

EVALUATIVE CONTINUING EDUCATION:
A NEW PARADIGM FOR GROWTH-ORIENTED, EVALUATION-BASED
PASTORAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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FEB 2016

ABSTRACT

Continuing Education (CE) is an effective means by which pastors can grow spiritually, professionally, and personally. Survey results find that 100% of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) pastors have participated in some form of continuing education, whether formal or informal in nature. This unanimous participation demonstrates that continuing education is an important aspect of full time pastoral ministry. Yet despite a collective assent to the value of continuing education, the majority of WELS pastors and their congregations participating in the survey conducted for this thesis approach pastoral CE with little or no focus or plan, greatly diminishing CE's potential benefits. This thesis will answer two questions regarding this situation. First, what challenges do WELS pastors face as they pursue CE? Four consequential challenges are studied. Second, how can pastors better engage in more targeted CE? In view of the challenges and a historical study of CE paradigms in WELS, and most significantly, in view of scriptural principals of growth, this thesis will propose a new paradigm of pastoral continuing education referred to as Evaluative Continuing Education (ECE). ECE is defined as a growth-oriented, assessment-based approach to CE that considers a pastor's gifts in light of the congregation's ministry in order to remove haphazardness from CE by targeting a course that is of greatest value to pastor and parish. Evaluative Continuing Education promotes targeted, mutual growth for a pastor and his congregation, resulting in more effective ministry.

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PART I – INTRODUCTION

A Lesson for Pastors from a Wood Carver’s Continuing Education

A man considered himself a nonreader and generally uninterested in learning. By trade, he was a woodcarver. This woodcarver, however, developed a special interest in carving ducks. So, he focused his efforts on teaching himself how to carve them well. Though pleased with his newly acquired skill, he was not satisfied with a beginner’s competency. Seeking to grow in his ability, he took his early duck carvings to wood carving exhibitions. There he talked with other artists about his work. Afterwards he even read books related to duck carving. As you’ll recall, he had been a “nonreader.” Desiring to improve his carvings further, this man raised ducks so he could have live models – a project which, in itself, required much learning. Remember: he was previously uninterested in learning. However, having experienced such personal growth firsthand, today this wood carver sees himself as a lifelong learner. He is passionate about continual growth in his profession, realizing his continued learning is making him more successful and more fulfilled.¹

Picture a similar man in a different vocation. During his schooling, he was not particularly enthused by academia. He is a Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) pastor. This man, however, has a variety of specific, special interests: biblical language studies, doctrine, counseling, worship, evangelism, leadership, and education to name a few. Though recognized by his congregation and pastoral peers as a faithful shepherd and undeniably competent, he is not satisfied. Seeking to grow in his abilities in every area of interest and ministry, he attends conferences, study groups, and classes. He reads books. Additionally, he takes on self-directed, ministry-related projects that yield learning experientially. However, his attempts fall short in achieving the growth he had hoped for, as his approach to growth lacks a clear focus. As a result the pastor feels unfulfilled and unmotivated. Today, despite the learning that has certainly taken place, his attitude toward education remains the same. He views his

¹Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 25.

learning experiences, even those of his own initiative, as a necessary evil. Regarding the idea of personal and professional growth, he remains indifferent.²

What is the difference between the two men? Surely the professions of woodcarving and pastoral ministry have several. However, two closely related differences concerning these men's approach to learning are worth mentioning.

Difference #1: Targeted Learning

First, the woodcarver had the luxury of targeting one very specific area: ducks. For a pastor in parish ministry, spending time, energy, and cost growing in any one particular area is more difficult. There are simply more areas of responsibility. Pastoral ministry is, comparatively, a much more demanding profession. Should time and energy be spent growing in one area it may likely be that other areas suffer. For a woodcarver, targeting an area of growth is much easier to do.

The woodcarver who participated in an interview for a study on self-directed learning was led to the realization by his experience with duck carvings that there is benefit in targeted or focused learning. Although he didn't plan for it, he directed his learning by identifying ducks as his target area of learning, and therefore subsequent area of growth. Albeit unintentional, he planned his learning by consulting other artists, reading books, and raising ducks. This focused approach led to the acquisition and development of new skills. Secondly, yet perhaps more significantly, the benefit of his focused learning inspired in the woodcarver a growth mindset. The hallmark of the growth mindset is a *passion* for stretching yourself in order to grow.³ Because he targeted his growth, the one time non-learner developed a love and desire for continued growth because the experience was fruitful and enjoyable.

² This author has no one individual in mind. However, the picture of this pastor is no less valid. Several real individuals inspired this picture. When speaking with pastors informally about continuing education or conducting formal interviews for this thesis project, I received varied reactions to continuing education. However, common themes soon became apparent. One in particular is noted in this fictional pastor. While every pastor expresses a recognized value in continuing education, the majority of pastors simultaneously convey reservations about their own participation in continuing education for various reasons.

³ Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Ballantine Books trade pbk. ed (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 6.

The pastor, on the other hand, did not focus his growth. With several areas of interest demanding his attention he took a potluck approach to continued learning. With no clear target he dashed through the educational potluck line and took a little bit of everything. What resulted was a figurative stomachache, no tangible benefit, and no desire for seconds. Just like eating for eating's sake does not serve to benefit our health, education for education's sake does not effectively serve the cause of ministry.⁴ Ministry is a demanding profession and continual learning is necessary, yet understanding that truth, like knowing the need for healthy eating, doesn't make it any easier. Although pastors are convinced that learning and growth are good, the demands of ministry often produce an educational attitude of arbitrariness. Consider these examples of an unfortunately haphazard attitude regarding CE.

When asked in a survey, "What have you found to be the greatest benefits of CE in your ministry?" pastors gave these positive responses reflecting its undeniable value.

Pastor A – Being around other pastors and being back in a classroom setting recharges you and reminds you why you're serving as a pastor – to share Christ's love with as many as possible.

Pastor B – My CE helps me stay strong in my understanding of God's Word and helps me to grow in it.

Pastor C – It always is faith strengthening, and revitalizes and invigorates me for gospel ministry.

Pastor D – Deeper study of the Scriptures, and also new methods and applications that reach more people.

However, when asked, "Is pastoral CE a part of your congregation's regular ministry plan?" the same respondents gave answers that were anything but optimistic. Instead, they reflected this unplanned, untargeted approach to pastoral CE.

Pastor A – Sort of – we budget for it, and we generally want our pastors doing something each year, but it's not spelled out in detail.

Pastor B – No.

Pastor C – Not in the plan per se. But it's in the budget when needed.

⁴ David John Zersen, "Finding Better Ways to Clergy Competence than Mandatory Continuing Education," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62(3) (1998): 209–18, 212.

Pastor D – No.⁵

With the clear, demonstrable benefits articulated above, why is there not a greater dedication to targeting the good and capturing the blessings that result from CE? Why don't pastors and congregations take time to spell out specific ways pastors can further grow in the Word? If CE is always faith strengthening, revitalizing, and invigorating, why isn't it *always* in the regular ministry plan? When a deeper understanding of the Scriptures for those who teach the Word is a blessed result of CE, why isn't sufficient time set aside? A solution to this unfocused approach in pastoral CE seems necessary.

It may be critical to find ways to help pastors plan and prioritize possible areas of growth so that they are not paralyzed by the many ministry needs for which growth could prove beneficial. Helping ministry professionals honestly evaluate their gifts and comparing them with the ministry challenges before them may help yield some insights on where the greatest benefit of focused growth may lie.⁶

Evaluation of self and ministry in order to target specific growth areas may be the answer to the growth paralysis caused by various ministry demands for which growth itself would serve as a blessing. However, that is easier said than done. That concept brings us to our second and perhaps most significant difference between the pastor and the woodcarver's CE approach.

Difference #2: Growth-Oriented Evaluation

The second difference between the woodcarver's and the pastor's situation is found in the ability to evaluate one's work *for the sake of* growth. Very simply, his evaluation tool was his live ducks or a picture of an actual duck. When the wood carver needed to assess his work to determine precisely where he needed to grow or improve in his work, he simply needed to hold his creation up to the real thing. Doing this immediately made obvious where development, change, or growth was necessary.

In pastoral ministry, no such "tool" exists to continually evaluate one's self and one's ministry *for the express purpose* of pinpointing areas of future growth. How can a pastor determine if his preaching or teaching styles are connecting with listeners? How can a pastor measure the effectiveness of his leadership or administration? How can a pastor gauge his skills in counseling? Furthermore, back to the complexity of a pastor's call, if he sees shortcomings in

⁵ Survey responses from WELS pastors. See Appendices C, D, E, and F.

⁶ Richard L. Gurgel, "The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching: A Comprehensive Plan for Continuing Education in Preaching for Pastors of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod" (D.Min. diss., 2010), 57.

a few areas (and who doesn't), how is he to know which area should primarily become his targeted growth area? Peter Drucker, management consultant, educator, and author, famously said "Most people think they know what they're good at (*and one could add what they are bad at too*). They are usually wrong."⁷ On our own, we don't know what we don't know.⁸ It seems an evaluation tool to help pastors target, plan, and prioritize their growth could be valuable.

Certainly there are a variety of personality assessments and gift evaluations and inventories, ranging from free online quizzes to those provided by paid consulting groups. While these can be incredibly useful, they have limitations. An assessment tool that measures one's personality, gifts, aptitude, learning or leading styles, etc. is limited by the fact that it cannot take into account one's entire ministry context which significantly involves ever-changing ministry needs and non-static human beings. Quality in such tools is lacking. Assessments or evaluations done by people (i.e. consultants or counselors) can be much more accurate in their assessment of a pastor and a ministry; however, they come at a cost and are rarely a tool to be used in a regular, ongoing manner. Yet when determining where one needs to grow, honest appraisal of one's strengths and weakness is invaluable. When asked, "What benefit(s) do you see evaluations having in a pastor's continued education?" a interviewee experienced in the area of education answered by saying, "The data says [evaluation] is just as important as continuing education, and when you link them they can be powerful."⁹

The multiplicity of roles in pastoral ministry makes continuing education difficult. A random approach to pastoral continuing education does not help the problem: haphazard learning leaves much to be desired. Is there no tool to guide pastoral continuing education and help pastors target, invest, and grow in their strengths and weaknesses in light of their ministry context? It is the conviction of this author that such a tool to aid pastors in their continuing education does exist. This tool is, in fact, the congregation the pastor serves. This thesis will offer a paradigm – a model – of continuing education for pastors that involves the pastor and his congregation while simultaneously addressing haphazardness that hinders a pastor's continued growth.

⁷ Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 15.

⁸ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September, 2015.

⁹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September, 2015.

Specifically, this thesis will begin in Part II by studying the topic of continuing education from a biblical perspective to help readers realize why a pastor prioritizes his growth. In Part III a brief historical overview of continuing education in modern times in Europe and America, in theology as a field, and in the WELS will be studied to gain an understanding on the state of continuing education for pastors today. This section will concentrate on three existing paradigms of pastoral CE in WELS.

In Part IV, two key questions will be investigated. First, “What challenges do WELS pastors face as they pursue CE today?” This thesis will explore four specific challenges. Secondly, the question will be asked, “How can pastors better engage in targeted CE that has as its goal mutual growth for the pastor and the congregation?” In response, this author will propose a new paradigm of continuing education for WELS pastors called Evaluative Continuing Education. Evaluative Continuing Education is best understood as an assessment of a pastor’s gifts in light of the congregation’s ministry in order to pursue a course of pastoral continuing education that is of greatest value and benefit to pastor and parish. This paradigm of pastoral continuing education is not only well-suited to promote pastoral and congregational growth, but it diminishes and has the potential to dismiss the major challenges WELS pastors face when pursuing continuing education. Continuing theological education conducted in the Evaluative Continuing Education paradigm promotes targeted, mutual growth for a pastor and his congregation, resulting in more effective ministry.

This author does not claim that Evaluative Continuing Education is an innovative approach to pastoral continuing education. The concepts are not new and they are not original to the author. There may be some who already use this approach. However, many do not. Therefore, four critical moves are proposed to successfully carry out Evaluative Continuing Education.

