

Reaction to the Interview with Pastor Westendorf

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The story of the inner-city is not one which sums itself up in a short paper. No single event can describe it; no person solely encapsulates it. This truth holds true for the Lutheran church in the inner-city of Milwaukee as well. From the outside observer the story is as following – 1. The city expands to include in its boundaries the local rural church. 2. The local church swells in members because of the growing population. 3. The city experiences a massive amount of job losses. 4. Lower income jobs begin to move into the city. 5. A new population follows these jobs into the city. (In the case of Milwaukee, African-Americans). 6. The current membership of the church begins to move away from the city. 7. The church has to decide whether to move with the population, close the church, or reach out to the new population. – These seven points are very basic and oversimplified, but for they are a good starting point. This paper is going to examine an interview which took place with Pastor Rolfe Westendorf. He is sometimes called “The (Grand) Father of the Inner-City.” He served at Siloah Lutheran Church for more than 40 years and saw Siloah transition from an all-white, German membership to a predominately black congregation. On November 12th of 2010, I sat down with him for an interview to recount his life and his public ministry.

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7).” For 20 years of my life I sat at the feet and listened to Pastor Westendorf. His ministry could be summed up with one word – Love. When I asked about him about his special emphasis on love he replied, “Love is at the heart of the law and love is the heart of the Gospel.” Pastor Westendorf noticed that there was a lack of preaching about love. When the synod

released a new mission statement around 1990, he was disturbed by the perceived coldness of the statement. He reacted to the mission statement, concerned that a key element of the Bible was missing. "It just occurred to me that we weren't saying enough about love." Even within our own circles it's upsetting for him to see a lack of love. He worries that instead of being motivated by love, we are being motivated by being the winner. "It's a critical issue. And something that synod is going to have to work with," he expressed in the interview. Love is at the heart of the doctrine of fellowship also, and yet Pastor Westendorf made an accurate point. He raises the question, "After we decide who we can pray with, what is our obligation towards the people that we are working with?" The answer is love.

Love is the arrow that pierces through impenetrable barriers. During the 60s and 70s and up to the present day, a lack of love results in racism and injustice. Many of the churches that existed in Milwaukee's central city boomed in the late 50s. German immigrants were coming over in droves to fill the ever-demanding manufacturing industry. Siloah's membership totaled 2,000 with over 900 members attending services weekly. The early 60s produced a down economy and surge of low-income jobs. Because of prejudices against African-American, these were the only jobs that they could obtain. Pastor Westendorf stated, "Probably about 65 the neighborhood was essentially black and the congregation was white, which leads to an island mentality." It is natural to ask how a congregation that is situated in a black neighborhood not have any black members. The members of Siloah were not racists. They were not barring blacks from entering the building or attending the services. There are many complex answers that question. The overall anxiety between whites and blacks in the nation as a whole played a large part. I asked Pastor Westendorf about the race riots in Milwaukee. "I was installed in April of 67 and the riots happened in June. I can't think of the guy's name... installed at St Phillips on the night of the race riots. People who had gone to that installation had their cars rocked by crowds of angry young people." This confirmed in minds of the membership of Siloah that Milwaukee was becoming more dangerous as a result of the influx of African Americans. Sadly there was a lack of active

love for their new neighbors. I say *active* love because I don't perceive a sense of hate from the members, but more of indifference. Across Milwaukee WELS churches were either closing or moving out to the suburbs. It just seemed natural that Siloah would end up doing the same.

Thankfully God had different plans for Siloah. The leaders of Siloah were pushing to build a school. Pastor Bob Voss and Principal Gary Greenfield knew that Siloah needed a school to survive in its current location. "I love to tell the story from Gary Greenfield about Fred Walker," says Pastor Westendorf. "He stood up at a meeting and said, 'Yes we are going to move out of here, but there will be other people who will use the school.'" Siloah would have never integrated were it not for the school. The school was built in 1962. Pastor Westendorf arrived in 1967. The Milwaukee Public School system was not meeting the needs of many parents. Siloah stood out as a place that offered a quality education even if none of the neighborhood had ever been in a Lutheran congregation before that time. The contact through the school resulted in an evangelism opportunity. Many of today's members resulted from their parents being educated at Siloah. Siloah's school still serves as a great link to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Everything in Pastor Westendorf's ministry revolved around the love of Christ and the resulting love that we share with others. In 1987 he wrote *By Grace Alone*, an adult Bible information class booklet. In interviews with his members he asked the two questions that were popularized by James Kennedy: "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven? Why?" The answers that we were receiving disturbed him. Many members replied that they were good people or that they went to church often. Pastor Westendorf wrote the instructional booklet to stress in every lesson the two main teachings of the Bible: 1. We are sinners and deserve hell. 2. Jesus died for our sins and saves us by grace alone. The grace of God is the ultimate love. Pastor Westendorf continued preaching love in his book titled *Self-esteem, God's style*. His childhood was engulfed in the love of family and friends. Sadly many in the

inner city community do not feel that same kind of love. Many children in Siloah's neighborhood are born to single mothers and Pastor Westendorf knew that this resulted in so many problems later on in life. I asked him what made his books different from the hundreds of other books on the topic and he gave back an interesting reply. James Kennedy was preaching the God's law had no part in the life of a Christian and James Dobson was basing self-esteem on the bible but never included any scripture verses. Pastor Westendorf taught a self-esteem not based upon the opinio legis or psychological tricks, but rather based upon the clear word of God which preaches his love for us.

