal education, most are informal in character.<sup>20</sup>

What would happen if more called workers caught a glimpse of this broad vista of what they or brothers and sisters are already doing? “Any discussion about what clergy need to be doing in clergy continuing education must take into account what clergy are already doing - and both judicatory officials and clergy themselves tend not to regard the largely unrecorded independent learning as 'learning.'”<sup>21</sup>

The parallel challenge is to help called workers gain a greater sense of focus as they consider sampling the many learning options all around them.

Despite our verbal assent to the principle of purposeful or intentional continuing education, despite our sincere desire to engage in more effective ministry, how often do we operate without any target at all?...So often our continuing education is haphazard. We set no goals. We have no directions. We simply go to local and regional...conferences because they are being held or because they are required.

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<sup>20</sup> Brown, “Lifelong Learning and Ministry.,” 161

<sup>21</sup> Zersen, “Finding Better Ways to Clergy Competence Than Mandatory Continuing Education.,” 214

We may attend a workshop because we haven't been to any learning event recently or because someone suggested we go.<sup>22</sup>

God can certainly be at work to fan us into flame in spiritual and ministry growth without any planning on our part – as he often does by placing particular crosses in our path. Yet also here would it not be right to assume that “God is not a God of disorder” (1 Co 14:33)? Good order is beneficial for congregational polity and ministerial growth.

### **A Plan to Assist Public Ministers Fan into Flame Their Faith and Their Gifts**

But can't structure become the enemy of gospel freedom? Certainly legalism is always lurking, creating divine mandates where God has none. We cherish the freedom won for us in the gospel. We know it is only the gospel that can empower us to make wise use of our great freedom won for us in Christ. Genuine love for God and neighbor that flows from the gospel needs such freedom to give it room to breathe as it with wondrous spontaneity expresses itself in the myriad of opportunities God planned in advance (Ep 2:10) to put in front of us each day to love him and neighbor. So also, when it comes to how a public minister goes about his or her continuing education, there is great freedom in how it can be pursued. Fanning into flame our faith and our gifts can take an endless variety of forms – and so it must be since we are uniquely gifted children of God whom he has called to unique positions of ministry. Any one-size-fits all rigid pattern or requirement is doomed to failure because it cannot match the rich variety of both the spiritual gifts that need nourishing and the ministry settings in which they are used that make up each called worker's situation. And we've only hinted at issues such as personality types and learning styles!

But freedom is not chaos. Gospel freedom loves to pour itself into useful forms that promote edification (consider, for example, the rich gift of the liturgical heritage handed down to us). So, to give at least a little bit of helpful form to what otherwise can be the chaos of continuing growth in faith and ministry gifts for public ministry, I have attached in Appendix C some forms that Wisconsin Lutheran High School uses to give some structure to its faculty's plans for growth, and in Appendix D, I have attached a form developed several years ago for pastors by the CECW committee.

But I would like to go one step beyond by sharing an idea for how to make use of tools like those. I am borrowing this idea from *The Theology of the Cross*.

Those of us who are pastors [And, I would add, all called workers! RG] might do well if we would set aside June 24 (the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist) and June 25 (the Feast of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession) to consider anew what our service is really all about, both its glory and its unique crosses. The dates are especially appropriate since for most pastors they fall so close to the anniversary dates of ordination into the holy office of the ministry. As well, they fall close to the great festival days of Ascension and Pentecost, days that close in triumph our yearly pilgrimage through the Half Year of Our Lord. We have just concluded our annual journey with our *Lord of the Cross* in the

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<sup>22</sup> Carter, *Pastors on the Grow*, 26

preaching and teaching of all that he has done for us and for our salvation. June 24 and 25 fall also at the close of the busiest times of the year for pastors; school is out and most of the organizational activity in a parish tends to fall into low gear.