Definition of Continuing Education’s Purpose and Terms

What is continuing professional education? Specifically, how is continuing professional education defined as it is applied to pastoral ministry? These questions will be answered in this section and further demonstrated throughout this paper.

Continuing professional education (CPE) is synonymously used in many fields and in this thesis with the term continuing professional development (CPD). CPE or simply continuing

education (CE) has been defined variously across different professions. Some fields define CPE by offering an exact definition, while others define CE in terms of its scope or requirements.

Consider five diverse examples:

- “Continuing education for the profession of pharmacy is a structured educational activity designed or intended to support the continuing development of pharmacists and/or pharmacy technicians to maintain and enhance their competence. (CPE) should promote problem-solving and critical thinking and be applicable to the practice of pharmacy.”¹⁰
- The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors states, “Continuing professional development (CPD) is a commitment by members to continually update their skills and knowledge in order to remain professionally competent.”¹¹
- The State Bar of Georgia defines CPE or Continuing Legal Education (CLE) as a program “designed to enhance its members' professional competence as lawyers. Active lawyers are required to keep current on the law by attending a minimum of 12 hours of education each year. Of these, at least one must be in ethics, one must be in professionalism, and for trial attorneys three must be in litigation.”¹²
- Continuing education is defined by the *Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice* (American Nurses Association [ANA] and National Nursing Staff Development Organization [NNSDO], 2010, p. 83) as ‘systematic professional learning experiences designed to augment the knowledge, skills, and attributes of nurses and therefore enrich the nurses’ contributions to quality health care and their pursuit of professional career goals.’¹³
- The Yoga Alliance (organization responsible for oversight of the teaching of yoga) defines CPE as “45 hours of yoga teaching and 30 hours of yoga training: At least 10 training hours must be Continuing Education (CE) Contact Hours. No more than 20 training hours may be Continuing Education Non-Contact Hours. All hours must be directly related to one of the YA Educational Categories.”¹⁴

In conclusion what accounts for varying understandings is the different context in which the CPE is applied. Therefore, it is wise to recognize and divorce oneself from any preconceived notions of CE as we begin our discussion on CE applied specifically to WELS pastors.

¹⁰ “Definition of Continuing Education for the Profession of Pharmacy” (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, September 2006), 1.

¹¹ Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, “Continuing Professional Development (CPD),” accessed September 13, 2015, <http://www.rics.org/us/regulation1/compliance1/continuing-professional-development-cpd/>.

¹² State Bar of Georgia, “Continuing Legal Education (CLE),” Accessed September 12, 2015, <http://www.gabar.org/membership/cle/>.

¹³ “The Value of Accreditation for Continuing Nursing Education: Quality Education Contributing to Quality Outcomes” (American Nurses Credentialing Center, June 2012).

¹⁴ Yoga Alliance, “Continuing Education,” Accessed September 13, 2015, <https://www.yogaalliance.org/Credentialing/ContinuingEducation>

CE for pastors is, first of all, *continual*. In *Competent Ministry*, Mark Rouch defines continued education for pastors as “an individual's personally designed learning program which begins when formal education ends and continues throughout a career and beyond. An unfolding process, it links together study and reflection and participation in organized group events.”¹⁵ Though it may seem redundant to describe a pastor’s CE as *continual*, doing so helps instill an important attitude toward pastoral CE. First, it gets rid of the confusion between education and school. Many pastors find it hard to think about education/learning apart from the educational institutions or formal instruction in a classroom.¹⁶ CE is something that continues long after a student leaves the seminary’s halls and occurs in a variety of contexts. Second, emphasizing the *continual* aspect of CE underscores the essentiality of this education. CE is not an optional “add-on” to other responsibilities. CE is not interchangeable with vacation time. It is ongoing amid all responsibilities so as to assist in carrying out all responsibilities.

Regarding the *professional* component of pastoral continuing professional education some explanation is due.

The term “professional” comes with some potential baggage. The public ministry is far more than a “profession.” It is a divinely instituted calling that comes to human beings from Christ through his church. However, even though public ministry is far more than a “profession,” the term is being used here to remind all of us who serve in the public ministry that the kind of ongoing growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities that is beginning to be an expected part of more and more professions is also rightfully a part of the public ministry.¹⁷

What is meant by *professional* is similar in usage to what is meant when Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is referred to as a “professional” school since it is a graduate level institution that prepares students for a career in one specific field. When we examine pastoral CE in light of Scripture, much more can be said to help us understand why public ministry, though certainly much more than a profession, is acceptably understood as a profession.

¹⁵ Robert E. Reber, “Educating Out of the Future: Where are We Headed in Continuing Theological Education,” in *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, edited by Robert E. Reber and Bruce D. Roberts, 39-51. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000, 36.

¹⁶ George Brown, “Lifelong Learning and Ministry,” *Reformed Review* 50(3) (1997): 157–66, 161.

¹⁷ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Seminary's Ministry to Pastors: Praeparatio Continua,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 2,

<http://www.wlsessays.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/4128/GurgelPraeparatio.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed November, 2015).

Relevant to the topic of CE in pastoral ministry is the question of whether this term refers to *formal* or *informal* educational opportunities. While CE is often understood in the secular world as referring to credits and classrooms, diplomas and advanced degrees, these are only part of the potential components of a pastor's CE. Pastoral CE equally means making the most of conferences and circuit meetings, forming small study groups, or self-directing one's own learning projects.¹⁸ To ask whether pastoral CE is formal or informal is to demonstrate a somewhat limited understanding of what pastoral CE means. A pastor's CE must be understood as both formal and informal as it will depend greatly on the individual and the ministry circumstance.

Finally, it is essential when forming an accurate definition of pastoral continuing professional education to keep in mind something that will be addressed in full below; the purpose behind pastoral CE. Secular fields give a variety of reasons to pursue and many times demand CE: to increase competency, to update skills and knowledge, to maintain licensure and legal practice, to qualify for pay increases or raises. Though reasons vary, one word can summarize the purpose of CE in nearly every discipline: "growth." That is why CE is synonymously used with the term "professional growth."

For pastoral CE the purpose actually remains the same – growth – yet it is a growth of a different kind. Our concept of pastoral professional growth must be understood as growth intrinsically linked with growth in the gospel; in other words, *spiritual* growth. And this spiritual growth, though done often in connection with one's profession is not limited to *professional* growth, but concurrently results in *personal* growth, as the two cannot be separated when originating from the source of this growth, the gospel. As a pastor seeks to grow in his profession he has no other choice but to grow in all of his callings in life – husband, father, friend, etc. – for this is the very nature of growth in the gospel. The purpose of a pastor's growth is to serve God and those to whom he is called to the best of his ability and to carry out the most effective ministry he can. For this reason, his growth is simultaneously *professional*, *personal*, and *spiritual*.

"Continuing Education" and "Professional Growth" are not scriptural terms. They are human terms. Therefore, there will be an incredible amount of freedom in the meaning that we

¹⁸ Richard L. Gurgel, "Grow sowers of the word," Forward in Christ, July, 22, 2010, 2.

assign to them.¹⁹ The explanation above, however, is necessary so that those who read this thesis are of the same understanding when these terms are used.

As always, when we use the terms and look to make applications of CE and professional growth to pastoral ministry we must first look to Scripture to see what concepts our Lord wants us to bear in mind so that “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

PART II –SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON PASTORAL CONTINUING EDUCATION: WHY GROW?

Peter, in the final verse of his “Epistle of Knowledge,” urges his letter’s recipients to “grow.” He writes, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). How can Peter command Christians to grow in grace? Isn’t grace something about which we have no control; isn’t it a free gift given to us? Why then do we need to grow in grace? Isn’t grace sufficient for all that Christians need for this life and life eternal? How does Peter’s imperative for *spiritual* growth tie together with the *professional* growth involved in a pastor’s CE? Why grow? This section aims to answer these questions.

We Grow Because Scripture Demonstrates That Growth Is Important

Growth is a common theme mentioned throughout the Bible. “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:15-16). “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing” (2 Thessalonians 1:3). “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and

¹⁹ Harold Johnne, “The Post-Graduate Professional Growth of Our National Workers,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 5,

<http://www.wlsessays.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/2417/JohnneWorkers.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, World Seminary Conference, 1982, (accessed November, 2015).

understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-10).

Additionally, one cannot even begin to mention all the other verses where growth, though not stated directly, is certainly implied. “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:15). “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers” (Psalm 1:3). Clearly, growth is a topic worthy of our consideration.

We Grow Because the Gospel We Receive Causes Spiritual Growth

A chapter before Peter commands that believers “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” he writes these words to demonstrate what causes growth of all kinds:

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. (1 Peter 2:2-9)

In verse five and following, Peter will tell his readers that godly living is marked by a possession of qualities added “in increasing measure,” i.e. growth, in Christ. However, before he urges a “growth-in-godliness” type of life, Peter provides that which drives such a life. Reread verses 2-4. In these verses Peter tells his readers what gives Christians the motivation, and really, the ability, to grow in the first place.

It is none other than “[God’s] divine power,” nothing from man but something divine given not just once, but continually.²⁰ It is *sola gratia* that enables growth. It is “our knowledge of him who called us” – or *sola fide* – that gives believers everything they need to lead a

²⁰ David P. Kuske, A Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, Jude (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 275. Perfect tense of δεδωρημένης expresses the continuing nature of all that was given.

sanctified life. “We can’t say, ‘I don’t have what I need to live such a life;’ Peter assures us that God has given us everything we need in his Word, especially those invaluable promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation.”²¹

It is crucial to one’s understanding of why we grow to note what Peter first tells his recipients, and us. Growth is not something we have to do, can do, or even get to do. Spiritual growth is something that is done to us. The ability and the impetus for growth is the gospel itself, which the Spirit has placed in our hearts. It is only “God who makes things grow” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). As we continue to let Scripture shine a light on continuing education we see that at conversion, the Holy Spirit makes us “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11), and also implants the impetus for future growth in those who have been washed clean with the waters of baptism. The gospel, by its very nature, is a message that presupposes growing activity and at the same time, by the effect it has, guarantees further growth will happen.²² “Professional growth first and foremost means growing in awareness of what already is ours and what awaits us in the eternal mansions above, by virtue of our Savior’s death on the cross. Professional growth... is, above all, growing in this kind of knowledge.”²³ Professional growth for pastors is before anything else spiritual growth. We grow because the gospel we receive causes growth in the grace of our God.

This awareness and knowledge of what is ours, time and time again, renews our desire to grow by the means of grace, thus making spiritual growth by the means of grace a priority for us. “God revealed the gospel of Christ to [us] not merely as an abstract and objective truth, but as the basis of an intensely personal relationship with the Lord Jesus himself.”²⁴ Relationships are meant to grow, and our relationship with Christ grows more and more through the means of Grace and creates spiritual growth in us. Speaking about this matter in his essay, “Practical Insights into the Minister’s Spiritual Growth,” WLS Professor emeritus Forrest L. Bivens writes:

In inviting, encouraging, and commanding us to devote ourselves to his Word and Sacraments, our Lord has in mind the increase of our knowing him, not only our knowledge of objective and orthodox truth... Everything else in our spiritual lives comes

²¹ David P. Kuske, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, 289.

²² John Schaller, “The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry,” translated and printed in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78:1 (Jan 1981), 30, 31, 38.

²³ Harold Johne, “The Post-Graduate Professional Growth of Our National Workers,” 1.

²⁴ Bivens, 1

from that center like spokes radiating from a wheel. Therefore, to treat the call to grow spiritually as something optional or only a comparatively high priority in life is folly.²⁵ This is why we grow. This is why we are zealous for growth. It is because our identity with God has absolutely nothing to do with an evaluation, assessment, or grade on our performance in ministry.²⁶ It is because at the Jordan we remember our true identity is that we are by pure grace loved lambs of the Good shepherd.²⁷

We Grow Because the Gospel We Receive Compels Professional Growth

It is for this “very reason” (1 Peter 2:5) – because of the knowledge and awareness that believers are sharers in the gospel promises – Peter then continues with the imperative that believers “make every effort” to add to their existing faith. With heightened gospel awareness it is then that Peter calls believers to pick up the gospel-inspired zeal they’ve been given and take action. To keep from being ineffective and unproductive in one’s knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter commands that believer’s make “every effort to add to your faith” virtuous qualities of godliness. In other words, *grow!* “Grow in the grace of your lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). This growth-oriented life is the mark of all Christians deeply affected by the gospel. It is the faith-filled understanding of justification resulting in a desire to grow in sanctification. Now, if this is true for all Christians, how much more is the importance of growth for the under-shepherd of Christ Jesus tasked with the public proclamation and administration of these “very great and precious promises” to others?