Pastor Westendorf had a dynamic public ministry in which he faithfully taught the love of God to the inner city of Milwaukee. The African American culture can seem very different from the German culture to which many in the WELS are accustomed, but nonetheless we share more than many realize. We share the curse of sin which weighs at our conscious. We know that we are sinners who deserve only to be sent to the depths of depth. And yet we also share someone so powerful that he breaks down all barriers. Jesus Christ is the brother of both whites and blacks along with every other people in the world. When we base our relationships around this love and great truth, then we truly are following the Great Commission of our Lord. Pastor Westendorf based his ministry on this kind of servant-leadership that the Lord himself modeled to us. When I look back at the ministry of Pastor Westendorf, this is what I will remember, that he loved his Lord and he loved the community to which he served.

Addenda: Questions that I asked Pastor Westendorf

Where did you grow up? How would you describe your childhood?

What were the occupations of your parents?

Describe the personalities of your family.

What was school like for you as a child? What were your best and worst subjects?

What school activities and sports did you participate in?

Do you remember any fads from your youth? Popular hairstyles? Clothes?

Who were your childhood heroes?

What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up

How is the mindset of the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?

When was the first time that you thought about becoming a pastor?

When and how did you meet your spouse?

What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

How did your wife feel about your commitment to the public ministry?

If you could have had any other profession what would it have been?

Did your education at WLS prepare you properly for the ministry?

You were a tutor, a pastor in a parish, and then an associate for many years? Did you favor one area of service over another?

You were an associate pastor for your ministry at Siloah, what special gifts does it take to maintain a long-term associate relationship.

What are the blessings and difficulties of having a church with a school?

What was your role in the school?

Describe Siloah at the time you first arrived.

What qualities does it take to be an effective pastor in a cross-cultural ministry?

Describe the feelings in the church at the time that "white flight" was taking place and Siloah decided to open a school.

Why did you write your book on self-esteem? Who was your target audience?

How important was preaching about "love" over your many years, especially in light of developing an integrated congregation?

You often preached and taught about abstinence. Could you see this make a difference in the lives of your membership?

How did you schedule time for yourself and your family during such a busy ministry?

What gave you your greatest joys in the ministry? any specific joys?

Can you share what made you sad/frustrated in the ministry? any specific sad/frustrating times?

A pastor is charged by God to preach to the church and to shepherd the people in a more individual way. Which aspect of the ministry appeals to you the most?

What are your methods for involving yourself in the lives of your people as their shepherd and overseer of their souls?

What is your approach to personal evangelism? corporate evangelism?

Why did you write "By Grace Alone"?

What is your approach to counseling? How do you handle your counseling load?

Describe your leadership style. What have been some weaknesses? Strengths?

How has our society changed from the time you became a minister to your retirement?

What is the one thing you most want people to remember about you?

Transcription of Interview

Below is a transcription of the interview that I (Joel Tullberg) had with Pastor Westenfor on November 13th, 2010. Please note that this is not a polished word-for-word transcription. Due to time constraints that was not possible. The interview below should not be quoted without checking the actual taped interview. It is merely provided as a way to read through the interview quickly.

Where did you grow up and how would you describe your childhood.

Bay City, MI. Safe. Home was secure, parent's had good marriage, neighborhood was very safe, I would leave the house at noon and my mother wouldn't worry about me until it was time to come home for supper. She would stand on the back porch and holler my name so I knew it was time to come home. Extreme example, I was six years old. We had friends in the country and I decided I was going to walk there. A guy was looking for pollywogs and I showed him where to find them. He picked me up and took me to my relatives. They immediately called my parents. He drove me home. My mother had no idea that I had gone that far. - It was safe.

What did your parents do for jobs?

Dad was a pastor, son of pastor. Great grandfather was a farmer by Zilwaukee. There were two sons, so one took over the farm and the other went to Michigan Lutheran Seminary when it was still a seminary. Four of his five sons became pastors. My dad was a pastor for 20 years in Bay City, MI., Mother was a home maker, when homemaking was considered an honorable profession. Also the unpaid secretary of the congregation. Dad couldn't type. Mother did the typing that was necessary. I was privileged to have a full-time mom.

Mom was willing to be your dad's full time secretary?

Yes, it was normal to do that. Pastors didn't have full-time secretaries. There weren't all the printed materials. Duplication methods were pretty good. There was a primitive mimeograph machine, which either had too much ink or not enough. The sheets would sail out into the study and then you picked up the sheets once they were dry.