What better or more convenient time could there be for us to refocus or to sharpen our focus on our high calling under the cross of Christ and in imitation of our great forebear, St. John the Baptist? No mere mortal ever showed us the way better than he. It's all about Christ, not about me. It's all about pointing to Christ, the sacrifice for sinners of whom I am chief, as that other great model for the ministry put it. Yes, it's all about getting lambs to think more and more about Christ and less and less about me. Even in his death St. John carried out his great theme of "He must become greater; I must become less." For no martyr ever died more shamefully; St. John died, not as a great hero making a bold confession like St. Stephen but at the whim of a drunkard following the lead of a bimbo.<sup>23</sup>

In Appendix B of this paper I've sketched out one way those two days (or other days) could be organized. I am going to use those two days this summer to re-evaluate growth that is needed in all of my callings from God: child of God, brother, husband, father, friend, congregational member, and professor. I invite you to join me on those two days. There will be something wonderfully encouraging knowing others are seeking with us new ways to fan faith and gifts into flame.

## Conclusion

What our church needs today is not a great spiritual leader - we all know what God wants us to do - but rather many faithful pastors, professors, and teachers, every one of whom stands his ground at his post in every article of the gospel against the devil and his deceptions, and joyfully and diligently carries out every responsibility that the circumstances require of him. More than ever in our church the question to be answered by every servant of Christ is not: How much do I *have* to do in my ministry in order to pass examination by human beings? But rather: How much *can* I do in order that the kingdom of God may come?

How shall we reach that point? I know of no other counsel than that of Asaph - that we "[enter] the sanctuary of God" (Ps 73:17)....

The most dreadful thing on earth is being alone with our sins and the miseries of life. The most blessed thing is being alone with Christ....Alone with Jesus - to tell him in private about all our troubles and the wretchedness brought on by our sins; about our unfaithfulness, our trials, temptations, and crosses; and to plead with him for grace and patience; for his Spirit and the strength to carry out our ministry; for his blessing on our labors; for the conversion of the ungodly; for the strengthening and growth of his church; for humility, meekness, and patience; for truthfulness, purity, and steadfastness. Alone with Jesus - in order to hear from

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<sup>23</sup> Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross*, 197.

his own mouth the absolution in the Scriptures, to receive new comfort, gain new insights, and experience new streams of the Spirit, new joy and strength. Yes, there is such a thing as joining John in lying on the Lord's breast amid the storms of life and being comforted. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" (Is 66:13).<sup>24</sup>

My brothers and sisters, have you already drawn the connection between the troubles that face our church body and the topic of this keynote address? What our church needs most is not some charismatic human leader. What our church needs most is not to find that human cloning is legal, and we just happen to have some of Marvin Schwan's DNA in storage. What our church needs more than anything is a whole army of pastors, teachers, and staff ministers who by God's grace are fanning into flame their faith and their gifts. What impact would such Spirit empowered burning have on the people of God? I pray you join me in seeking to find out, now, while the abundant shower of God's grace is still patiently raining all around us! That rain and snow that falls from heaven will not fail to make us bud and flourish (Is 55). Such effort will never be in vain (1 Co 15:58).

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<sup>24</sup> Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," 289-291

## Appendix A

### **Discussion Ideas for Use with the Keynote Presentation**

#### **Discussion Focused on the Challenge of Fanning into Flame an Unhypocritical Faith**

Consider the barriers mentioned in the essay that try to hinder us from fanning into flame an unhypocritical faith through personal devotional study of the Word. What would you add to the list that was not mentioned in the presentation? Of those barriers listed in the presentation or added by you, which do you consider to be the hardest to overcome?

Share with your group anything that you have found helpful in overcoming those barriers and staying on track in pursuing a regular and deepening devotional life.

#### **Discussion Focused on the Challenge of Fanning into Flame Our Gifts for Ministry**

Imagine the outcry in our synod if WELS VEBA administered our health care and pension with the same kind of ad hoc confusion with which we have for too long approached continuing education in our midst. Discuss why we seem to have given more attention to one than the other. More importantly, make concrete and realistic suggestions about what can be done to change the culture in our synod where pursuing excellence is not showing itself.

