

Pastor Wayne Schneider: Training Future Pastors

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Prepared for Senior Church History, CH 3031

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December 11, 2006

Pastor Wayne E. Schneider served his Savior in the pastoral ministry from July, 1966 through August 27, 2006. Throughout his forty years of ministry, Pastor Schneider served four congregations. From 1966 until January 1971, he served St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Bethany Lutheran Church, both in Broadhead, WI. In January 1971, he moved to Savanna, IL where he served St. Peter's Lutheran Church of Savanna and Trinity Lutheran Church of Mt. Carroll, IL. He served these two congregations for the remainder of his ministry.

During his thirty-five years in Savanna and Mt. Carroll, Pastor Schneider held the responsibility of training thirty vicars¹, future candidates for the pastoral ministry. Of his thirty vicars, Pastor Schneider noted that twenty-two are still in full-time ministry, while two more are still awaiting assignment. His excellent reputation as a bishop is even more remarkable when one considers the fact that several of the vicars he trained were below average students. Pastor Schneider says they were sent to him because in Savanna and Mt. Carroll he was able to devote more time "to spend with them, to work with them, and be patient with them and encourage them."² He also felt that the differences in the two congregations also benefited these men. In these two different settings they could see ministry in two very different perspectives. The author believes that the success of these cases was in large part because of the way in which Pastor Schneider taught them.

Pastor Schneider served as a vicar at Our Savior Lutheran Church in 1964-65 in Pomona, CA. His bishop was Pastor Paul Hein. He had the responsibility of starting new missions in the southern California area. This gave Pastor Schneider ample opportunity to work in mission

¹ A vicar is a man who has completed two years of training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The vicar year is one of practical experience. He learns from his supervising pastor, or bishop, by observation and hands on training. Following the vicar year, the student returns to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for his final year of study before being recognized as a candidate for the pastoral ministry. The bishop is the vicar's only professor for this one year of study.

² Video Interview with Pastor Schneider, December 2, 2006.

settings, as well as the other basic foundations of pastoral ministry. He thought very highly of his bishop. He credits much of his style to how Pastor Hein dealt with him during his vicar year. Especially in the area of preaching, Pastor Schneider valued the communication he had with his supervising pastor and gave great effort to share personal time reviewing the vicar's sermons.

When Pastor Schneider graduated in 1966, he was assigned to Broadhead, WI. St. Peter's Lutheran Church had been on mission status for many years, but they were worshipping in an inadequate building. Shortly after Pastor Schneider arrived, St. Peter's Lutheran Church began a building project. The second congregation was a former ALC church, which was abandoned by their synod. They decided to continue their ministry and appealed to the Wisconsin Lutheran Evangelical Synod. Pastor Schneider dealt with doctrinal issues in this congregation because of their history with the ALC. These two very different congregations prepared Pastor Schneider for his future work in Savanna and Mt. Carroll. He says that he understood better that "there's a lot of grey areas"³ in many different situations. During this time he learned what it means to have an evangelical approach to different people in their different situations.

In December 1971 Pastor Schneider accepted a divine call to serve at St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Trinity Lutheran Church in Savanna and Mt. Carroll, IL. At first, Pastor Schneider had no idea that he would be training vicars in Savanna and Mt. Carroll. It was only after three years, when the congregations decided to call a vicar again, that Pastor Schneider understood that he was going to carry the responsibility of a bishop. He noticed in his early years that his ministry was limited as one person. He felt that once he received a vicar, he was able to expand ministry and to give more focus to vital areas of ministry.

³ Video Interview with Pastor Schneider, December 2, 2006.

In carrying out his responsibilities, Pastor Schneider relied heavily on the resources that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary produced. He felt that these resources were invaluable in aiding the bishop in his responsibility. He also commented that the seminars provided by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary were very helpful to him in carrying out his responsibilities. This was his main source of support. The District Presidents worked to assign the right vicar to the appropriate situation. The Circuit Pastor offered encouragement, assistance if any problems arose and assistance in evaluating the vicar's performance. However, these men were not able to offer any more support, due to their own calling and their lack of experience with vicars. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary was the main avenue of support for the bishop and has improved its program over time.

The ministry itself brings heartaches and joys. As a bishop, Pastor Schneider experienced unique emotions. Many of the heartaches came from issues that arose in the vicar's personal lives. He dealt with these situations as a caring pastor. As a bishop, he was not only called to train these men, but also to be their pastor as well. He sought to care for these individuals by listening to their specific problems and encouraging them through heartfelt conversations. He never mentioned the emotional weight that he himself carried for these young men. Instead, he always focused on helping those men through the difficult situations they faced.

There were also many joys that accompanied his ministry as a bishop. He found much pleasure in seeing the progress of the vicar throughout his year of training. Even the simplest tasks of teaching them about the daily routines of a pastor gave him much joy. He saw the progression of each vicar as a remarkable gift of God. What a beautiful example Pastor

Schneider gave of rejoicing in even the apparently mundane gifts that God gives to each one of us, joys which, at times, might be overlooked!