Describe the personalities of your family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

My dad's first wife died in child birth. He had two children at that time. Then he married my mother and I have two younger brothers. My dad performed the father's most important function. That was to love my mother. He did not have a lot to do with rearing the children but his love and loyalty to my mother was unquestioned. That gave me a sense of security. My mother made most of the disciplining. My older siblings, ½ brother and sister, admired and looked up to my older brother, 10 years older. He became a pastor in the Michigan district. Older sister was the built-in babysitter. I was the real live doll that she got to play with. About the time my youngest brother was born, my father was disabled by a mental illness. I kind of filled in that role model of the male around the house. Although I was gone to school.

How old were you?

14 years old. Older sister was 25. My little brother was the same age as some of his cousins.

Did they have a Lutheran grade school?

I looked forward to Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

What was school like for you?

Part of the culture of the time is that most of the discipline took place in the home. So when I was in 4th grade, Emma Tiefel (aunt to Prof James Tiefel), she had three grades in her classroom with 54 kids in the room. I remember my father commenting that was quite a few, it was not a problem. Because parents could take care of the discipline and teachers could teach.

If you got in trouble your parents were going to find out. It was not a threatening situation at all. I don't even remember any fights on the playground. We would just wrassle around, and so forth, but anger in that kind of malfunction was pretty scarce.

What year did you enter MLS?

1947 started MLS.

What was your favorite subject and least favorite?

I thought about that and studies were never really hard for me. I would not really be able to say that [I had a favorite or least favorite].

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What sports did you play?

Gradeschool - softball, touch football. Didn't see a basketball till I was in 8th grade. We went in a gym that my friend rented and threw the ball at the basket. MLS did not have contact football at that time. We played intramural football – touch football. Basketball was the big thing. I had very little skill in that area. But I was six feet tall so that made me a candidate. By the time I got to my senior year I was high scoring man on the team. We didn't win a lot but had a lot of fun.

College - I had the "fortune" of joining a team that was all freshman and sophmores. Football again was something that I was totally inexperienced at. Didn't play freshman year. Played in the line both ways in my senior year. Class of 55 never lost a game in four years. I didn't have anything to do with the first two years. And we only played 6 games a year. First two years there was a tie, but I wasn't responsible for that. (Laughing)

Did you play with my grandpa? Ed Stelter?

Definitely, both basketball and football. He was one of the Sophomores that had to graduate before I got to play. In football he had to make all the tackles I missed because he was linebacker and I was in the line. It was good to have Ed back there.

Do you remember any fads from your youth? Hair styles, clothing?

Nothing. Style was not an option in the post-depression years. Hand-me-downs was what you wore. We weren't styling. Maybe the one thing that came up was the bobby socks. White short stockings with saddle shoes. Short hair cuts were relatively rare. I would get a butch for the basketball season. I thought long hair was not an asset to an athlete. Grease came along a little later. Was just starting when I was in high school. Personally, we kind of prided ourselves in not being subject to the trends of the time. We were anti-cool.

Who were your childhood heroes?

The Detroit Tigers. Hank Greenberg, Dick Wakefield. TV was not a factor, but radio programs - Lone Ranger. We would listen, from 5-6pm were the serials on the radio. 15 minutes each. That was regular entertainment. Unfortunately I had to leave the radio to go to supper when my mom didn't time it just right. Then there was the Lone Ranger and tonto. It was very upsetting in my life when it went to 7:30-8:30 cause I had to go bed at 8pm.

You mentioned living in post-depression era. What world events had the most impact on you?

I was born in 33 which was about the pits of the depression. I remember my dad talking about one father who drove all over town looking for the cheapest bologna. When the Sunday offering came, the principal and my dad divided it up and that's what they had to live on. The classic was shoe repair. You didn't have money for new shoes or shoe repair. I remember cutting out cardboard and putting pieces in my shoe. We were poor but we didn't know it. Everyone else was in the same boat. Members of the congregation would donate butter and stuff like that. We got by. The big family sport was perch fishing. It was not just for sport but was for putting food on the table. It was kind of significant that I had some nice toys to play with. But the ones that my older brother and sister had before the depression. I didn't feel deprived in that way. Hand-me-downs was what you expected.

The other big thing was WWII. For many families that was a devastating experience. I got over to Europe maybe 15 years after the war. I met people that remembered back 15 years, for us that would be 1995. They were in the middle of it. For me it was a big adventure. War games, playing with the model airplanes, all the excitement and glory of battle, that's what I knew about. The pain and devastation that went on elsewhere. In our congregation of 300 or 400 communicants, we only had one fatality and it wasn't a combat fatality. We experienced the war with gas rationing cards and because my dad was a pastor he got more gas than most people., Butter and sugar were rationed, not because there was a shortage, but the people back home didn't know there was a war unless there were restrictions. WWII and the USA coming out the ruler of the world a very positive experience for me, but not for a lot of other people.

How old were you?

They say that you always remember where you were when these things happened. I know right where I was when they announced when Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I was sitting in the living room putting a picture puzzle together. I was 8 years old. Then in 1945 when it was over, I was 12 years old. So I didn't get to join the army in those days.

Did your older brother have to?