Give some critical analysis to Professor Deutschlander proposal for using June 24 & 25 as days of personal reflection each year. (If time permits, glance quickly through Appendix B which has more ideas for those two days.) What do you find helpful in the suggestion? What modifications/improvements would you suggest?

## Appendix B

### One Way to Make Use of June 24 & June 25 to Plan for Personal Growth in Faith and Ministry Gifts

Here are some points to ponder as you prepare to plan on these two days (or any other days):

- Spend one of the two days in more a more royal priestly focus: personal devotional life and the callings we live out as royal priests of God (child of God, spouse, parent, congregational member, etc.).
- Also include in your reflection attention to issues such as health, exercise, and diet. The impact on our mental alertness and energy level for life and ministry can be huge. Such things aren't all important, but they are certainly not unimportant. We are not Gnostics.
- Spend the other day in a more public ministry focus.
- If you haven't read through the Augsburg Confession recently, let that be a part of your reflection on the second day.
- On the second day, also reread the words spoken to you – and that you answered – on the day of your ordination/installation. Those works will give you further reason for prayer and study of the Word!
- Use the lessons and prayers and hymns appointed for those two feast days (found below) to wrap the entire enterprise in Word and prayer thereby keeping it focused on the empowering grace of God (1 Ti 4:5).
- A thorough (measured in hours, not minutes) devotional and prayerful study of one of the pastoral epistles would be a wonderful addition.
- Each day invite input from others who can assist you in your time of personal and ministry reflection (spouse, children – whose almost naïve forthrightness might say precisely what we need to hear but that others are afraid to say, co-workers in full-time public ministry, lay leaders, friends).
- Take your “reflection assistants” out for breakfast and lunch (give them ahead of time a clear idea of what input you are looking for).
- Urge those speaking with you to be lovingly open and honest. Christians whose status and identity are secure in Christ do not need to be afraid to confront sins and weaknesses (and be absolved by fellow Christians!) and can in all humility also give thanks to God where his grace is in evidence!
- If you have not done so before, spend some time exploring your personality style (something like the DISC profile can be helpful, even if it is a bit simplistic). Also consider your preferred ways of learning. Many foolish false steps may be avoided by designing a growth program that actually matches how God wired you. With thanks to Dr. Jim Grunwald of MLC, here are a three web sites that might be useful for both issues:
  - <http://www.discprofile.com/>
  - [http://www.jobsetc.gc.ca/eng/toolbox/quizzes/quizzes\\_home.do](http://www.jobsetc.gc.ca/eng/toolbox/quizzes/quizzes_home.do)
  - <http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>



- When you are finished, share your plan with others who can help you crucify daily your sinful nature in regard to your plan, and, even more important, supply the encouragement of the gospel (not to mention keeping you and your plans in their prayers!).
- Do some reading or online study on what constitute SMART goals. SMART is a common acronym for goals that are Specific, Measurable (caution: some very important goals in the kingdom of God defy outward measurement – don't neglect them because of that), Attainable (by God's grace!), Relevant, and Timed (always acknowledging God may have a better calendar than yours!).
- Set both short term goals (weeks, months, a year) and long term goals (2, 3, 4 or more years). If you only set short term goals, some larger growth tasks might never be attempted. If you only set long term goals, you may miss out on some rather immediate blessings that could be reaped under God's blessing.
- Be careful not to attempt too much in each area of devotional life, personal life, and public ministry. Better one or two specific goals in each area accomplished well by God's grace than too many goals leading to frustration and abandoning of your plan. Perhaps several short term goals in one area might substitute for one longer term goal.
- Pick a date each quarter to spend an hour or two making any mid-point adjustments to your plan. Just don't abandon too quickly good plans that are just taking time to show visible fruit. Don't forget that God's grace means it is always OK to start over if necessary!
- Remember: Your plan is your servant, not your master. You serve Christ, and your plan must serve you. Live out of the gospel!

The proper for each day is taken from *Christian Worship Manual* p. 457 with a slight lengthening of the gospel appointed for June 24.