Jesus answers that rhetorical question for us. In chapter twelve of Luke, Jesus issues warnings and wisdom to all his followers. After telling a crowd of “many thousands” (Luke 12:1) to “be dressed ready for service” (Luke 12:35) Peter asks Jesus if those words were meant for the Twelve as well. Essentially Peter is asking, “What about church leaders? Is there anything

²⁵ Forrest L. Bivens, “Practical Insights into the Minister’s Spiritual Growth,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 1-2, <http://www.wlsessays.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/516/BivensGrowth.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, (accessed November, 2015).

²⁶ Richard L. Gurgel, “You Were Ordained for a Life of Growth: Pursuing Ministry Excellence by the Gospel and for the Gospel,” <http://www.wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace/ordained-for-a-life-of-growth/>, (accessed November, 2015), 5.

²⁷ Ibid, 5.

additional they should know?" Jesus doesn't answer his question. Instead he asks one of his own: "Who then is the faithful and wise manager?" (Luke 12:42).

In short, Jesus says the faithful and wise leaders of the Church are equivalent to wise managers who loyally distribute to the other servants that which the master has given them (i.e. the Word). Should those entrusted with great responsibility choose to be lazy or, even worse, exercise their authority wrongfully, the most severe punishment awaits. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). The point Jesus makes to His disciples is one he makes to pastors (and all church leaders) as well. Much has been given. Much will be demanded. Much will be asked. James adds this: "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1). How important is it for pastors to grow in what they've been given? Jesus says it is extraordinarily important.

Paul talks about this very same thing when he speaks to his Corinthian congregation. "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Those who have been "entrusted with the secret things of God" have been asked much as well. They are required to prove faithful. What does it mean to be faithful in the ministry? Professor Forrest Bivens answers this in his excellent essay, "Practical Insights into the Minister's Spiritual Growth." There he quotes Professor August Pieper:

What does it mean to be faithful in the ministry? That is very simple: it means to do what you can, to work "with the strength God provides" (1 Peter 4:11)... Above all, faithfulness requires a heart that is faithful to God and to those entrusted to his care; the sincere concern, that the whole gracious will of God toward his flock be done, the heartfelt concern for the salvation of every soul entrusted to him... Even more than that is involved in true faithfulness in the ministry... [There is also] the inner concern before God as to how one may become a better, more skillful, wiser, more efficient, more capable servant of the Lord.²⁸

It is spiritual growth in the life-giving truth of God's gospel the spurs pastors on to grow professionally. It is a conviction of the very great and precious promises that have been entrusted to a pastor that compels a pastor to grow professionally and "become a better, more skillful, wiser, more efficient, more capable servant of the Lord."

²⁸ Forrest L. Bivens, "Practical Insights into the Minister's Spiritual Growth," 4.

The apostle Paul talks about continuing education and professional growth with young pastor Timothy, saying, “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:15-16). Paul also advises: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Greek word σπούδασον (“do your best”) is not used in the despairing sense of “well, just try your best” – the idiomatic “give it the old college try.” Not at all. Rather, when Paul exhorts Timothy to “do your best” he means “to be zealous or eager, to take pains, to make every effort. Paul is suggesting that being a ‘workman who does not need to be ashamed’ calls for continual painstaking effort on the part of the minister to correctly handle the truth.”²⁹ It is *because* the gospel – the “word of truth” – holds the central position of importance in a pastor’s ministry that he will seek to grow professionally. The result of a pastor’s gospel-centered ministry will be a ministry marked by zealous efforts resulting in clear, visible progress as testimony that the Word deserves nothing but his best. This is why pastors must grow professionally.

We Grow Because My King Deserves My Best

There is yet another reason pastors grow professionally. God in his infinite wisdom and grace has not only entrusted his gospel to “jars of clay,” but furthermore he has equipped his sinner-saints with gifts, talents, personalities, and abilities to carry out this work (see 1 Corinthians 12). “To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it” (Ephesians 4:7) and “each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10). These are additional reasons why pastors grow professionally; God’s giving of talents compels pastors to put their talents to use for the Master (Matthew 25). God has given gifts, and he expects that they be used, for “it is not

²⁹ Stephen J. Carter, *Pastors on the Grow: Continuing Education CAN Improve Your Ministry*, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1986), 24.

beyond God to take away what he has given if a person does not appreciate his grace in giving the abilities in the first place. The guiding principal should always be, ‘my best for my King.’”³⁰

Several pastors relayed in surveys and interview that a desire to stay sharp in an ever-changing world was a key motivator of CE. Yet it is not merely the changing world in which we live that stands as a primary driving force behind continuing education. My best for my King: that guiding principal shapes a pastor’s attitude toward his ministry and his continuing education and professional growth. The Ad Hoc Commission report published in the Book of Reports and Memorials (BORAM) for the 2009 WELS synod convention has a section on continuing education. An encouraging emphasis in these reports is the idea of continuing education with the goal of pursuing excellence across WELS ministry. Yet is a standard of “excellence” in and of itself motivation for professional growth amongst pastors? If excellence is understood as a selfish standard separate from Him who deserves our excellence, then we are certainly misguided. However, when an attitude that says “my best for my King” sits behind this call for excellence in the WELS, excellence becomes a beautiful trophy to set at our King’s feet.

The “confirmation equals graduation syndrome”³¹ prevalent in many confirmands serves as an excuse for discontinuing growth after the confirmation years. Sadly, this often creeps into the minds of pastor as well, who believe his graduation from the Seminary means he is a “finished product” set for a lifetime of ministry. However, “my best for my King” destroys this attitude as “mediocrity should never be acceptable when we are working in the name of Christ.”³² Ask yourself, would you go to have a surgery done by a doctor who has not taken any further medical training since she left medical school 25 years ago? Of course not. With the constant changes and advancements in the medical and technological world you would never depend on a doctor who is so foolish (and/or so arrogant) to assume that she does not need to build on the foundation laid during her years in school.³³

³⁰ Vilas R. Glaeske, “Continuing Education for Public Ministers,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 273, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1845/GlaeskeContinuingEd.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, (accessed November, 2015).

³¹ Vilas R. Glaeske, “Continuing Education for Public Ministers,” 265.

³² Ibid, 265.

³³ Ibid, 265.... This author has heard this comparison widely used.

Another example would be the pilot who knows quite well how to fly a plane. Though he could (figuratively, of course) land the craft in his sleep, periodically he must take time in the simulator to hone skills because of changing aircraft models and keep sharp for reacting to unexpected circumstances. The lives of his passengers and crew may depend on his ability to react to the unexpected circumstances to keep the plane from crashing. For pastors it is the same. Since people's eternal lives are the focus of pastoral ministry, sharpness and effectiveness in ministry is no minor matter. In this line of work the Word is not changing, but the world will throw unexpected changes at pastors. The spiritual destiny of God's people is impacted by their pastor's ability to guide them through the storms of this life. Continuing education is a way for our pastors to keep the skill-sets honed and polished for their calling.³⁴ Remembering that we are the jars through which God carries His changeless love to this constantly changing world, a pastor will work hard to stay sharp and carry out an effective ministry. "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Earlier the Apostle Paul was quoted telling Timothy to "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:15-16). A minister striving for the best and most high standards in ministry will be a continuously sharpened tool God uses to save people from an eternity in hell and turn them towards an eternity with Christ Jesus. Was there ever a more compelling reason to pursue professional growth?

What is the end goal of a pastor's professional growth? Is it simply to be a more competent, more diligent, and wiser minister? Is it to have a recognized and more effective ministry? By no means! Although those adjectives may be blessed byproducts of a pastor's spiritual and professional growth, the gospel-shaped ambition³⁵ given by God to pastors is not to serve one's self. As pastors grow professionally they are to do so keeping in mind that they are "workmen" who are to be "regarded as servants." To what end are pastors growing? It is to serve.

³⁴ Ibid, 264.

³⁵ This term was taken from Gurgel's article "You Were Ordained for a Life of Growth" where he attributes the term to Kevin R. Armstrong in his book *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry*.

What was the end, the goal, that ambition should have? Service! That's the one-word goal of hard work, of respect, of planning: service! It is service that is done in submission to the Word of God and in accordance with his commandments. It is service that seeks the good and the benefit of the family, the church, and society in general. It is service that always has in mind the honor of God and the benefit of my neighbor. It is service which is useful in displaying to the perishing world the peace and joy of the one whose life is hidden in Christ.³⁶

A Concern Worth Noting

Does such an emphasis on the effort of a pastor in his ministry to work hard, pursue excellence, and stay sharp take away from the inherent power of God to save sinners through his gospel in Word and sacraments? If we are not careful, it could. The following paragraphs offers a summarized explanation by Pastor Hein from his essay, “Treasures in Jars of Clay: The Synergy Between the Instrumental and Ministerial Causes in God’s Plan of Salvation.”

We know these two truths are at work. First, we understand there to be multiple factors that play into God’s saving work. At the heart of our salvation is God himself, the Trinity. Without God there would be and could be no salvation, grace, Savior, no Sacraments, or ministers. He is *the principal cause* of our salvation. There are also God’s *impulsive causes* of salvation, which move God to act for his elect: his fatherly love, misery of mankind, and his mercy in view of Christ’s merits. Furthermore, God saves through the *instrumental cause* of salvation, that is, the Word and Sacraments through which he creates faith. Finally, there is the *ministerial cause* of salvation: the ministers God calls to be his agents in his saving work by utilizing the *instrumental cause*, the Word.³⁷

Second, we know that “the mode of operation of the Word is both supernatural and psychological. Psychologically, [God] sends his Words through our senses in a way we can understand. . . The Word of God appeals to the human intellect, to human emotion, to the human will.”³⁸ However, it is only by the Holy Spirit’s supernatural working through these

³⁶ Daniel M. Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross: Reflections on His Cross and Ours*, Impact Series (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 2008), 185.

³⁷ Jonathan Hein, “Treasures in Jars of Clay: The Synergy Between the Instrumental and Ministerial Causes in God’s Plan of Salvation,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 2, <http://www.wlsessays.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/2157/HeinTreasuresSBL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed November, 2015).

³⁸ Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics Notes, “Faith”, 118-120.

psychological activities that Word's saving power is made effective. "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14)." This is how we can say that the Word works simultaneously, both supernaturally and psychologically.

Now keeping these two truths in mind, we see that "the psychological working of the Word is where the instrumental and ministerial causes of salvation touch."³⁹ Ministers are the ones who use the Word to preach, teach, witness, counsel, plan, and worship; however, in all these things it is God alone who brings about its effect (Isaiah 55:10-11). God in his infinite wisdom chose to work with us and through us (*ministerial causes*) to spread the message of his salvation and to bring that same message which works faith to people. Could he have done it on his own? Yes. But God didn't. What a privilege! So, there is this blessed consequence: we work as if everything depended on us, and pray as if everything depended on God since we know it does.⁴⁰ Make sure you catch the second half of that sentence. "It is because the Word works psychologically that public ministry is so vital,"⁴¹ and it is specifically because the Word works supernaturally that the public minister can have confidence in his vital work.

What happens when these truths are confused? On one side of we find a minister, years after his seminary graduation, carelessly satisfied with mediocrity, that is, the basic beginning competency he opened his ministry with. This could possibly signal an abuse of the truth of the inherent power of the means of grace in order to avoid the work involved in growing professionally and spiritually. What results is carelessness in preaching, aimlessness in teaching, and cluelessness in leadership because he has overemphasized the power in the *instrumental causes* of salvation, forgetting the promise of God to work through him, the *ministerial cause*.