No, the ministerial students were classified 4D (D for divinity). They were not drafted. They were sometimes despised. These healthy young men were enjoying life at home and other young men were dying overseas. In order to restrict draft of them they changed the school year so you one month off. They you had to go back to school to prove you were 4D. My older brother missed out on junior and senior year of football due to war time restrictions.

How is the mindset of the world today changed since when you were a child?

They write books about that. I think that the oversimplification is as significant as you're going to get. People expected to sacrifice for the good of the family and the community. Gratification is the standard now. If it feels good, do it. Not necessarily related to sexual now. People expect to have more than they need or deserve. This has far reaching negative effects on the world we live in today. Pastors entering the ministry today have huge challenges that I didn't have to worry about.

When was the first time you thought about becoming a pastor? With your dad and grandpa also being a pastor was it was expected?

I didn't want to be a pastor cause I didn't think that I thought I couldn't stand that long in the pulpit. I thought I might be a teacher. Then decided to be a pastor. When I asked my mother what she wanted me to be. She was happy with whatever I decided. In our family, not everybody was quite so fortunate, the story was that at least some of my relatives became pastors due to family pressures to do so, with some sad consequences. Not a problem for me.

When and how did you meet your lovely spouse of today?

The interesting thing is we went to the same high school. Grew up within 40 miles of each other in Michigan. We met in Mobridge, SD. Her brother tutored in SD the same time I did. I was a little ahead of you and decided I should start looking for a wife. I was very pleased with the results.

What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

There again, there are many books written about that. There are a lot of factors involved. But I think its the tension between sacrifice and self-gratification, and that connects with what love is all about. I think I have a good definition of love; an attitude that connects to the feelings of the one that you love. If the one you love is happy, you're happy. If the one you love is sad, you're sad. Keep the lady happy. "What's in it for me?" A lot is in it for me, if her happiness makes me happy. Whatever sacrifices I have

to make to keep her happy, this is no cut and dry situation, because what makes her happy is continually changing from day to day. You keep on making the same mistakes, sometimes old, sometimes new ones. If my happiness depends on her happiness then whatever sacrifices you have to make, and the key thing there is sacrifice in terms of forgiveness. "I was right, but that doesn't make any difference. Cause if that didn't make you happy I was wrong." There's that neat phrase from I Corinthians 13, "Love keeps no record of wrong." And because your happiness depends on your wife's happiness, you don't want to remember what she did to make you unhappy. Whereas in so many cases, keeping the record of wrongs destroys the marriage. Nobody gets married, expects to get divorced. Divorce has been called the most painful experience only second to the death of a child to personal trauma. Why would you want to tear yourself up inside by getting a divorce? Let that record of wrongs build up or you kind of live your own separate lives in the same house, where you are just content to live together without really enjoying one another's infection. That would be it. You find your gratification in pleasing your wife, and forget about pleasing yourself.

How did your wife feel about your commitment to the public ministry?

Fortunately for me, my wife kind of grew up hoping she would marry a pastor. That's half the battle right there. She is totally supportive of my ministry. She doesn't do the secretarial work, like my mom did, but in terms of making me look good, she gets her joy from that. Because people like her husband, that's a great pleasure for her. That is a wonderful quality in a pastor's wife.

Was her father a pastor?

No, her brother was a teacher. No clergy in that relationship.

If you could have had any other profession, what would it have been?

I never thought outside the box. I thought I would be a teacher, I taught for year at Mobridge and a year at Northwestern Prep. I enjoyed that. Because of my experience with high schools, I thought that was probably going to be my career. But then I got called to Siloah instead. Other than that, I remember once as a kid watching a truck driver unload bricks that were going to be used in the remodeling of a school. I thought that would be fun, drive a truck all day and then, he didn't have a power machine. He unloaded the truck and then got all that exercise. Farming also was something that appeals to me. I wouldn't be any good at it, but working outside and watching the Lord make the crops grow. That would be fun too. Never gave it a thought to be anything other than a pastor.

Jump ahead to your time at WLS prepare you properly for the ministry. Were you ready for it when you came out of school?

A good question. The short answer would be – No. I didn't know anything about evangelism, didn't know anything about stewardship in the first years of ministry. One of my most painful experiences. One of the members who knew about stewardship told me what was wrong with my stewardship program. Knew nothing about cross-cultural ministry. At the same time, that's constant tension in the

seminary curriculum. How much time do you spend on fundamentals and how much on the practical stuff.

The seminary did a good job cause I was prepared to learn these things when I needed to learn them. I had the theological background, but didn't know how to apply it. Had the evangelism background, but did not know how to apply it.

One long term disappointment, I said back then, "If we only had a stewardship counselor, in the synod all the problems would be solved. Now we have stewardship counselors and deferred giving counselors and consultants coming out of the ears and so much good stuff to work with evangelism, and basically we're right back to what we were doing in the 1930s. Not overall, there have been some improvements, but with all the assets that have been given to our churches over the years, the progress is not what it should have been.

You were a tutor, a solo pastor in a parish, and also an associate pastor for many years. Do you have a favorite?