This pattern for the three devotions suggested for each day is taken from *Morning Meditation, Midday Meditation, and Evening Meditation* as found in *Christian Worship Supplement*.

As you read each lesson, try using Martin Luther's advice to his barber to slow down and ponder each reading. The four questions are:

- 1) What is God saying here?  
A question seeking comprehension of Spirit's point in the Scripture
- 2) For what does this lead me to give thanks?  
A question searching out God's gracious blessings in the reading
- 3) What sins does this lead me to confess?  
A question probing our hearts and lives for what sends us running to God's grace in Jesus)
- 4) For what does this lead me to pray?

A question reminding us the Bible study and prayer make for a full “conversation” with God and that it is his Word that informs our prayers so that learn what it means to pray “according to God’s will”.

Following Luther’s suggested pattern for the six devotional times suggested below may build a devotional study skill you may wish to continue during the year you are planning! Luther’s pattern is simply trying to slow us down long enough to ponder the Word in our hearts! If you want a fuller description of this pattern, purchase the pamphlet *A Simple Way to Pray* that Luther wrote for Peter the Barber.

If you have never sung psalms, hymns and canticles as part of your personal devotional life (as suggested below), it may seem strange at first. Remember that you are really never singing alone. You are simply joining the thunderous chorus of saints and angels who already stand visibly before the throne of God.

In all of this study and reflection, take your time! You are consciously seeking to be a Mary in a Martha world! It might even be wise to find a quiet place to get away where you can meditate on the Word and pray. Your church’s sanctuary might be a wonderful place for such prayerful reflection.

**Wednesday, June 24, 2009**  
**+ The Commemoration of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist +**

**Before breakfast:**

Use the *Morning Meditation* from *Christian Worship Supplement*.

Hymn: By All Your Saints Still Striving (CW 552: 1, 12, 3)  
Psalm: Psalm 1  
Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-5  
The LORD reminds us of the great privilege of announcing his great salvation to a world in desperate need of it!  
Canticle: The Song of Moses (CWS 786)

**For the rest of the morning:**

Meet with your spouse, a child, a good Christian friend at breakfast or lunch to assist you in your evaluation. If you are using a SWOT type analysis, it would be helpful to provide that to the other person ahead of time so that your helper would be able to provide knowledgeable feedback.

Focus on analyzing your life in your callings that are part of your royal priestly service to God: spouse, parent, friend, congregational member, part of a high school association, synod, etc. Include also reflection time on issues of health, diet, exercise, and getting sufficient rest. Save some of the best time to evaluate your personal devotional life.

One way to pursue this time of reflection would be to use a SWOT analysis for each calling or area of life. For more complex areas of life, it can be helpful to divide up that area into subcategories.

A SWOT analysis includes:

**Strengths** (These look at the present situation.)  
(Only false humility refuses to see where God's grace wherever it shows evidence of itself in our lives. When focused on God, identifying strengths is praise.)

**Weaknesses** (These look at the present situation.)  
(Where the weaknesses are sin, don't neglect to crucify your old self by confessing them specifically to God for the evil they are and, most important of all, finding the comfort of Christ's dying and rising love!)

**Opportunities** (These look at the future.)  
(This tries to anticipate new windows of opportunity God may be giving to make positive changes in the days, weeks, and months ahead.)

**Threats** (These look at the future.)

(Without giving in to sinful anxiety about tomorrow, this attempts to understand changing circumstances in each area of life that threaten to hinder the change and growth which we are prayerfully seeking to plan.)

**For the afternoon:**

Begin with the *Midday Meditation* as found in *Christian Worship Supplement*.

Hymn: Speak O Savior, I Am Listening (CW 283)

Lesson: Acts 13:16-26

Paul gives us a vista from which to view God's saving deeds down through the centuries, including a reminder of the place in God's plan of salvation that John the Baptist fulfilled.

For the rest of the afternoon, develop specific plans for each of the areas for which you reflected in the morning. Give some of your best and most careful attention to your personal devotional life. Be careful not to plan too much in each area at the same time. One or two good goals in each area may be sufficient. Include specific action steps as needed for how you will, God willing, implement each goal.

