

**WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY:
MINISTERIAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

PASTORS

The 1993 Synod Convention resolved to amalgamate Dr. Martin Luther College and Northwestern College on one campus. The resolution states, "That our synod adopt and support a worker training system with...one ministerial school with separate pastor training and teacher training colleges, including other programs...all on one campus" (Proceedings 67). It further resolved, "That both the pastor and teacher tracks retain their identity and integrity in the worker training system" (Proceedings 66). Accordingly, the two colleges are not being combined, nor is one being assimilated into the other. The synod established one ministerial school with two separate colleges.

Because training for pastoral ministry has been conducted on a separate campus for 130 years among us, we will face a new, significant, and fundamental change in the way we train pastors. Some would suggest that it is about time we change a system of training that concentrates on old paradigms no longer important in our modern world. Others would suggest that we stand in great peril of losing what we have long treasured as an important form of ministry, and if we do not lose the form altogether, we will change the pastoral ministry dramatically over the course of the next 10 years even if we retain the title "pastor." Simply stated we have abandoned the concept of training pastors in an all male school dedicated only to the undergraduate formation of pastors. Some would suggest that we can no longer afford the luxury of spending so much money on the training of pastors, while others would suggest that such a system of training isolates pastors and flies in the face of our concept that all public ministry is essentially the same.

Changes in how we train pastors and teachers will come. Of course, some changes will be natural responses to the needs of our congregations. Such changes have historically occurred over the history of our synod and will continue. Other changes will occur because we have changed the environment for the training of pastors. Still other changes may occur in ways and because of forces we do not understand at this point and have not anticipated adequately. The discussion on ministry at the Western Wisconsin District is important in that it will allow us to pause and see what is different about the forms of ministry among us. God willing, that discussion will reveal what we need to retain as the changes unfold.

For these district sessions, all of the presentations on the specific forms of ministry among us occur without a thorough discussion of the concept of ministry from which they flow. Professor David Valleskey will deal with the broader concepts to some degree in his presentation. Perhaps that is as it should be since "Member Ministry" requires us to see both what is common to

all public ministers and what is different about each form we know. My assignment was to speak about the pastoral ministry and because of the changes ahead of us as a synod, I want to focus my attention on the training we provide pastors. Remember that the young men entering the pastoral training program this fall as freshmen will graduate in 2002 -- the beginning of the 21st century. The future then is closer than we imagine.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE PASTORAL MINISTRY

One cannot begin a discussion about pastoral training in the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod without assuming some things about the goal of that training and education--its outcome. These assumptions lead to a significantly different kind of training for pastors than for teachers or other public ministers. It seems to me that those responsible for training pastors have operated in our classrooms and outside the classrooms with these assumptions about the pastoral ministry:

1. The pastoral ministry is a ministry of the word of God. Those who occupy this form of ministry will be spokesmen of God who understand clearly and thoroughly the word of God and the doctrines it proclaims. Therefore, among other things, the pastor must know enough to handle the word of truth correctly, be apt to teach, and be an example to the church so that the message of God is not discredited. (Cf. I Timothy, Titus, I Corinthians 3-4, II Corinthians 2-6, etc.)
2. The pastoral ministry is communicating the word of God to people. Therefore the pastor must understand a wide variety of human beings, their activities, and perceptions, not just the activities and perceptions of believers.
3. God has given the ministry of the word to all believers. Yet Scripture outlines requirements for leaders of believers, and God has called leaders for his people throughout history. The leader we know as pastor is a servant, a shepherd who serves under the Great Shepherd. The pastor serves first of all the Lord who calls him to a position of leadership among the saints. He also serves the believers who call him to serve them with the word and sacraments. He should have a love for people, a desire to provide for their spiritual needs, a humble attitude toward his people and his work, and a courageous heart to confront sin and proclaim God's message when it will not be appreciated.
4. His distinctive responsibilities in the church are preaching the word of God, exercising spiritual responsibility for the entire congregation both young and old, administration of the sacraments, and leading congregational worship. While his focus must include reaching out to those who are not believers because Christ commanded that of all his saints, his call will direct him to focus most often on the believers he serves.