On the other side we find a minister tirelessly pursuing continuing education because deep within lurks a selfish and proud ambition that seeks to grow in ministry knowledge and professional skills because it will bring him praise, recognition, and admiration of men.⁴² This prideful overemphasis on the *ministerial cause* of salvation is a dishonor of the primary power

³⁹ Jonathan Hein, "Treasures in Jars of Clay," 11.

⁴⁰ Famous quotation. Usually attributed to Ignatius of Loyola

⁴¹ Jonathan Hein, "Treasures in Jars of Clay," 11-12.

⁴² Richard L. Gurgel, "You Were Ordained for a Life of Growth," 11.

found in the *instrumental cause*. The former confuses the two-fold working of the Word in favor of the supernatural while the latter does so in favor of the psychological.

As the necessity for spiritual and professional growth in gospel ministry is further stressed, in no way should it be understood that the power of the gospel somehow depends on the continuing education of the minister. No preacher will add to God's all-powerful ability to accomplish what pleases him, and none will rob the Word of that power.⁴³ However, "any doctrine of the Holy Spirit that relieves [a pastor] of [his] work and its responsibility is plainly false."⁴⁴ In conclusion, Professor Gurgel's concise summary of this twofold working of the word as it relates to the articles of the Creed is worth noting.

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 God has given us, they are to be used to the fullest to make sure the gospel gets out and is heard.⁴⁵

PART III – HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Brief History of Continuing Education in Europe and America

The modern concept of continuing professional education (CE) is not new. While historians place the formalization of CE somewhat recently (1960s), the idea of working adults maintaining or acquiring knowledge and skills for increased competency within their profession dates back to the 19th Century. With the industrial revolution in Europe came a revolution of adult education.

Predictably, with the rise of the industrial revolution came attendant new ideas, attitudes, and needs that drove the organization of adult education from a largely *laissez faire* enterprise to one that engaged government, universities, and industry in a collective effort to educate the working classes (Armstrong, 1998; Fieldhouse, 1996; Goldman, 1995; Rose, 2002; Taylor, Rockhill, & Fieldhouse, 1985). [There] was the need for a more skilled workforce "exhibiting a wholly different range of working practices and skills" (Fieldhouse, 1996, p. 2). While employers' needs changed, so did the motivations of

⁴³ Forrest L. Bivens, "Practical Insights," 5.

⁴⁴ Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, Rev. and with new sermons (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2001), 31.

⁴⁵ Richard L. Gurgel, "The Unending Pursuit of Growth," 28.

workers who saw the acquisition of new skills as increasing employability and mobility. In addition was a societal need and sense of urgency to acquire new knowledge about the scientific and technological innovations that were driving the industrial machine.⁴⁶

During roughly the same time period in America, an organization dedicated to continuing education for adults was growing in popularity. Started in 1847, the Chautauqua Institute (which, ironically, was started as a summer education camp for Sunday school teachers) would grow into a nation-wide, year-round program of lectures and readings designed for “rather earnest, but high-minded, activities that aimed at intellectual, moral self-improvement and civic involvement.”⁴⁷ The Chautauqua Movement, as it became known, “gave life to the notion that learning should be lifelong; that education for adults was both a right and a duty.”⁴⁸

However, as soon as the idea of the adult as a lifelong learner was given life, it was choked out. “In North America, the rise of institutions for primary, secondary, and higher education in the middle and late 19 century displaced the understanding of learning as a lifelong activity.”⁴⁹ These institutions gave rise to the mentality that learning was an activity for children. Adults had already been educated; they were finely-tuned, finished products.

It wasn't until the 1960s that this notion of lifelong learning for adults was “reborn” and “given a name, *continuing professional education*, and recognized as a component of adult education.”⁵⁰ As this component of adult education was named, it was soon systemized. Gurgel cites a succinct summary of this history.

Beginning in the 1960s, we began to see embryonic evidence for systems of continuing education. Perhaps the first clear signal of this view was the publication in 1962 of a conceptual scheme for the lifelong education of physicians (Dryer 1962). The 1970s saw the beginning of what is now a widespread use of continuing education as a basis for relicensure and recertification (Cervero and Azzaretto 1990). By the 1980s organized and comprehensive programs of continuing education were developed in engineering, accounting, law, medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, social work, librarianship, architecture, nursing home administration, nursing, management, public school education,

⁴⁶ Daniel Shannon, “Continuing Higher Education in America: A Profile,” *International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning* Volume 1, no. Issue 2 (2009): 19–29, 20.

⁴⁷ Lakeside Chautauqua, “The Chautauqua Movement,” <http://www.lakesideohio.com/about/chautauqua-movement> (accessed November, 2015).

⁴⁸ Daniel Shannon, “Continuing Higher Education in America,” 21.

⁴⁹ George Brown, “Lifelong Learning and Ministry,” 159.

⁵⁰ Arthur L Wilson and Elisabeth R. Hayes. *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, Rev sub. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 375.

and many other professions (Cervero 1988). During that decade, many professions developed their system of accreditation for providers of continuing education (Kenny 1985).⁵¹

Although the history of CE's ideals dates back many years and the CE movement today reaches across a variety of professions, continuing education is still a relatively young development.

Brief History of Continuing Education in Theology

The early chapters of continuing education's history are still being written, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of continuing theological education for ministers. "The publication in 1960 of Dr. Connolly Gamble's *Continuing Theological Education of the American Minister* provided the spark that began the movement."⁵² His influential paper reported positive findings. At that time, 95 Seminaries, 35 colleges and universities, 15 conference centers, and 10 pastoral institutes were already offering some form of continuing education for clergy. The reaction his paper inspired was positive as well. In 1968 the Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM) was formed to lead those involved in the work of the church to share ideas for growth as professionals, identify and address issues which affect the advancement of continuing education for ministry, advocate continuing education for ministry, and conduct research to encourage it. Denominational agencies, seminaries, and independent organizations such as training centers all followed suit in the pursuit and advancement of continuing education.⁵³ This flurry of action took place primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, however further breakthroughs and relatively little development in the world of continuing theological education for ministers has taken place since.

History of Continuing Education in the WELS

The modern concept of continuing education is not new for pastors in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). The attitude of the pastor as life-long learner, dedicating

⁵¹ Richard L. Gurgel, "The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching," 31.

⁵² Mark Rouch, "From Yesterday to Today in Continuing Education," in *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, edited by Robert E. Reber and Bruce D. Roberts, 19-28, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000, 19.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 20-32.

himself to continual growth both spiritual and professional is a rich part of WELS heritage. Consider the following historical synopsis offered from the perspective of three distinct paradigms. These paradigms of continuing education for WELS pastors do not replace those preceding, but each builds upon the former.

Presenting his paper, *Faithfulness in the Preaching Office*, at the 1893 Synod Convention, Adolf Hoenecke wrote, "It is also still to be observed that a pastor should indeed never consider if he could in his *Amt* draw on that which he has earlier studied. If one wants to perform something properly, then on[e] has it as a necessity to still apply himself diligently all the time to study. One can never finish this apprenticeship."⁵⁴ Writing just a few years later in *The Wauwatosa Theology*, August Pieper passionately agrees and adds to Hoenecke's thought.

In no calling is anyone less a master after completing his apprenticeship than in the holy ministry... 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... 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 other- wise. 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.⁵⁵

From the early years of what would become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, men who served as pastors understood that they had heightened responsibilities as stewards of God's gospel to grow in the grace of their Lord.

Even early on, pastors were not without resources that would aid them in their quest to be ever growing in the Word. Recognizing the importance of a pastor's ongoing study of God's Word, the faculty of the WELS seminary began to publish a theological journal in 1904, the *Theologische Quartalschrift*. As Pieper more accurately noted, *Quartalschrift* "came into life without particular design, called into existence by synodical resolution purely at the desire of our

⁵⁴ Adolf Hoenecke, "Die Treue im Predigtamt: Faithfulness in the Preaching Office," translated by Wade Johnston. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 13-14, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/2218/Hoenecke%201st%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed September, 2015).

⁵⁵ August Pieper, "Scripture Study as the Special Task of the Pastor," *The Wauwatosa Theology, I* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 119-120.

pastors.”⁵⁶ To think it a resource used exclusively among the academic-minded pastors would be a mistake. In 1912 there were 453 pastors and professors on the Synod’s roster; of those, 447 subscribed to this journal⁵⁷, thus proving that from the first days of the 20th century pastors were prioritizing their growth spiritually and professionally. Over the years this journal, now known as the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, would offer articles on various points of doctrine, homiletics, exegetical studies, questions of pastoral practice, book reviews, and comments on church news.⁵⁸

The paradigm of pastoral continuing education consisting of a regular devotional life supplemented by personal theological reading continued as standard and sufficient continuing education throughout the first half of the century. It appears as though there were never any attempts to formalize, systematize, or organize this mode of continued learning, rather the initiative and responsibility to study rested on the pastor alone or in conjuncture with his circuit, conference, or district.⁵⁹ This first paradigm of CE is best described as “*personal CE*.”

However, a paradigm shift occurred in 1952 when the first Pastors Institute was held on the Seminary campus in Mequon. The first year of this more formal approach to continuing education consisted of two 45-minute lectures followed by 30-minute discussion periods each morning for one week in the summer. Though the formula of these Pastors Institutes has changed somewhat over time – for example, in the mid-1980s the Institutes were offered over five Monday afternoons throughout October and November,⁶⁰ and now they are available off-campus throughout the country – they remain a popular option among many WELS pastors today. “In 2013, there were eight such Pastors Institutes offered with a total attendance of 380. Many years there have been almost double that number of Pastors Institutes with attendance of hundreds more.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ John M. Brenner, “Continuing in His Word - A History of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 2, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/738/BrennerContinuing.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed November, 2015).

⁵⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 2-3.

⁵⁹ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching,” 82.

⁶⁰ Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Book of Reports and Memorials*, (Milwaukee, WI, 1985), 70.

⁶¹ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Seminary's Ministry to Pastors: Praeparatio Continua,” 6.

The next development in this new paradigm of continued education – that is, seminary-provided, formal continuing education – came in 1972 with the establishment of what is today known as Summer Quarter. During the seminary’s Summer Quarter, pastors were invited to attend on-campus courses offered for three weeks in June and July. “Beginning in 2010, Summer Quarter courses began to be offered online, and since the 2011-2012 school year, these online courses aren’t offered only in the summer, but also during the fall and spring semesters.”⁶² To see the statistics of attendance for Summer Quarter classes both on-campus and online, see Appendix A. Summer Quarter has been a popular CE opportunity given that “well over 1,000 different WLS graduates (or pastors of our confessional fellowship) have taken at least one of these more formal CE courses through WLS.”⁶³

During that time of Seminary-provided continuing education there were a variety of other formal continuing education options available to pastors, such as synod-wide counseling workshops in cooperation with Wisconsin Lutheran Child and family services of Milwaukee, and for-credit study tours abroad just to name a few.⁶⁴ Of great significance as well, were the synod’s increased efforts to produce informal materials that pastors could use on their own or with their peers for their continued education and growth. Examples of these informal materials include publications such as the aforementioned *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, *Preach the Word*, *Worship the Lord*, the green “Sermon Studies” books on the ILCW pericope texts published by Northwestern Publishing House, and the digitalized library of essays found in the Seminary’s online Essay File.

The spirit of this new paradigm in pastoral CE is captured well in a 1978 revision to the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s purpose statement. The original purpose statement reads below.

The very specific purpose of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is to offer theological training for men who desire to enter the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or of churches within its confessional fellowship....

In addition to this prime purpose the Seminary endeavors in various ways to offer opportunity for theological study and professional growth to those who are already active in the public ministry of its confessional fellowship.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid, 7.

⁶³ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁴ Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Book of Reports and Memorials* (Milwaukee, WI, 1983), 74.

⁶⁵ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Seminary’s Ministry to Pastors: Praeparatio Continua,” 3.

While continuing education was formerly thought to be an auxiliary effort of WLS, the revision below captured a change in attitude.

The specific purpose of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is to offer theological training for men who desire to enter the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or of churches within its confessional fellowship....