**For the evening:**

Plan some special time with family and/or friends that you have been meaning to do for some time. Perhaps consider making it "non-media" related. A night off from television or the Internet might provide a welcome break to everyone involved.

Make part of the evening sharing with one or more family/friends your written plans. Ask them to pray for you and to encourage you in meeting your goals. Depending on the goals, they might even consider joining you in those plans (for example: doing the same reading in Scripture and then discussing it from time to time).

**At the close of the day:**

Use the *Evening Meditation* as found in *Christian Worship Supplement*.

While much of this day has been spent in personal planning and meditation, this would be a wonderful time to invite family members or friends to join you for this evening meditation.

Hymn: The Day You Gave Us, Lord, Is Ended (CW 594)

Psalm: Psalm 85 (This could be sung using CW p. 97.)

Lesson: Luke 1:57-80

The birth of John and the wonderful insight into God's plan of salvation revealed by Zechariah's song.

Canticle: Sing the Benedictus (Praise Be to the Lord) as found in CW 276.

**Thursday, June 25, 2009**

**+ The Commemoration of the Presentation of the Augsburg + Confession**

**Before breakfast:**

Use the *Morning Meditation* from *Christian Worship Supplement*.

Hymn: The Church's One Foundation (CW 538)  
Psalm: Psalm 46 (CW and CWS both offer a way to sing Psalm 46.)  
Lesson: Isaiah 55:6-11  
The LORD calls us to find our hope not in our thoughts marred by sin but in his thoughts marked by grace. He also promises that his Word will never fail to prosper in making his saving purpose for us and others bud and flourish.  
Canticle: The Te Deum

**For the rest of the morning:**

Meet with or call a co-worker in ministry who knows you well and a key lay leader who is also very familiar with your ministry and who has a good grasp on what faithful ministry is in God's definition. Enjoy breakfast or lunch with them as they seek to assist you in your evaluation. If you are using a SWOT type analysis, it would be helpful to provide that to the others ahead of time so that they can provide knowledgeable feedback.

Focus on analyzing your life in your callings that are part of the public ministry.

If you have not read the Augsburg Confession yet this year as part of a review of the Confessions, include a reading of it during the morning.

One way to pursue this time of reflection would be to use a SWOT analysis for each area of your ministry. See the brief SWOT directions listed for the previous day.

**For the afternoon:**

Begin with the *Midday Meditation* as found in *Christian Worship Supplement*.

Hymn: In Christ Alone (CWS 752)  
Lesson: Romans 10:5-17  
God reminds you how near is his salvation to save you! He also reminds you of the privilege of being one of those specially called to bring that salvation near many others.

Before moving on to ministry goals and plans, reread the words spoken to you, and the words with which you responded, when you were ordained/installed. These may inform even further the plans you are about to make.

For the rest of the afternoon, develop specific plans for ministry, taking into account your reflection from the morning. Remember: one or two challenging ministry goals may be sufficient when getting started. You are in this for the long term. More goals will be set in the future. Include specific action steps as needed for how you will, God willing, implement each goal.

**For the evening:**

Plan some special time with family and/or co-workers that you have been meaning to do for some time. Consider again making it “non-media” related. Another night off from television or the Internet might provide a welcome break to everyone involved.

Make part of the evening sharing with one or more family members or co-workers what you have planned. Ask them to pray for you and to encourage you in meeting your goals. Depending on the goals, they might even consider joining you in those plans (for example: planning a study together of the same sermon texts or growth in an area of teaching).

**At the close of the day:**

Use the *Evening Meditation* as found in *Christian Worship Supplement*.

While much of this day has been spent in personal planning and meditation, this would be a wonderful time to invite family members or co-workers to join you for this evening meditation.

Hymn: Dear Lord to Your True Servants Give (CW 542)

Psalm: Psalm 46 (Use the other version from what you did in the morning. Use A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (CW 200 or 201), or simply read through the psalm.)