I would have to say I had fun in all three situations. I think an associate pastor faces some challenges that many are not equipped for. That was not a problem for me. I enjoyed all three phases, and I would have no problem in spending one or the other.

You were an associate pastor for many years at Siloah. What special gifts does it take to maintain that long-term partnership?

One of the practical things is division of duties. You take evangelism, I'll take stewardship. You do not two pastors at each, one pastor is enough at each meeting. The other practical thing is if we can't agree on something, we disagree in private, we do not disagree in public. You don't disagree in public. Those are the practical things. The intangible is that you have to be proud enough to be humble. You can afford to lose if there is a disagreement. Some people can't afford to lose because their self-confidence is fragile. If they lose, their worth as a person is threatened. It's a little bit like marriage in that you have to be proud enough to be humble. When you can afford to lose, you take that loss as part of the price of doing business, and then you forget about it. It's not an issue that you take personally.

What are the blessings of a church and school?

I guess the blessing is the contact with the parents. You become involved in the lives of the families in a way that you can't without the school. This was a key factor in Siloah's integration. African Americans - what do they know about Lutherans? "Who cares about Lutherans? However, the Lutherans have a school. So we have to put up with Lutherans to get the benefits of the school. Oh maybe I should learn something about Lutherans." That is the key factor which unfortunately remains undeveloped. The teacher has enough to do manage the classroom and unless the teacher is out-reach minded, you get the kid to learn his stuff and move him on to next year, and your job is done. To help the whole family learn Jesus - it's kind of beyond that. Especially now with school choice. It used to be that kids got a good education because Siloah provided it. Now kids get a good education because Madison provides

it. To compensate for that loss requires an outreach attitude that at least from what I have seen has not been very successful. That is not to blame the teachers and maybe, you know, culture and history have changed. What happened at Siloah in the 70s is not going to happen in the 21 century. But that's the advantage of the Lutheran school. The down side of it is that the more people you have the more opportunities you have for incompetence. I don't know if you remember your days at Siloah and experiencing teachers who were less than competent in the classroom and we had to let them go. That is not a happy experience. Sometimes it's a nuisance and sometimes it traumatic. It's not just the teachers, the downside is dealing with parent's who can't accept responsibility for the failure of their children and automatically place it on the teacher. Which is what everyone does, so why shouldn't you do that.

What was your role in the school?

In 40 years working with Siloah, I taught catechism class. I served as principal for a year. Maybe my role that I inherited from my father, when I was growing up, the single teachers were a regular guest at our table, they were like adopted sisters. I mentioned Emma Tiefel; she formed a special bond with my mother. To nurture the teachers' in a social way, was what we did regularly. The advent Hymn sing was one of the key events. That kind of fell apart later on. I tried to make every teacher feel welcome at our table.

How would you describe Siloah when you first got there? I've seen pictures that show it's just farmland. Siloah had just passed the glory years. There was a time when German immigrants were moving into that area by the boatload. Paul Burkholtz was a very talented pastor. I went to Siloah once when I was a sem student. I remember hoping that we would get the young pastor to preach and not the old one. But I don't remember who preached, so I don't know if I ever heard Pastor Burkholtz preach. He was a gifted. One pastor had over 2000 communicants. He was very good at delegating authority and there were men who were ready to step up. The congregation was more or less in the neighborhood. The newsletter was hand delivered. The congregation did suffer because of his inability to develop the potential. The depression affected that potential. The attitudes of the time for stewardship. I remember rummaging around the stuff at Siloah. I found a rubber stamp that said "you are behind in your contribution, pay up." That was stewardship in the 30s. The congregation in those days had 900 people come to church in 3 services. Burkholtz's health began to fail. They called Bob Voss. Outstanding gifts as an administrator, later became administrator for worker training. On top of that Gary Greenfield came out of New ulm. Got rid of his job of organ playing. His talents were not in that area. Siloah congregation was well organized, a strong congregation, but the neighborhood was changing. I got there is 67. The peak was in 57. When I got there it was already down 500 members. The significant thing was the building of the school. What happened is that Burkholz was never really too excited about the school. On the 50th anniversary booklet, looking to the future, the big thing was to build a bowling alley in the 50s. The congregation was sending their kids to Garden Homes or Bethesda. Gary Greenfield was called to be a member of the Bethesda faculty. When Bethesda moved out, we had a teacher and no school. It was a very iffy thing – should we start our own school. There was no place to put it. I think the houses were moved in order to build the school the way it was when you first started going there. The people were moving out. The debate went back and forth, "Why should we do

this when we aren't going to be around that long." I love to tell the story from Gary Greenfield about Fred Walker. He stood up at a meeting and said, "Yes we are going to move out of here, but there will be other people who will use the school." Without the school we were not going to integrate.

The school was built in 62. With four classrooms with expansion for 8. Shortly before I got there 8 classrooms were operative. When we dedicated the new facility across the street [in 2003], Bob Voss came back and said how happy he was that after he had started that school with Gary Greenfield that the congregation had maintained it.

You talked about integration. When did the cross-cultural African Americans moving into the neighborhood?