In line with this single purpose [emphasis added] of training men for the public ministry the Seminary also endeavors in various ways to offer opportunity for theological and professional growth to those who already are active in the public ministry of its confessional fellowship.⁶⁶

Although this wording does not reflect the official version of the revised purpose statement, but only what some have written, it nonetheless emphasizes a singular goal of the Seminary: to train men for the public ministry. The Seminary viewed its one purpose from two perspectives – training both pastors to-be and pastors alike. This change by the Seminary reflected in the opportunities offered, both formal and informal in nature, changed the culture of continuing education for pastors in the WELS. No longer was the philosophy of continuing education that it was only something *personal*. Now pastors had a *provided* form of continued education. Though this new paradigm of continuing education –seminary-*provided* continuing education – became the focus for many; it certainly did not do away with the earlier paradigm of continuing education being *personal* in nature. Rather it added to the previous era’s continued professional growth paradigm.

In 1988, a third paradigm of continuing education in the WELS began to take shape. This change took place slowly over the course of a number of years. Primarily, the shift occurred in response to two trends. One trend was the popularization of continuing professional education across many secular professions in our country⁶⁷, and the second was the increasingly formalized continuing education efforts of those in the WELS teaching ministry.

In August of 1988, the desire for a committee to look into the continuing education of called workers was noted by a contingent of WELS pastors due to some general contemporary needs noted about pastors’ well-being, their families, and their congregations.

In the summer of 1989, one-day seminars were launched for pastors based off of the book *Pastors on the Grow* by Stephen Carter. An ad hoc committee under the leadership of WLS professor David Kuske conducted these seminars across all twelve districts. While certainly

⁶⁶ Ibid, 3-4.

⁶⁷ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching,” 31.

beneficial, there was nothing set in place to capture the momentum generated by these seminars. “This rendered the seminars ineffective insofar as organized long-term impact on CPE for pastors in the WELS as a whole.”⁶⁸

Identifying this shortcoming, the ad hoc committee that planned the one-day seminars proposed to the 1991 WELS Synod Convention that a synodical Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) committee be formed. It was approved. The committee had ambitious goals of what it hoped to accomplish: to produce CE materials such as assessment forms, to create an “accountability structure,” to perform district workshops, and to set up a system for continuing education units (CEUs) (e.g. 1 hr. of study = 1 credit) to be recorded by the Seminary. Unfortunately, due to many legitimate factors such as insufficient manpower and funding, the CECW met only fourteen times between 1991 and 2007, with two significant gaps between meetings of five and four years. The CECW was able to accomplish less than what it had hoped.

Despite this, they were able to produce some material that would be influential for future continuing education efforts in WELS: surveys demonstrating a need and desire for further homiletical education (1994), the *Preach the Word* publication (1997), “Continuing Education Catalog for Pastors” (2001), a professionally developed homiletics teaching film (2001), and the “Keep on Growing – My Personal Plan for Growth” brochure (2002). Though not in continuance today (with the exception of *Preach the Word*), these are listed to highlight a historically significant swell of continuing education momentum that was building already since 1988 and would reach a climax in the years 2008, 2009, and ultimately in 2010.

In August of 2008, the first vice-president of the synod held a think tank meeting with those involved in continuing education efforts within the WELS. Formally, he had been tasked by the Conference of Presidents (COP) with restarting more concentrated continuing education efforts for pastors. The result of this group’s discussions was straightforward: no meaningful, sustained efforts could hope to be accomplished without the support of the COP or without overcoming the issues concerning manpower and funding.

Meanwhile, an ad hoc committee commissioned at the synod convention in 2005 to study critical issues in the WELS continued drafting proposals prompting the synod to foster a culture of excellence in ministry and for called workers. Among their original proposals were high

⁶⁸ Ibid, 83.

standards for called worker continuing education. It wasn't until the 2009 Synod Convention that this ad hoc committee proposed the following resolutions, which were adopted.

WHEREAS 1) there are benefits for all called workers to be “involved in some type of ongoing and regular professional growth” (BORAM, p. 186, lines 1008 and 1009), for the enrichment of the called workers and those they serve; and

WHEREAS 2) our synod offers a variety of opportunities for continuing education for called workers; and

WHEREAS 3) our synod does not currently have a coordinated program of continuing education for called workers; and the Committee for the Continuing Education of Called Workers (CECW) has been inactive in recent years; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that the CECW be reestablished by the Conference of Presidents (COP); and be it further

Resolved, b) that this committee take steps to develop “a coordinated and comprehensive program of continuing education for called workers that meets real ministry needs and that understands various learning styles and preferences of our workers,” realizing that “programs of professional growth can be flexible and can incorporate many different kinds of professional growth opportunities” (BORAM, p. 186, lines 1021-1024); and be it further

Resolved, c) that the CECW provide a progress report to the 2010 district conventions and bring a coordinated and comprehensive program of continuing education to the 2011 synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, d) that all called workers be encouraged to participate in current and future programs of continuing education, and that all WELS congregations be encouraged to support their called workers in these endeavors.⁶⁹

With this, significant progress took place in the realm of continuing education for WELS pastors. Keeping in stride with resolutions passed in the 2010 convention the following year, the seminary demonstrated its desire to give the mission of continuing education new prominence and urgency by establishing *Grow in Grace, the Institute for Continuing Education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*. Moreover, through generous grants from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and from the Zietlow and Antioch Foundations, the seminary was provided the necessary funds to allow for a professor to dedicate half his service to strengthening the WLS continuing education program.⁷⁰ The mission, vision, and goals of *Grow in Grace* are currently as follows:

Vision:

Pastors value *Grow in Grace's* partnership for lifelong growth in all their callings.

Mission:

⁶⁹ Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Proceedings of WELS 60th Biennial Convention* (Milwaukee, WI, 2009), 69-70.

⁷⁰ Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Book of Reports and Memorials* (Milwaukee, WI, 2013), 160.

Grow in Grace connects pastors to gospel-focused resources for growth in all their callings and to gospel-filled encouragers to support that growth.

Goals:

- Events & Courses Deliver Christ-centered, accessible, and ministry impacting events and courses in the four theological disciplines.
- Retreats & Mentoring Provide collaborative opportunities for pastors to learn from one another and to gather with peers celebrating similar ministry milestones.
- Strengthening Ministry Deliver gospel-rich resources that assist pastors to partner with others in honestly evaluating all their callings and to plan for growth with confidence.
- Growth Resources Deliver informal resources useful for individual or group study that assist pastors to grow in all their callings.⁷¹

Beginning with the synod's conception in 1850 and until 1952, the pastor and his peers were almost entirely responsible to initiate their own actions for personal spiritual growth. The first paradigm for pastoral continuing education in the WELS began with what could best be described as *personal* continued education.

Through the establishment of Pastors Institutes in 1952, Summer Quarter in 1972, various other formal and informal offerings, and its emphasis on a singular purpose to continually train men for pastoral ministry, WLS established a second paradigm for pastoral continuing education. We will term this method of continuing education as *provided* continued education. The concept of continuing education started in 1952 has not been replaced, only improved upon. As of 2010, the synod, the CECW, and particularly *Grow in Grace* now join forces with pastors to plan and implement their continued personal spiritual growth and professional life-long learning in *partnered* continued education.

This history is not to demonstrate the accomplishments and developments of man. Quite the opposite: this history demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit who makes pastors what they are. "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). This history is evidence of visible fruits worked by our Creator in hearts and lives of ministers of the new covenant who have remained obedient to the Gospel imperative to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

There are several specific examples - increased for-credit learning opportunities, the

⁷¹ <http://www.wls.wels.net/grow-in-grace/mission-vision-goals/> (accessed February, 2016).

mentoring initiative for new pastors, *Grow in Grace's* growth planning packages, successful ministry retreats, and many more – that demonstrate the tremendous accomplishments of differing paradigms of CE stacked on top of those that precede. Addressing attendees at the 2013 Synod Convention, “Phil Hirsch, chairman of the Board for Ministerial Education, spoke of numerous blessings including 1,500 called workers involved in continuing education and 1,500 students currently in the system.”⁷² In a survey conducted of 34 pastors from the WLS graduating classes of 1990, 2000, and 2010 it was found that 100% had participated in some form of *provided* or *partnered* continuing education, whether formal or informal.⁷³

As one considers the history of faithful gospel ministry carried out by the WELS over the years, is it any wonder that the desire to grow manifested in continuing education efforts has been a bright spot of increasing illumination in our synod since its beginning? Such is the nature of the gospel. It causes rebirth. It gives knowledge. It creates growth. One is left only to ponder what incredible growth God has in store for the future of those who remain connected to the Vine.

PART IV – THE FUTURE OF PASTORAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

If the CE movement could be personified, one might compare it to a teenager. One who, at times, impresses us with his maturity and at other times demonstrates that he is still developing and lacking experience.

On the one hand, the CE movement in the secular world impresses us with its promised potential and can be proud of its accomplishments: increased competence and offerings of flexible learning⁷⁴; improved standards, knowledge, and workplace cooperation⁷⁵; increased

⁷² Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Proceedings*, (Milwaukee, WI, 2013), 98.

⁷³ See Appendix D

⁷⁴ Gabrielle Bauer, "Continuing Education," *Maclean's* 127, no. 51/52: 54, *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 21, 2015).

⁷⁵ Troy Lane, "Personal and Departmental Benefits of Continuing Education," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 74, no. 5: 1. *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 21, 2015).

bottom line⁷⁶; the ability to set you apart, keep you fresh and up to date, and prevent burnout.⁷⁷ Given continuing education's effectiveness across a number of fields, very few would argue that CE lacks any objective value.

On the other hand, despite all of continuing education's upside, it is still an area fraught with challenges. Much like the world of a capricious teenager, within CE "multiple competing theories abound, with new theories morphing by assembling bits and pieces from previously competing theories, thereby creating new philosophical alliances—while some old theories, once well received, suddenly are left wounded on the field by claims of newer research. And behind the theories lie competing worldviews, adding another layer of complexity."⁷⁸ Continuing education, despite its recent and rapid development, or perhaps because of it, is still an area searching for its identity in many professional fields while remaining uncertain about its future in others. There are challenges that must be addressed.

How are professionals to keep up with the constant change? "Fifty percent of all employee skills become outdated in three to five years (Shank and Sitze, 2004)."⁷⁹ Whose responsibility is continuing education: employee or employer? How is one's progress in continued education measured and tracked? How does a given model of CE that works in context X also work in contexts Y and Z? How can CE providers best use technology, today and in the future? Despite the limitless potential and presumed growth that continuing education offers, there is awkwardness due to these challenges, not much different from the struggles of a teen. This often creates discomfort and even tension in those whom continuing education is meant to help. This dichotomy found within CE is, unfortunately, seen clearly when continuing education is applied to the pastoral ministry as well.

The aforementioned essay by Dr. Connolly ignited a flurry of action that took place primarily in the 1960s and 1970s. It is now 2016. In proportion to advancements in continuing education and adult learning made in the last 40 years, there has been relatively little progress in

⁷⁶ Abram Herman, Laura Allen, Jenna Fleur, Paula Shea, Kris Bour, and Michelle Alexander-Batac, "TELL ME... How Can Continuing Education Help Me?" *Massage & Bodywork* 29, no. 2: 20-21, *Alt HealthWatch*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 21, 2015).

⁷⁷ D. Shamoian, "Benefits of continuing education show up in bottom line," *Hotel & Motel Management*, 220, 14, p. 16, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost, viewed 22 November 2015.

⁷⁸ Richard L. Gurgel, "The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching," 33-34.

⁷⁹ Sharan B Meriarium, *Learning in Adulthood: A comprehensive guide*, 18.

developing methods for professional growth for pastors. While continuing education for pastors has certainly grown as a recognized commodity, it still struggles with the same issues as CE in the secular world, perhaps to a greater extent.

Four Current Challenges of Pastoral CE in the WELS

What specific challenges do WELS pastors face as they pursue CE today? This author's research has revealed four significant challenges. The support and rationale for identifying these four challenges is not based off any other extensive studies on this topic, as no such studies exist. The challenges are not derived from observable historic trends; the history of formalized continuing education across the broader theological field is much too short to have received such attention. Instead, the reasoning and rationale for what follows is based off of two recent avenues of research: personal interviews and a general survey.