5. A church body needs pastors who are theological leaders in their congregations and who can, at times and in various crises, do in depth exegetical studies of God's word, explore historic and current problems in the church, and prepare apologetical studies of God's truth that take into account most of what is going on both in the unbelieving world and the Christian world. This presupposes the ability to interpret the word of God on the basis of the original languages, to read many kinds of other texts with discrimination, and to think independently.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In order to assure the church of Christ that the pastoral ministry might continue to provide theological leadership for the saints of God, I think the following principles need to persist among us and in the schools that train future pastors. These principles have been a part of our training for 130 years, and I believe we will be impoverished if we alter them or lose them.

1. Those who wish to be pastors should be trained by a faculty that is predominantly pastors. This does not mean that only pastors will teach future pastors, but that those who have been pastors should form the dominant group on the faculty of the school training pastors. Northwestern College has operated with that principle from the beginning. Pastors have been called from their congregations to take up the task of training future pastors. Once they arrive on campus we send them to graduate school to learn more in the discipline to which they were called. The primary criteria is a professor's exposure to pastoral or teaching ministry not his expertise in an academic discipline. A pastor who has served a congregation of God's people will bring a pastoral perspective to his teaching and to his assigned discipline that is important.

Pastoral training is not simply acquiring academic requirements and meeting the necessary credit hours for graduation. Pastoral formation requires more than providing credits in Greek, Hebrew and religion. Pastoral candidates should receive the benefit of a pastoral perspective in other academic area as well.

2. The faculty that trains pastors should be able to meet as a group of men to discuss the progress of students who desire to become pastors. Evaluation of students is critical because they will be recommended to congregations to serve as pastors. Such evaluation will be academic, social, moral, and psychological.
3. The faculty that trains pastors should be able to meet as a group of men to discuss curriculum for those aspiring to be pastors. Curriculum development involves many facets, most

responsibility for course work. Curriculum development should also involve the larger community of believers who calls the pastors and assessment of curriculum should incorporate some way that the larger community of believers can be heard. Nevertheless those who teach regularly know the classroom and the students the best. If they are also former pastors, they also have a vision of what the pastoral ministry requires.

4. The program for pastoral studies should be clearly identified. Prospective students need to know what is expected of them. It seems to me that the identification of faculty, courses, and course requirements for pastoral students is a minimum. Students are recruited, at the undergraduate level, as potential pastors. A recruitment to ministry is too vague to be helpful to most students. They need to focus on the concrete goal from the beginning or they will either not chose to come to begin their training or they will lose focus early in the training.
5. The program for pastoral studies must have sufficient financial aid to allow students to finish the longer course without taking time off to work and without incurring crippling debt to finish. This will require some distinction between pastoral candidates and those who desire to serve in the teaching or staff ministries, who have shorter periods of training. An erosion of the financial resources for pastoral students may result in fewer candidates able to finish the course of study.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Since we believe that all ministry is essentially the same, should our training for all ministers be the same?
2. When we consider how to train pastors, should we operate with outcome based education? Do we already deal with outcome based education but disagree on what the outcome should be?
3. Is it more important to train pastors who are missionaries than to train pastors who are theologians? Is this a false dilemma? Is it ever really possible to train either missionaries or theologians?
4. Do the young men who present themselves for service as pastors represent a denominational attitude toward their work because they were nurtured and trained in our congregations? In other words, are whatever limitations we see in them limitations in our own churches and the synod at large?
5. Are we expecting pastors in our congregations to solve every problem? When they fail because our expectations are too high, do we then too easily blame them for every problem in our congregations? Exactly what is a pastor to do above all else? Are we looking for "magical" or oversimplified solutions to complex and difficult problems when we want to alter our program of training?
6. It has been said that the training of pastors has created the problems we face in the church and the training must be changed. What problems do we face? Can they be solved by changing the training we give pastors?
7. Do we need Latin and German in the training of pastors? Do we need languages at all?
8. Have we denigrated the pastoral ministry in our midst by our emphasis on the concept that "everyone is a minister"?