The common phrase was "Heard they were up to Burleigh already." This neighborhood was all black, the next was all white. The whites got out as fast as they could. By 1967 it was rare to see white children in the neighborhood. Most of the younger families are out. The older families were around for another 20 years. Yes, there are some risks, usually it's the children who want to get mom and dad out of the neighborhood "before they get killed." It's usually a lot worse when looking in from the outside than it is from the inside. Probably about 65 the neighborhood was essentially black and the congregation was white, which leads to an island mentality. You just kind of survive as long as you can and then close up shop. It was not my doing because once the congregation decided to build a school the leadership was in favor of integration. The membership not necessarily. We had to take what Gary Greenfield had left for us and it was obviously very favorable circumstances. Not much to do with my vision. I didn't oppose it and I kind of liked the challenge. In fact, talking about the challenge, when I got the call to Siloah, I was in Maumee, OH. One thing I decided was that the last thing I wanted to do was go to Milwaukee. When I read the call letter, it wasn't going to Milwaukee, it was going to a changing neighborhood and that sounded exciting. There was nothing in my childhood that trained me specifically for cross-cultural ministry. The secure childhood I had and the confidence that something challenging was more interesting than something safe, that would have been about it.

You get the call to Siloah, and you're sitting in your office that first day with a black neighborhood and a white congregation. Were you the only pastor?

Wilmer Hoffman was there 6 months before I got there. The Voss' both accepted calls. We filled in.

So you are brand new to cross-cultural ministry. What emotions did you have? Did you have fear?

The adventure set aside all fears. Moving the family into the neighborhood is something we agreed on. We were willing to move into the parsonage. The congregation said you will probably stay longer if you don't live right by the church. We had no intention of living in the suburbs and then driving in. You know where we ended up. We were the last white folks to move in and the last white folks to move out of that neighborhood. A lot different than Dalton [where Pastor Westendorf lives now]. We felt secure there.

I thought of this on the way over, when did the race riots happen – before you arrived?

I was installed in April of 67 and the riots happened in June. I can't think of the guy's name of the sem student installed at St Phillips on the night of the race riots. People who had gone to that installation had their cars rocked by crowds of angry young people. That was right in the middle of it.

Did that have anything effect with Siloah?

The mindset was already there? It accelerated things. It didn't change anything. But the theory of physical danger became a reality. People would have been in a hurry to move out.

You wrote a book on self-esteem. Why did you do that?

The historical answer is that James Schaefer, the editor of the Northwestern Lutheran. I told him that single parenthood was not good for children. He disagreed with me so I had to tell him why he was wrong. That consolidated many of my thoughts that I had observed. I figured out that a lot of your self-esteem comes from the time with your parents. My mom and dad loved each other and stayed together. For four years I had an older brother and sister. For four years I was only the grandchild in my mother's family. Grandma and Grandpa and aunt, the apple of everyone's eye in those days. Because the people around you think you were special you grow up thinking you are special. The less you get of this, the lower your self esteem.

[Due to a glitch in the video, this part of the interview has been lost. In it Pastor Westendorf explains why his book is different from other Christian writers who have written on similar topics. He says that Dr. James Kennedy wrote a book in which he said the law of God had no place in the lives of a Christian and in fact was detrimental to the self-esteem of a Christian. Dr. Dobson wrote a book based upon biblical principles, but hardly ever quoted scripture. Pastor Westendorf wanted his book to be based solely on the word of God properly using the Law and Gospel]

Reminds me when I went out to Mobridge. I was warned that there had been some hard feelings between the high school and the congregations. Whatever you do, don't get into that. I went to the barber shop and the barber said, what do you think about the school and the congregation. I said, "I don't know anything about it and I don't intend to."

Another thing that was important that I noticed over the years, you're preaching about love. How was that important especially in light of the integrated developing congregation?

Well, the evils of racism are not easily overcome. The victims of racism are pretty good at detecting artificial friendliness. If there is going to be any real trust between groups that are historically divided by racism, it's got to be more than just polite. Love is risky business if you trust yourself to someone by loving them, you risk having that love rejected and squashed. So again, if you don't have some inner courage, or self-esteem, risking love is more than most people want to do. And if you want to earn the trust of people who are from a hostile[in the sense that the cultures are different and not historically connected] culture, love is essential. Of course, you shouldn't have to figure all that out because the Bible lays it right out for you. The Bible tells us that people will know you are my disciples because you love one another. Love is at the heart of the law and love is the heart of the Gospel. It just occurred to