Lesson: Matthew 10:32-39

Jesus openly and honestly prepares us for the cross that will come to all who boldly confess the Crucified One. Don't miss the awesome promises of his grace that encourage us not to be afraid of our cross.

Canticle: Nunc Dimittis (Song of Simeon)

**Appendix C**

**A Template Used by Wisconsin Lutheran High School to help their public ministers plan their growth in faith and ministry.**



**2008 – 2009  
School Year**

330 North Glenview Avenue  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212-3379  
414.453.4567 • Fax: 414.453.3001  
www.wlhs.org

**Professional Development Planner**

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as  
working for the Lord,  
not for men, since you know that you will receive an  
inheritance from  
the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23-24

Name

Assigned Teaching Courses

Other Duties

---

**Ministry Goals for the School Year**

Biblical Studies:  
(optional)

Professional:

Personal:

**WLHS Conference Ministry Goal 8**

Forge a team of faculty, administration, board, staff, and volunteers who demonstrate their commitment to Christ and WLHS by pursuing excellence and growth in their professional and personal lives.



**Level One: Growth Activities for the Faculty**  
*(minimum of 12 hours)*

- List the faculty inservices or small group faculty professional/biblical studies activities in which you participated this year.
- List the significant information and/or strategies that you assessed as helpful to you in achieving your ministry goals.

---

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

**Level Two: Individual Growth Plan**  
*(minimum of 30 hours)*

---

**Spiritual Growth Activities**

*Please report on a minimum of six of the hours in which you were involved in biblical studies.*

- List some of the biblical studies in which you participated this year. (You need not list all activities; select those activities that were particularly helpful to you.)
  - List the significant insights and/or ideas that you assessed as helpful to you in your biblical studies.
- 

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*



**Technology Development Activities**  
(*minimum of 6 hours*)

- List the formal or individual technology growth activities in which you participated this year.
- List the significant information and/or strategies that you assessed as helpful to you in achieving your ministry goals.

---

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Presenter

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

**Professional Development:** Personal Interest Areas  
(*minimum of 18 hours*)

- List the interest area activities in which you participated this year.
- List the significant information and/or strategies that you assessed as helpful to you in achieving your ministry goals.

---

Activity

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

Activity

Date

Total # of Hours

– *Assessment*

## Assessment and Documentation

- Assess your success in achieving your ministry goals (use additional sheets as is necessary)
    - *To what degree were goals achieved?*
    - *What was helpful to you in achieving these goals?* –or–
    - *What prevented you from achieving these goals?*
    - *Where will you go from here?*
- 

Biblical Studies Goals

Professional Goals

Personal Goals

---

I have reviewed this completed Professional Development Planner and:

- Certify that this teacher has met the staff development requirements for this school year
- Certify that this teacher has not met the staff development requirements for this school year for the following reasons:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

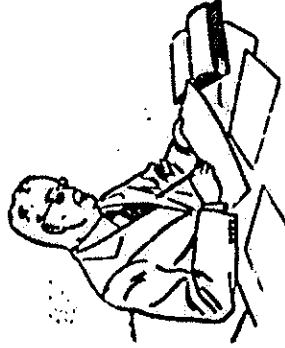
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D



# PASTORS GROWING IN MATURITY TO THE FULL MEASURE OF PERFECTION FOUND IN CHRIST

(Ephesians 4:13)



tinued growth a regular part of your life as a pastor in your present calling. Secondly, this program is intended to help you with suggestions and resources which will help you carry out the personal plan you have developed.

### OPPORTUNITIES

#### Individual Study

The most obvious kind of program for continuing education is the study the individual pastor does on his own. When you have chosen an area of study you can request a catalog of resources for that area which will suggest some books you might read, some audio or video tapes to listen to or to watch, and some printed materials for you to pursue on your own. To begin with there will not be as many items for study in some areas as there are in others, but your requests will indicate to the committee the areas in which more materials need to be developed.

#### Group Study

Another opportunity for continued education would be to have a small group which meets regularly to follow a joint course of study. For each area of study, the group can request a catalog of resources for help in carrying out the chosen area of study.