First, the author conducted interviews with ten WELS leaders that have vested interest and significant experience in the area of education for WELS called workers. These men were chosen in order that this thesis might present the relevant challenges faced in WELS pastoral CE today. A sample of the questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Second, the author used research derived from a survey of WELS pastors. The survey was sent to fifty-five parish pastors of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduating classes of 1990, 2000, and 2010. A 60% response rate generated thirty-three survey responses. Of these thirty-three surveys, twelve (36.3%) are from the class of 1990, ten (30.3%) are from the class of 2000, and eleven (33.3%) are from the 2010 class. Pastors who have served or are serving in all twelve districts of the WELS are represented. It was estimated that this selection of WELS pastors would give a limited, random, but accurate sampling of the overall picture of WELS pastoral CE. A sample of the survey each pastor received is found in Appendix C. The results of this survey are represented in chart form to preserve anonymity. These results are found in Appendix D, E, and F.

Challenge #1 – Infinite Demands, Finite Time

100% of the thirty-three pastors surveyed mentioned time as a major challenge to their continuing education. There are two sides to the time challenge coin.

One side of the coin presents the very many time constraints imposed by the nature of full-time ministry. As mentioned in the introduction, 21st century full-time gospel ministry is exceedingly demanding. A pastor is expected to budget his time to effectively and faithfully preach (this includes a text study in the original language, sermon writing, and sermon memorizing), teach multiple lessons to both adults and children throughout a week, counsel, conduct marriage and family enrichment, carry out administration duties, meet with various church groups, employ and plan outreach strategies, plan worship, conduct youth ministry, create and carry out a long-range strategic plan, recruit and train volunteers, visit shut-ins and those who are hospitalized, form meaningful relationships with all members, and get acquainted with the community. Add all this to his responsibilities as a husband and father, his personal time in the Word, regular exercise, rest and relaxation for personal wellbeing, and sleep. A pastor is then asked to incorporate continuing education on top of all this! The Lutheran pastor's perception that lack of time prevents professional growth is very real.

Let's not forget, however, the other side to this coin: the concept of proper time management. Over half of the WELS leaders interviewed pointed to poor time management skills practiced by pastors as a major challenge to a pastor's own continuing education. Is the pastor creating a personal schedule that prioritizes duties that are most necessary? Does he routinely schedule specific time for unavoidable tasks (checking email, for example)? Does the pastor discipline himself in keeping these schedules? Is he honestly evaluating his time, or does he justify time-wasting activities? Does he know how to say "no" when necessary? Does he practice appropriate delegation or attempt to do it all by himself? Finally, does the pastor begin the tall task of time management resting squarely on *Him* who establishes the pastor's steps (Proverbs 16:9)? At some point, all have fallen short in attempting to glorify God in the way time management is practiced.

"Time is immensely valuable and utterly irretrievable. Without a doubt, it is one of the most valuable commodities we have. No one has more or less time than you and I. To each of us is given the 1440 minutes per day and the 168 hours per week. This is true whether we are laborer, homemaker, farmer, or preacher."⁸⁰ Continuing education invariably will take time. The

⁸⁰ Vilas R. Glaeske, "'Redeeming the Time'-An Essay on the Pastor's Stewardship of Time," Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 1,

Lutheran pastor's perception that lack of time prevents professional growth is real. However, people make time for what is most important. If pastors, congregational leaders, and synod leaders truly believe that growth is necessary, they will find ways to provide adequate time for pastoral professional growth.⁸¹ "Nothing significant will take place to change the direction and philosophy of theological education until the seminaries, laity, local churches, clergy, and denominational agencies become involved as equal partners in planning and evaluating life-training for ministry."⁸² If time is a major obstacle, how can pastors, congregations, and CE providers work together to hurdle it?

Challenge #2 – "Ministry isn't actually structured to make pastoral CE happen."

When asked, "Is pastoral CE a part of your congregation's regular ministry plan?"⁸³, one pastor answered, "Ministry isn't actually structured to make pastoral CE happen."⁸⁴ While this pastor may have overstated his case, there may also be some reality to his perception. Does the infrastructure surrounding a pastor serve to help or to hinder his CE?

"There is no lack of opportunity for clergy continuing education today. Seminaries, colleges, retreat centers, institutes, and judicatories – all offer a great wealth of professional study and growth avenues which, strangely enough, have the potential of becoming a professional hazard."⁸⁵ The fact that there is an overabundance of CE resources offered by the WELS is an incredible blessing; however, two interviewees and several of those surveyed echoed the above concerns. Pastors are overwhelmed when competing infrastructures (synod, district, conference, organizations outside the WELS, etc.) that offer CE opportunities all

<http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1843/GlaeskeRedeeming.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed November, 2015).

⁸¹ John Meyer, "No Time for Continuing Education?" *Issues in Lutheran Education*, January, 30 2105 (accessed September 2015),

<file://localhost/Users/mattrothe/Library/Application%20Support/Zotero/Profiles/fmccxsgk.default/zotero/storage/KKC7VXMA/Studies%20-%20No%20Time%20for%20Continuing%20Education.html>.

⁸² David P Ludeker, "Training for Ministry: A Life-Time Experience," *American Baptist Quarterly* 3, no. no 2 (June 1984): 99–116, 1.

⁸³ See Appendix E, question #3.

⁸⁴ Survey with a WELS pastor, September 2015.

⁸⁵ Glenn L. Borreson, "Clergy Continuing Education: Fast Food or Planned Meal?" *Dialog*, 26, (winter 1987), 1.

demand attention. Their good intentions are having negative effects. Consider the following quote from an interviewee:

In addition to individual motivations, clear or unclear understanding (which is different from appreciation) [of CE's importance] may also result from tensions that arise when the CE infrastructure in one's individual application or in one's local circuit/conference/district meets up against additional infrastructure from another entity. Multiple paradigms, structures, governances, etc. will undoubtedly lend to a muddier understanding (and perhaps engender a misunderstanding) or compel one to pick and choose which CE structure is viewed to work for the individual.⁸⁶

When these infrastructures (blessings in and of themselves) begin to compete for a pastor's time, there will undoubtedly be tension. Tension grows exponentially when CE is forced from the top down.⁸⁷ The consensus is heard in every corner: "the seminaries, laity, local churches, clergy, and denominational agencies [must] become equal partners in planning and evaluating life-training for ministry."⁸⁸ "There has to be collaboration from the bottom to the top and top to the bottom; you can't just create something off to the side and drop it in expecting that it will go smoothly. Especially if that thing you're setting in place has real expectations to it."⁸⁹

Yet if a collaborative approach seems to be unanimously agreed upon as wise, why does infrastructural tension still exist? Perhaps there is still unequal ownership of the CE process among those involved, either real or perceived? David Ludeker, in his article "Training for Ministry: a Life-time Experience" offers the following:

What one does not own one does not support. Churches and alumni are asked to provide financial support to a training program they have little influence over and which fails to take seriously the parish culture in which ministry takes place. What would happen if seminary staff, clergy, laity, and denominational staff were to sit down together as equal partners and begin to plan a lifetime process of theological education?⁹⁰

Does the current infrastructure surrounding pastors help them grow as effectively as it could or does it inadvertently inhibit growth? The solution to the competition seems to be cooperation. What an incredible blessing waiting to be realized!

⁸⁶ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ David P Ludeker, "Training for Ministry: A Life-Time Experience," 1.

⁸⁹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

⁹⁰ David P Ludeker, "Training for Ministry: A Life-Time Experience," 18.

Challenge #3 – Ambiguity Leading to Decision Paralysis

One leader in continuing education offered an explanation for why there is little uniformity among the continuing education of WELS pastors. This interviewee pointed out that, for pastors, there is no parallel secular profession to help drive innovation, standards, and, therefore, a higher quality of continuing education in their field. In contrast, as an example, WELS teachers do have a paralleled profession in the public sphere – public school teachers. States requires public school teachers to continue their education constantly. Naturally, the requirement of CE drives up standards, and standards result in more effective teachers and schools. By continuing their own educations, WELS teachers are simply expressing a positive desire to live up to the same professionalism.⁹¹ One could make a modern day application to Jesus' parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16. The “people of light” see the “people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind,” and believers who pursue excellence for reasons far greater than state requirements will respond accordingly (Luke 16:8).

For pastors, as the interviewee stated, there is no comparable profession in which CE is regulated or mandated. They can't say, “Look what this group is doing!” in an attempt to emulate or better their own pastoral CE practices. Pastors must write the rules, set the standards, and devise the methods for their own continuing education. While this could be seen as a blessing in some regards (i.e. freedom produces creativity, practices become practical in the context of ministry, etc.), it is listed here as a challenge with good reasons. With the demands on his time (Challenge #1) and the pressure from competing infrastructures (Challenge #2), consider the struggles a pastor has when making decisions about his CE. “Should I utilize a peer, a ministry partner, my circuit, or my congregation in my CE?” “Are yearly conferences enough?” “Should I go to a WLS provided Summer Quarter or Symposium?” “Should I partner with *Grow in Grace* to seek a further degree, or should I enroll in a locally offered conference or course?” “Is a formal approach even the right option?” “Do I have time for any of this?”

A pastor is faced with very many choices as to how he can carry out his CE. Is this a good thing? By now, the reader can clearly see that it is not. “As Barry Schwartz puts it in his book *The Paradox of Choice*, as we face more and more options, ‘we become overloaded.

⁹¹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

Choice no longer liberates, it debilitates. It might even be said to tyrannize.”⁹² The problem in light of many choices is ambiguity⁹³, which we understand as a lack of decisiveness or commitment resulting from a failure to make a choice between alternatives. An ambiguous approach to CE undeniably leads the debilitating disease known as decision paralysis. A pastor catches the disease of decision paralysis when the status quo – i.e. his normal mode of CE – feels more comfortable, steady, and safe compared to uncertain alternative choices. What is the current “status quo” of many WELS pastor’s CE? Challenge #4 answers this question.

Challenge #4 – A “Haphazard” Approach to Pastoral CE

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? When we aim at nothing, we will hit the target every time. So often our continuing education is haphazard. We set no goals. We have no directions. We simply go to local and regional pastoral conferences because they are being held or because they are required. We may attend a workshop because we haven’t been to any learning event recently or because someone suggested we go.⁹⁴

Surveys with synod leaders and parish pastors demonstrated the above statements to be true. When asked, “Does the climate of CE amongst WELS pastors today reflect a clear understanding of its importance *or* a lack of concern for it?”, the following responses were given:

- Generational concerns are an underlying issue here. But there are exceptions of course. There has been a dramatic change [towards a clearer understanding] over the last 1—15 years.⁹⁵
- Both/and: There is a growing understanding, but there tends to be a lack of understanding as well. This flows from an anti-academic philosophy. Perhaps, a pushback to what we saw in MO Synod where professors were required to get their PhDs. There is also a historical reason along with that. There was a time when the pastor was likely the “highest educated” person in town. Now, there is a shift away from that mentality.⁹⁶

⁹² Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, 1st ed (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 52.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 17-18.

⁹⁴ Stephen J. Carter, *Pastors on the Grow: Continuing Education CAN Improve Your Ministry*, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1986), 26.

⁹⁵ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

⁹⁶ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

- I have really been paying attention to this for the last 4 years. I have to say, I am really amazed at the progress over the last 4 years to the point where the [parish pastor] has a clear understanding of the importance. 4 years ago maybe I couldn't have said that.⁹⁷
- The drum has been pounded enough so that I believe my contemporaries who graduated in the 90s onward have heard the encouragement, and accept CE as a good thing...I think there is a majority who recognize the importance in theory, but whether they have pursued it or not [remains to be seen].⁹⁸

Each parish pastor confirmed these assertions not only in their survey responses, but also in their reported 100% participation in some form of CE throughout their ministry. However, although all realize the *importance* and benefits of CE in theory, the *practice* of CE by parish pastors and their congregations lacks significantly. Consider the following statistics discovered in the survey of WELS pastors conducted for this thesis. Of the pastors surveyed, 100% have participated in some form of CE: 91% in informal opportunities and 61% in formal opportunities. Positively, 64% of congregations support the pastor's CE financially.⁹⁹ However, despite both pastors and congregations recognizing the *importance* of CE (evident in the pastors' participation in CE events and the funding provided by the congregation), only six of the thirty-three pastors surveyed (18%) actually *practiced* planning their continuing education as a part of their congregation's ministry plan. Only one (3%) planned his CE by intentionally considering his areas of strengths/weaknesses in light of his ministry context and by talking to his congregation. Only eight (24%) reported to personally considering their strengths/weaknesses and the context of their ministries when choosing CE opportunities.