me that we weren't saying enough about love. How can you read your Bible and not talk about love. When the synod came out with its mission statement, around 1990, I made the comment officially, this is a nice statement but where does it talk about love, it didn't, there was no love. Where does this mission statement say that we intend to be Christ's disciples by showing love for one another? Actually something happened as a result of that. The mission statement now says that we reflect Christ's love. You know, that's not involved the same responsibility as we ought to love each other. We can reflect Christ's love, we don't have to love, we just let Jesus' love bounce off us. Which is a cynical way of saying this. Basically if you want love you need to give love. That is what I have experienced personally. I feel somewhat good about the attention that is given to love. The Lutheran hymnal had one hymn that talked about love between Christians. Bless be the tie that binds. Someone pointed out to me that one of the communion hymn's third stanza talks about love between Christians. And it's in the regular liturgy that we love one another. One of the closing prayers of the communion liturgy mentions it. But you know you might say that scripture is about 50% about love and we are about 1/2 of 1% about love in our preaching and teaching. Some of these thoughts had been circulating in my mind and I think it was back in the 1980s I read an essay about the theology of fellowship, who you can't pray with. And I said "After we decide who we can pray with, what is our obligation towards the people that we are working with?" We need to love each other. That may be a critical issue for the future. Because we have a lot of tension in the synod- worship wars, church and change in WELS, cut the budget, we need to know that we don't have to agree but we have to be friends. Or we shouldn't call ourselves Christians. If that perception is not there, in a lot of cases we're right and you're wrong and we don't have to be friends. It should not be a mystery because the gospel is based on God's love for us in Christ. Love is the fulfilling in the law. I can't say it any clearer than that. Why do we think, not we, why do they think they can deny love and call themselves Christian. It's a critical issue. And something that synod is going to have to work with.

You often preach about love and you also taught about abstinence. I remember your bumper sticker. [Respect Sex] Could you see this make a difference in the lives of your membership?

Unfortunately no, we had some success when Kathy Mimis was our family coordinator and she had the cadet group going. There was a real commitment to abstinence among those kids. The culture in which we live celebrates sexual freedom, what we can say about it, what little we can do in catechism class, sermons and bible classes is a puff in the wind storm. It gets blown away by the elements under which we live. One of my frustrations is that as a church we say so little about it. When you consider the threat that promiscuity presents to the family and the church, it's a major issue. Who should be more interested in abstinence than Christian life resources. Abstinence eliminates abortion. Why aren't we marching those banners up and down the street. 'Clearly caring' rarely has anything to do with abstinence. That is a serious challenge and I don't think we do enough about it. When I was at Siloah I could stick that oar in the water anytime I wanted to. Now I'm retired and I can't. I think it's a serious issue. The issues of promiscuity are the same in the inner city as in Montello. Marquette county had a spurt of abstinence teaching. They brought in live at some great expense, Pam Stenzel, nationally known in abstinence circle. A handful of people showed up to hear her. She has never been so ignored so completely. Don't want to hear about abstinence. That doesn't make much sense.

On a different note. How did you schedule time for yourself and your family?

I never was all that busy. I did what I thought I was supposed to do. Having 2 pastors there that gives you freedom very simple to take off time to go on trips with your family when you have 2 pastors. Could always have lunch at home if I wanted to. Especially when the kids are little, I had lunch at home. There is a potential problem that, I'm sure the seminary deals with this with some emphasis, but God wants you to serve the church and God wants you to serve your family. That's like saying "should you love your wife or should you love your children?" There is an artificial conflict between the two. It's artificial because pastors feel worthless if they aren't devoting themselves to the ministry. That's called law driven sanctification. When there's law driven sanctification you got to be doing this and that unless if it's spending hours researching the Hebrew, you're not a worthwhile person. That creates artificial barriers between the pastor and his family. The family can take 2nd place when you have funerals, weddings, heavy counseling. The family can take 2nd place in short term, in the long term family comes 1st. If you aren't nurturing your wife and children, you are not being faithful to your ministry. That has to come first. I'm pretty sure that my wife and kids would have said, why isn't daddy home tonight? He has a meeting. But almost always daddy is home for supper and daddy is home for dinner. Not always do we get to give the kids before they go to sleep. It was an interesting example of a conference in Chicago. So I had a room reserved for me for Sunday night. I didn't get married to sleep in a hotel bed by myself. I can get up early the next morning. Which is what I did. In the meantime, somebody ran a light and totaled Krista's car that night. I would not have been there, if I didn't do that for any other than selfish reasons. But it could very(?) – in a lot of other cases. I could have talked to the brothers about the ministry.

A pastor is charged by God to preach to the church and to shepherd the people in a more individual way. Which aspect of the ministry appealed to you most?

I have to say I liked them both. Through the years preaching has become more easy for me. It wasn't at first. I certainly devoted a lot more time to sermon preparation than I do now. I like preaching and I like counseling. Actually, the members of Siloah never, rarely bothered me with their problems. I know it's different in a lot of other congregations where pastors spend hours in counseling. I did some and I was glad to do that. Most of the individual contacts was of my volition. Shut-in calls, hospital calls, premarital counseling. Planning funerals and so forth. I don't think my ministry was typical in that way. But as far as if I would have had people lined up wanting to talk to me I wouldn't have felt so comfortable about it. But it wasn't a problem for me.