#### Seminars and Workshops

Another resource will be a list of workshops and seminars (on Bible study or practical aspects of the ministry) which are available on request by a group of pastors in a given area.

#### Summer Quarter

The most intense study opportunity is that provided by the courses conducted at our seminary each summer.

The WELS Committee on  
Continued Education for Pastors  
11831 N. Seminary Dr.  
Mequon, Wisconsin 53094

### CONTINUING EDUCATION

Those who are called to serve in the public ministry of the Word seek to grow both in the knowledge of the Word and in their ability to minister to God's people with that Word. Paul urged Timothy: "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress." (1 Ti 4:15)

### MOTIVATION

The motivation for continued growth for every Christian, and so also for the Christian pastor, comes from the Gospel. "Christ's love compels us" (2 Co 5:14). Christ's love compels us to put off everything that might hinder our continued growth: pride, laziness, excuses of being too busy or too tired, etc. Christ's love compels us to keep growing "in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ." (Eph 4:13) Christ's love compels us to keep growing in the ability to minister to others so that each of us can present himself to God as one who is approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Ti 2:15)

### PLANNING

It has been said that failure to grow as a pastor has less to do with the lack of desire than with the lack of planning. Satan and our old sinful flesh can easily sidetrack us from growing if we do not make it part of our planning for each week. The new program of continuing education for pastors initiated at the 1991 synod convention is not a mandatory program which will demand planning of you as a pastor. Rather, it is intended to encourage you to do some planning (together with your congregation, if possible) to find a way in which you can make con-

## DEVELOPING A CONTINUING EDUCATION PLAN

**1. Planning the area of study and/or improvement:** (Circle one or two, perhaps one area of weakness which needs improvement and one area of strength on which to build. In making your choice(s), bear in mind also what would be of the greatest benefit for the people you are serving in your present call.)

**a. Knowledge of the Word**

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Doctrine
- Biblical languages
- Lutheran confessions
- Exegetical skill

**b. Pastoral Work**

- Preaching
- Teaching children
- Teaching adults
- Evangelism
- Visitation
- Family ministry
- Leadership
- Counseling
- Administration
- Stewardship
- Assessment/planning

**c. Personal**

- Devotional life
- As a father
- Relaxation
- As a husband
- Physical exercise

**2. Planning a specific goal and a timetable for carrying out your plan:**

a) In the area(s) circled under #1, put down a specific subpoint of that area that you would like to work at and summarize your reason for working at it in a sentence or two:

b) Put down how much time you need to set aside each week or each month to pursue this item, and specify how you will plan your schedule to include this time each week/month.

**3. Planning the how:**

a) Choose the way that will best help you carry out your plan: (Check one category and circle one or two of the items behind each choice)

- Learning alone as an individual = reading a number of books, video tapes, audio tapes, review class notes, correspondence course, study guide, part of sermon or Bible class preparation, other
- Learning in a small group = small group of pastors, with pastors of the circuit, marriage retreat, other
- Attend workshop/seminar = requested by pastoral conference, by some pastors of the district, in another district, school of outreach at the seminary, other
- Attend summer quarter at the seminary = 3 courses, 2 courses, 1 course, a week workshop

b) Finding resources to accomplish your plan: (Check as many of the following as apply)

- Purchase books or tapes
- Seminary class notes
- Start a pastors study group
- Write for a catalog of resources available (cf. other side of this brochure)
- Subscribe to a magazine or periodical
- Visit a library in the area
- Consult with a pastor skilled in a given area
- Consult with church council for help in carrying out the plan

**4. Sharing your plan with others:** (For advice in planning and for encouragement to keep at it, check those people with whom you would do well to share your plan.)

- Your wife and family
- Leaders in your congregation
- Some pastors of your study group or your circuit
- Your circuit pastor and/or the pastors of your circuit

**M. B.** When you complete this plan, evaluate how it went. Then choose another area to pursue [cf. #1].



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