These statistical findings ask the question, is CE not being conducted continually, purposefully, or as a priority? Mark Rouch raises a similar concern in his article "From Yesterday to Today in Continuing Education." There he states, "I continue to believe that while the number who enroll each year in one kind of continuing education program or another may be quite high, the number who engage in well-planned programs of learning designed to meet their needs is much lower."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

⁹⁸ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

⁹⁹ See Appendix E

¹⁰⁰ Mark Rouch, "From Yesterday to Today in Continuing Education," 26.

Providers of CE trumpet the importance of CE. Parish pastors, hearing this, attempt to participate in CE. In practice, however, pastors battle multiple ministry demands (Challenge #1), face competing ministerial infrastructures offering several CE opportunities (Challenge #2), and are therefore still paralyzed by a smorgasbord of choices (Challenge #3). What, then, is a pastor left to do? Unfortunately, many well-intentioned pastors take a haphazard or “shotgun approach”¹⁰¹ to continuing education. A pastor has unrestrained freedom to carry out CE as he sees fit (Challenge #3), there is no prevailing wisdom regarding CE for pastors that wins the day (Challenge #2), and the pastor sees that he could serve to grow in many areas (Challenge #1). His actions are justifiable: or are they? Permit a lengthy quote by Glenn Borreson from his article “Clergy Continuing Education: Fast Food or Planned Meal?” Here Borreson further explores this “haphazard” approach to CE using a different, yet fantastic, analogy.

If food finally is for strength and education for effective ministry, then careful selection is essential... My wife is an excellent meal planner, but occasionally confesses to running low on ideas. At those times, she asks our sons and me for ideas for the dinner menu... far too often we suggest a fast food restaurant, and that usually limits us to hamburgers, pizza, or tacos. Now there's no great problem with this response, I suppose, unless we were to make this choice too often. Then our lack of inventiveness would lead to pains in the pocketbook plus a dull and less-than-healthy diet. In the long term, we would suffer for our choices, even though, for the moment, they may seem indifferent or even delightfully spontaneous. In the end, however, our family would live better by the wise planning of one person than by the easy alternatives of four others. Our day-to-day well-being is sustained because my wife is informed on healthy nutrition and plans according to our needs.

Pastors who respond impulsively and without planning and forethought to the array of continuing education opportunities which cross their desk are like our family in its uncreative decision to eat at a fast food place. They are not going to starve. They are going to get something of value, more than if they had not eaten at all. Once in a while, they will even receive a real burst of energy. After all, some fast food is really not bad food... The point is that, like fast food, all these are good but could be better, especially if this has become the pattern for one's engaging in continuing education.

Over the short term, fast foods may keep one "on the go," but long-term they lack variety, sustenance, and even interest. So can participation in ill-chosen education events. Clergy may fall into the trap of selecting on the basis of impulse as at the fast food place where you're supposed to order as you walk in the door and haven't even located the menu! What happens then but the choosing of what's been chosen before. Either unfocused or narrow personal choices can greatly diminish education's potential riches. Over the longer period of ministry, the fast food mindset can rob pastors of a broad solid

¹⁰¹ *Dictionary.com* defines a shotgun approach as “the hasty use of a wide range of techniques that are nonselective and haphazard.”

basis and a needed depth of learning required to do *effective ministry* today (emphasis added). The randomly selected growth opportunity may delight and please one occasionally and for a brief time, but finally real education is like good nutrition: there's no substitute for planning.¹⁰²

Why is a haphazard approach to CE so bad? There are two reasons. The first needs little explanation in view of Borreson's apt analogy: there is simply a better approach to CE that results in more effective ministry. There is more out there. There is a healthier diet that we can consume.

The second reason why a haphazard approach is unacceptable addresses a certain attitude that surfaced throughout this author's research. Some opined, "Why such a push for a targeted, purposeful, and planned approach to CE? Ministers are still able to do their job without CE, right? After all, pastoral ministry is not a profession, it's a calling. It doesn't operate with bottom lines, required standards, or credentials as the primary motivators for doing what pastors do. It is moved instead by the gospel. Just let it be. Don't force CE." In response: God deserves better. God's people deserve better. The gospel ministry and the pastoral office deserve better than haphazard efforts.

Gospel ministry is more than a profession. It is a sacred calling. At the same time, in the best sense of the word, the ministry is a profession. High standards concern for growth among colleagues, and a service motif are all important ingredients of the ministry. Other professions insist on regular and purposeful continuing education to assure consistent, quality practice. If physicians, lawyers, accountants, and engineers are asked to grow in competence, should not ministers also do their best to present themselves to God "as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed?" Professional development as a concept helps us to target effective ministry as the purpose for our personal and professional growth.¹⁰³

In Acts 20:28 Paul instructs those entrusted with Christ's ministry at Ephesus by saying, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

When the price paid for each soul is considered, the imperative to deal as wisely and effectively as one can stands before us in bold relief. The precious blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed all people from their sins. The universal will of God for all men is that He will "have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth." The individual becomes the recipient of these blessings of redemption when he personally is led to faith. The means by which this is done is, of course, the Gospel and the Holy Spirit's operation through it. But it is not at all true that since the Spirit is the One

¹⁰² Glenn L. Borreson, "Clergy Continuing Education: Fast Food or Planned Meal?" 59-60.

¹⁰³ Stephen J. Carter, *Pastors on the Grow: Continuing Education CAN Improve Your Ministry*, 25-26.

through whom faith is instilled and preserved, that we are therefore excused from responsibility.¹⁰⁴

Could there be a more important profession in which to pursue CE than ministry? Could there be a more important reason to desire effectiveness in ministry? No. Effective ministry as a target is a worthy goal (the minimum goal, perhaps) of the gospel ministry with which pastors have been entrusted.

Tackling the Challenges

How can pastors better engage in targeted CE that has as its goal mutual growth for the pastor and the congregation? What follows is a suggested paradigm to move pastoral CE to be even more effective in ministry. If a haphazard, “shotgun” approach (Challenge #4) is in fact the culminating result of pastoral decision paralysis in the CE world (Challenge #3), strenuous ministries demands (Challenge #1), and competing ministerial infrastructures (Challenge #2), what is the solution? How do pastors go about creating more effective, targeted continuing education? Is there a tool to help pastors “take aim” at CE?

Based on the interviews and research conducted for this thesis, it is the opinion of this author that such a tool exists for all who work in ministry. The tool that will help pastors grow is the congregation, and the solution is grounded, first and foremost, in a deep and meaningful partnership between the congregation and the pastor. How so? Said succinctly, “Healthy churches are directly related to healthy pastors.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, if a church is to grow it must have a pastor who grows. If a growing church needs a growing pastor, the congregation must allow, encourage, and enable pastoral growth through continued education. A pastor’s growth, outside of personal growth in the Word, begins with the relationship of the church to its pastor. It must.

A Scriptural Perspective on Mutual Growth

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say,

¹⁰⁴ Vilas R. Glaeske, “‘Redeeming the Time’-An Essay on the Pastor’s Stewardship of Time,” 4.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

“Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

(1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

“The interconnectedness and the interdependency of these members are so essential to the proper health, function, and growth of the body that Paul says it is impossible for one member to say to another, ‘I simply don’t need you,’ or ‘I am able to function quite well on my own, thank you,’ or ‘I have grown to the point where I no longer need what you have to offer.’”¹⁰⁶ “Each one of you,” that is, every believer without exception, is a part of the body of Christ. That means each member of Christ’s church is equally responsible for the health and well-being of all the others. Paul’s point is that this responsibility is not just a quaint metaphor for having one another’s backs during extreme difficulties; rather he is emphasizing a desperate and constant need that each believer has as a part of the body of Christ. This always includes the pastor. The pastor “is a member of the body of Christ who himself desperately needs the ministry of the very body he has been called to train and lead.”¹⁰⁷

Using the same metaphor in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says:

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... 15 speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

It does not matter how wise he is or how eloquent his preaching sounds; it does not matter how outwardly energetic or talented he is. Paul isn’t comparing pastors with many years of

¹⁰⁶ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2012), 89.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 89.

experience to those fresh from Seminary. No, Paul says, the pastor will always be a member of the body of Christ. The pastor is never the exception to the rule, and the body's purpose is always the same. It is to "grow and build itself up in love, as each part does his work." Even though Christ, through the Church, calls the pastor to "equip" the rest of the body, the pastor needs the body of believers just as much as they need him. When the individual grows, the congregation grows. If this is true for every member, how much more so for the leader of the congregation, the pastor! Let neither the pastor nor the congregation ever forget this truth, for "an intentional culture of pastoral separation and isolation is neither biblical nor spiritually healthy."¹⁰⁸

In an essay written for the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Professor Vilas Glaeske reflects on his own continuing education and concludes by making the following comment. "Why is continuing education important? It is important because the vitality of the congregation revolves around the pastor."¹⁰⁹ How true this is; yet could we not say the same in reverse based on the Apostle Paul's words? If the pastor is shrinking (the opposite of growing) how can he possibly grow those he serves? If a congregation is going to set the goal of growing through Word and Sacrament then the same high expectation must be set for the one who serves them. When the expectation of growth is set, an environment must be cultivated in which essential time is given to the pastor to pray and study the Word himself so he can grow.¹¹⁰

The biblical truth that Christ sees his church growing through the interconnectedness and the interdependency of all its members, including the pastor, is understood. Yet when one looks at the concept of growth through pastoral CE and observes the remarkably low number of pastors that partner with their congregations to pursue growth, it seems not to be as widely understood as one would hope. The fact that only 18% (6/33) of pastors who completed the survey demonstrated joint planning of the pastor's CE is heartbreaking. A congregation deserves better. The fact that the same low number (18%) of congregations was reported as giving pastors support in ways besides finances (encouragement, time, accountability, etc.) is equally as tragic. Pastors, too, deserve better. Congregations must support their pastors so that pastors can support their congregations.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Vilas R. Glaeske, "Continuing Education for Public Ministers," 270.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 271.

Evaluative Continuing Education

In light of what Scripture says concerning how pastors and congregations are to serve one another for the purpose of growth in Christ, and reflecting on how pastoral continuing education in the WELS is challenged in the four above-mentioned areas, this author proposes a new paradigm for pastoral CE. This paradigm enhances, but doesn't replace, the three previously mentioned historic paradigms of continuing education currently in place for WELS pastors. This paradigm will be referred to as "Evaluative Continuing Education"¹¹¹, or ECE. The Evaluative Continuing Education paradigm promotes targeted, mutual growth for a pastor and his congregation, resulting in more effective ministry.

ECE is defined as a growth-oriented, assessment-based approach to CE that considers a pastor's gifts in light of the congregation's ministry in order to remove haphazardness from CE by targeting a course of pastoral CE that is of greatest value to pastor and parish. "Every minister is a unique individual with special gifts, a particular background, and singular needs, but the professional growth of the individual minister cannot be separated from the equally unique setting of a local parish... Effective ministry takes place when the minister's growth reflects the parish's ministry needs."¹¹² Therefore, this paradigm of pastoral CE is based on a Christocentric, collaborative approach to the pastor's growth between the pastor and the congregation that has, as its foundation an understanding of the context in which they serve, principles of Christian spiritual gifts, why Christians grow, and how Christians grow.

Previously, the author has referred to the congregation as a "tool" for helping the pastor to evaluate his gifts and to grow. Though this is definitely part of the congregation's role in ECE, viewing the congregation only as a tool paints an inaccurate picture of ECE's purpose. The goal of ECE is simple and it is specific: mutual growth. Remember: education for education's sake may not effectively serve the cause of ministry.¹¹³ The emphasis of ECE is mutual growth for the sake of more effective ministry. Although the purpose of ECE is one, the benefits, as you will see, are many.