Personal evangelism. In the beginning of my ministry what we knew about was canvassing, locating the unchurched, inviting them to church. Shortly after I got to Siloah we discovered James Kennedy and the evangelism explosion. There the philosophy was that you would train people to go out and visit. That was a good system which was not sustained and that was partly because of the division of responsibility. I took stewardship and Hoffman took evangelism. So when he was not doing evangelism it didn't get done. But that's the easiest thing in the world to neglect, evangelism. Basically your members are expecting you, and the unchurched are hoping you aren't coming. So you end up going where you are needed and wanted and neglect the unchurched. I'm happy with the emphasis we have on evangelism

we have at the seminary and the synod. I wish I could see more of it happening in the congregation. The school of outreach showed up in Madison and I went there and got a whole bunch of ideas and took them back to the congregation in Montello and nothing happened. I'm proud of what I was able to do in evangelism. Not very excited about what we are doing in the synod with evangelism. You can look at the adult confirmands, which is a misleading statistic. With all its weakness there are way too few adult confirmands in spite of all the extra help we have for evangelism at the seminary, which we didn't have before. If it were easy it would be happening, but it's not easy. Maintenance ministry is pretty much the standard in spite all we say and try to do. Maintaining what we got is all we do. We don't expect much more.

Speaking of Adults. Why did you write by Grace Alone?

There's a direct connection there. We found Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion and we went around and asked the two questions, we talked to our good Lutherans and they didn't know. If you died tonight where would you go? Why should God let you into heaven? "I'm a good church member." All we preach about salvation by grace, and grace alone. It wasn't registering in the people of Siloah that I talked to. They were embarrassed they didn't know the right answers. I had been using Oswald's Grace What does the bible say. When I looked at it, there were 1 ½ lessons that talked about salvation by grace. All the rest covered the ground. This kind of adult instruction wasn't doing it. We should write, conceived of a Bible instruction course, in which upfront law and gospel are presented in the first lesson. If you don't come back for the second you heard law and gospel. And then we broke it down and went over the same ground in five lessons. All law and gospel. Salvation by grace would appear squeezed into a lesson whether it fit there or not. Because of the inability of our people to express the atoning sacrifice, as the reason for their salvation.

How would you describe your leadership style: Weaknesses, Strengths?

Servant leadership is the style. Let me say creative persuasive. I like to come up with a good idea for the problem. And then if I can persuade my co-pastor and the church counsel. If it doesn't float, then fine. The strength of that is that issues get addressed whether they are accomplished or not is another issue. The weakness is that I tend to take leadership away from the members, leaders of the congregation. They are the ones who are responsible for it. I'm supposed to be facilitating them. I don't think that I have done a good job of it. My excuse is that I don't think I have been blessed with creative leaders. That if there is quite naturally at Siloah our men were inexperienced in church leadership. They were moving into positions that had been developed by the white congregation before them and not feeling real secure. Very willing to support but the creative leadership was not there. I had to supply. That's my excuse. I don't know if that is an excuse that holds water. It's easier to do it yourself.

What gave you the greatest joy and maybe something that made you sad or frustrated if you are willing to share?

Greatest joy, standard answer is in the gospel, and not just knowing the joy of salvation. Being confronted with it every day whether you like it or not. That is spiritually speaking the greatest joy.

Emotionally speaking the greatest joy is to earn the love and trust of a hostile culture. That's not the good way to say that. In spite of racism, to earn the trust and love of a different people. So proud of the fact that we have black friends in Milwaukee. Your dad is so very good at that. There is a lot of confidence that he has in the black membership. They will never let him go. Negative side is when you get betrayed. You're working with sinners. Right toward the end of my ministry at Siloah, people that I trusted betrayed me. I had their personal insecurities. What I had invested in them got thrown back in my face. That was very painful. That goes with the territory. If you are not willing to lay your heart out there where somewhere can knock it off, nobody is going to accept it either. So, by and large, I come out way ahead. The downsides were painful, but nothing compares to the love of other people.

What is the one thing, or a couple things that you want people to remember about you?

That's a very self-serving question. Personally I don't care if anyone remembers anything about me or not. However, I was gratified when someone gave me that statue of Jesus' washing the disciples feet. If that is what they think of when they think of me, that would make me very happy. I didn't really rehearse that but I had my retirement celebration on a miserable cold day in January. I had to get up and respond and I didn't want to take a lot of time. So I just said, I loved my wife and she love me back, I loved my kids and they loved me back. I loved my brothers in the ministry and they loved me back. It doesn't get any better than that. If people know that I genuinely cared about them, that would make me feel real good. But, we have just been so blessed when we see the grief that a lot of other people have to endure. We have our mansion here in Dalton, our SUVs, all sorts of material luxuries. Just what we need, we've been very blessed. Maybe one more thing is that when my grandfather was my age he was dead for 25 years. My father was my age he was dead for 15 years. What gives me the right to still be here. Probably the best answer, they worked a lot harder and were finished a lot sooner than me. That shows I have more to do.

Conclusion:

In my years at the synod we have gone from a uni-cultural synod to a multi-cultural synod, that is accepted and promoted by people with a lot more talent than myself. Like Al Sorum, for instance. The sad thing about it is that the home and the family were a lot more secure when I was growing up. The failure of love to dominate in our relationships. That's not love's failure, that's our failure. That's a major disappointment. That is the maybe a sign of Jesus is coming back.