It was noteworthy how Pastor Schneider taught specific areas of ministry. The overarching principle that he employed was a combination of being an outstanding model of a pastor and patient encouragement and guidance.

Pastor Schneider valued the subject of preaching as “one of the biggest areas that I could help the vicar through my experience.”⁴ He felt this was the one area where he was most able to guide the vicar. Quite valuable was the time he spent one on one discussing the sermon outline and manuscript. Here he could give advice and guidance to the vicar as to how the pastor sought to communicate God’s truths to people in their many different situations.

In other areas of ministry, Pastor Schneider used the same principle. He gave the vicar ample opportunity to observe how he taught, led evangelism meetings and conducted stewardship emphases. He showed them the value of a radio ministry and how to carry out the devotions for that ministry. He also introduced the vicar to the Gordon Jones’ Home, which was the facility where the Jesus Cares’ Ministry was conducted to developmentally disabled individuals. After these opportunities for observation, the vicar also gained experience in carrying out these functions on his own. As time went along, Pastor Schneider would advise and counsel on ways the vicar could improve, but never with a heavy hand. He always allowed the vicar to maintain his own style, but showed him through patient teaching how the vicar might carry out his responsibilities to the best of his abilities and to the glory of Jesus. In many situations, Pastor Schneider left the vicar free to explore the way in which he would conduct ministry. He allowed vicars to make mistakes and learn from them. He never intruded on the vicar’s exploration of the ministry, except when the Gospel would be compromised.

⁴ Video Interview with Pastor Schneider, December 2, 2006.

Over his years of ministry training vicars, Pastor Schneider noted several changes that took place within the vicar program and with the vicars that he received. When he began his work as a bishop, there was little aid or support given to the bishop. Over time Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary improved on the materials and seminars that were offered. These materials that were developed aided the bishop in learning how to carry out his responsibilities. He also commented that the quality of the students that were sent to him improved greatly over the course of his ministry as a bishop. He credits the improvements in education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary over those years to the quality of his vicars.

One disappointment Pastor Schneider felt was that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary did not give the bishop much information regarding an incoming vicar, what kind of student he was and the like. He thought that this information might help the bishop to better understand the vicar from the first day. This would give him an advantage in training that young man. However, he was also quick to acknowledge that he understood that this was Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's position and he respected that position.

Early on in his ministry, Pastor Schneider noted that he didn't give as much help to the vicar as he did later. He learned "to spend more time with them"⁵ and to be more specific in regard to the responsibilities they held as a vicar and were going to carry out in full-time ministry.

Pastor Schneider gave some advice to men who have been called to the responsibility of being bishops. He reminds us that we can always improve on being role models, good examples of Gospel ministry. We can always grow in our patience and kindness when dealing with our brothers in the ministry. He recognized that he could always improve on his own work as a bishop.

⁵ Video Interview with Pastor Schneider, December 2, 2006.

When asked what he would say to a man who would soon take on the responsibility of a bishop, Pastor Schneider responded, “Be kind to the young man. Encourage him! It’s a wonderful opportunity. “My ministry – my forty years of ministry – was greatly enhanced by the thirty years that I spent training vicars. It has been a real joy to me.”⁶ This attitude embodies his approach to the training of vicars. He always sought to encourage and guide. He focused on the example he was giving. He sought to teach and correct, not by hard discipline, but by patient counsel. His responsibilities as a bishop were extraordinary. However, the way in which he fulfilled that responsibility was ordinary. His was the example of an ordinary pastor, humble and patient, ever seeking the glory of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the honor and glory for this wonderful servant, one who trained future pastors.

⁶ Video Interview with Pastor Schneider, December 2, 2006.

Vicars Trained by Pastor Wayne Schneider

1974-1975	Richard Agenten
1975-1977	Michael Frick*
1977-1978	Gerald Blobaum
1978-1979	Jay Gottschalk*
1979-1980	Thomas Horner*
1980-1981	John S. Dorn
1981-1982	Robert Fleischmann
1982-1983	Shawn Kauffeld
1983-1984	Donald Main
1984-1985	John Hartmann*
1985-1986	William Favorite*
1986-1987	Kevin Hanke*
1987-1988	David Haugly
1988-1989	Kurt Ehlenbrauch*
1989-1990	David Wierschke
1990-1991	Robert Seifert
1991-1992	Dennis Reichow
1992-1993	John Moll
1993-1994	Kurt Talsma*
1994-1995	Christopher Goelzer
1995-1996	Robbin Robbert
1996-1997	William Finn
1997-1998	Todd Krueger
1998-1999	John Werner
2000-2001	Joseph Crabtree
2001-2002	James Heffner
2002-2003	Mark Jacobson
2003-2004	Clint Burow
2004-2005	Adam Manian**
2005-2006	David Schmidt**

* -- Currently Not in Ministry

** -- Still Awaiting Assignment

To the best of my knowledge this information is accurate as of December 11, 2006