¹¹¹ The name given to this paradigm of CE is not in use elsewhere as far as this author knows. However, the concepts involved in this model are by no means original.

¹¹² Stephen J. Carter, *Pastors on the Grow: Continuing Education CAN Improve Your Ministry*, 25.

¹¹³ David John Zersen, "Finding Better Ways to Clergy Competence," 212.

Below are Four Critical Moves that lead a congregation and its pastor to successfully carry out ECE. The idea of scripting critical moves is explained in Dan and Chip Heath's book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. The purpose of scripting critical moves is to guide behavioral change in the face of challenges; specifically, to guide by removing the exhaustion caused by multiple ministry demands (Challenge #1), diminishing inter-structural tensions (Challenge #2), eliminating ambiguity (Challenge #3), all the while providing a clear, simple, and straightforward solution to the problem of haphazard pastoral CE (Challenge #4).

The Four Critical Moves below might appear to be less than complete in directing a congregation or pastor towards effective ECE. However, "you can't script every move – that would be like trying to foresee the seventeenth move in a chess game. It's the critical moves that count."¹¹⁴ Not only is it impossible to script every move, but it is sound educational strategy to allow for creativity and flexibility in the learning process. ECE is by no means a straightjacketed approach to pastoral CE. It promotes flexibility based on one's personality and gifts and the congregation's ministry context. It is the firm conviction of the author that this paradigm of CE, while flexible, maintains a targeted and purposeful approach to spiritual and professional growth that results in God-glorifying, excellent, and effective ministry.

Each critical move will be mentioned in brief, followed by suggestions for what pastors, congregational leaders, and CE providers can do to accomplish each step. These four moves are not necessarily to be taken in the order in which they are listed. Though there is a certain logical progression seen, the overall idea is that, in time, all four critical moves will simultaneously govern a pastor's growth plan.

The ECE process can be a remarkable learning experience for both the pastor and congregation. To borrow an analogy from Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute, when carried out thoughtfully, ECE is like turning a page to a new chapter in our lives.¹¹⁵ However, attacking ECE recklessly can be like a minefield, often haphazard in its construction and sadly lacking in

¹¹⁴ Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, 1st ed (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 56.

¹¹⁵ Richard A. Hunt, John E. Hinkle, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Clergy Assessment and Career Development* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 183.

humanity. Therefore, the ECE experience must be approached with extreme caution.¹¹⁶ For this reason, special attention within each critical move will be given not only to the benefits, but also to the challenging aspects of ECE. Roy Oswald's article, "Alban Institute Approaches to Assessment," is heavily relied upon as an authority on the challenges in this paradigm of CE. That which follows seeks to remove the haphazard aspects of CE by scripting the critical moves necessary for carrying out Evaluative Continuing Education in any congregational setting.

Four Critical Moves to ECE

Critical Move #1: Communicate and Educate

The first critical move to achieving successful evaluative continuing education (ECE) is essential throughout the ECE process. There simply must be an unprecedented amount of open dialogue between pastor, congregation, and CE providers for this paradigm of CE to work effectively. Oswald says that evaluations in ministry, like ECE, require the pastor and his congregation to be clear and candid about the things that matter most in their corporate life together.¹¹⁷ No longer can a pastor's CE be the elephant in the room that no one speaks of. There must be transparent discussion about this process, including the reasons for and the purposes of pastoral continuing education, on all levels.

Research suggests, more often than not, that this may first require varying amounts of education. All too easily, pastors, congregations, and CE providers alike can become distracted from the core purpose of pastoral CE when struggling to facilitate it. A re-education regarding what lies behind a pastor's CE takes everyone back to square one; gospel-powered growth in order to give our best to our King in gospel ministry.

Many congregations and even pastors are unaware of the opportunities that await them in the area of continuing education. How many WELS congregations, and even pastors, are unaware of their Seminary's institute for continuing education, *Grow in Grace*, and what it offers? How tragic it would be should they never learn of the opportunities available to them. This "is an issue of perceived value. If the congregation does not recognize value in [CE] then

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 183.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 183.

the pastor will have a very difficult time going about CE”¹¹⁸ and vice versa. All parties – pastors, congregations, and CE providers – must be aware of the potential blessings that God could choose to grant through more targeted CE efforts.

Pastor

When communicating and educating within ECE it is the responsibility of the pastor to take initiative for the Bible-based study and subsequent conversations about what CE and growth mean for a pastor and his congregation. How this is accomplished will depend a great deal on the pastor’s personality and leadership style. One interviewee’s approach to this specific aspect of the critical communication and education move is worth noting.

It does not matter (expect that you know what style is yours) what leadership style you have as a pastor. They’re all good. But, you have to understand that the tasks you are involved in as a pastor are all leadership tasks. It doesn’t matter what style of a leader you are; you have leadership tasks that need to be carried out. You are a servant leader, but a leader nonetheless. Therefore, you must be a leader in planning and empowering otherwise the congregation is stuck.¹¹⁹

Much of the ECE process is shared; however, in most cases the responsibility for beginning ECE should not be shared. There may be exceptions; there may be a congregation that is both ambitious and resourceful enough to begin ECE without the pastor’s impetus. However, they would be the exception, not the rule. The rule is that pastors must be the leaders, in some way or another, in setting the tone regarding their continuing education.

Congregation

When communicating and educating, it is the responsibility of the congregation to communicate to their pastor one clear message: “We support your growth plan. Your plan is our plan. Your growth is our growth.” As a pastor and a CE provider communicate the place and purpose of CE in pastoral ministry, the congregation responds with encouragement. A congregation can make their supportive message clear through non-verbal communication such as financing their pastors CE, giving him time off, etc. However, the importance of verbalizing this message cannot be overstated. “Encourage one another and build one another up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

After learning of the CE opportunities available, a congregation should also dedicate themselves to knowing what CE options become available to their pastor in the future. At times

¹¹⁸ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

¹¹⁹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

it may mean seeking secular options when traditional theological options are unavailable. Although this is primarily the job of the pastor and the CE provider, the congregation is sure to add a constructive perspective.

Of the thirty-three pastors surveyed, only one (3%) reported a model of CE taking place in which he and his congregation somewhat modeled these “critical moves” of ECE; that is, an intentional approach to CE based on some form of evaluation of the pastor’s gifts in light of the congregation’s ministry. Eight pastors (24%) stated that their personal growth plan was based on their own unarticulated estimation of what might benefit the congregation’s ministry.¹²⁰ In reporting the statistics of pastors who have not engaged in this form of CE, this author does not mean to place blame on pastors, but desires to make one point clear: the ECE paradigm of CE, while beneficial, is by no means easy to carry out. ECE presents a paradigm shift for pastoral CE, perhaps even a major cultural shift within traditions that govern congregational/pastoral interactions. Therefore, especially at this initial critical move, allow a challenge to be considered.

Initiating the conversation about ECE may be difficult for some pastors. “The prelude to personal growth is an openness and vulnerability that allows clergy to...explore their more vulnerable sides, those places where they feel afraid and insecure and those places where their work maybe pinching them... [The pastor must be] curious about how he is doing and want to know how to improve performance.”¹²¹ And yet, those who most need growth, evaluation, and continuing education are often the least able to initiate such openness. Oswald suggests in those situations that a congregation could consider hiring an outside consultant to facilitate the process.¹²² While doing so is certainly not critical to implementing ECE, this author recognizes the wisdom in seeking outside help when necessary.

One more challenge of communicating the initiation of ECE is to consider the timing. Again, we look to Oswald.

When congregational life is going well, no one wants to evaluate. When things are poor they do. Yet when trouble exists between a pastor and people, it is the worst possible time to engage in assessment activity. No matter how well grounded the process, it will be used by laypeople primarily as an expression for their discontent over what is or is not happening. Generally clergy are damaged in such situations, and nothing really changes.

¹²⁰ See Appendix E

¹²¹ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 180-181.

¹²² *Ibid*, 179.

The best time to evaluate is when clergy and congregation are feeling good about one another.¹²³

CE Provider

Communicating and educating make up the most important move for the CE provider in the ECE paradigm. Leaders in the area of continuing education offer the following three suggestions as they themselves look to offer increasingly quality CE.

First, CE providers can strive to make certain that both pastor and congregation know what CE opportunities and resources are available to them. Again, the data¹²⁴ does not allow for the assumption that what reaches the pastor's ears regarding his CE is simultaneously reaching the congregation's. A marketing strategy that looks to engage both pastors and parishioners is worth considering.

Second, CE providers can strive to demonstrate a full understanding of the pastor's challenges in continuing his education. When WELS pastors are presented with a message that there is more that they can or should do, it may seem to minimize the demands of ministry and cause exasperation.¹²⁵

Third, CE Providers can communicate other pastors' stories of successful CE. This is not for the sake of propaganda; sharing stories is not just giving "pep talks." When stories are shared of how and in what areas a pastor grew, more pastors are made aware of growth opportunities. One interviewee suggested that one of the hardest, yet most valuable things pastors can do is communicate with fellow pastors who are doing the same thing that they are. Often, the venue is not available or the effort might not be put forth to make this inter-pastoral communication happen, and pastors fail to communicate with others who are trying to grow in the same exact ways. Instead, a pastor tries to go it alone. This same interviewee added that this idea of collaboration is a basic principal of education used in classrooms, but could also be utilized on a larger scale. It could be the role of the CE providers to create an arena for sharing growth strategies.

¹²³ Ibid, 179.

¹²⁴ See Appendix E

¹²⁵ John E. Meyer, "Continuing Education and Remaining in Christ," 2014, 3,

<http://www.wlstc.org/home/180017202/180017202/Images/14meyerj1.pdf> (accessed October, 2015).

Critical Move #2: Define Expectations

The second critical move in ECE for pastor, parish, and providers is to clearly define expectations. While this move could have been included in the critical “Communicating and Educating” move above, the idea of defining expectations for effective ministry as well as for the ECE process is more nuanced than just creating open dialogue (which is the aim of the first critical move). Consider the following study of WELS teachers’ expectations compared to the expectations of the congregations they served.

Lutheran congregations’ top expectations focus on *performance*. Schmill (2015) shared that the top three qualities WELS schools look for in their teachers are 3) grounded and growing in teaching skills, 2) Christ-like servant, and 1) grounded and growing in God and his Word.

Contrast that with the qualities new teachers are looking for from their schools. The top three preferences of 200,000 career-seekers, including new teachers, centered on *culture* (Strack, 2014). They are looking for 3) a good work-life balance, 2) good relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Markow & Martin, 2005), and 1) being appreciated for their work. Nationally, a third of teachers who left teaching left because they did not think their contributions were valued (Richardson, 2008).

Performance and *culture*. These are two drastically different sets of expectations, and the conflict does have an impact on our WELS new teachers.¹²⁶ (Emphasis original) While the definitions of “performance” and “culture” above may not fit in a categorical sense, the point the study makes is nonetheless valid. Different expectations between called workers and congregations, while subtle, do exist, and can bear negative effects. Consider the following statistic when shaping expectations.

Lyle Schaller says often that 90% of what clergy do is invisible to 90% of the laity 90% of the time. When simplistic images of the clergy role are brought to an evaluation session, an enormous collection of individual expectations can easily be laid on clergy. When good-hearted clergy try to live up to all those expectations, role overload can quickly occur.¹²⁷

Defining clear expectations between the pastor and those involved in his CE is clearly vital to a healthy growth process.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Schaefer, “Let’s Not Burn Out Our New Teachers!” *Issues in Lutheran Education*, March, 17 2015, accessed November 2015, <file:///localhost/Users/mattrothe/Library/Application%20Support/Zotero/Profiles/fmccxsgk.default/zotero/storage/5K76824X/lets-not-burn-out-our-new-teachers.html>.

¹²⁷ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 180.

Pastor

Pastors should seek, not shun, expectations in their CE. A pastor must recognize that the independence he has in his CE could be potentially harmful, causing decision paralysis if no expectations are set in place. As the pastor fulfills his responsibility of taking the initiative to plan his CE, he must also foster a healthy church culture where clear expectations are laid out in a spirit of Christian love and support.

This can be challenging. Recall that the openness and vulnerability required in such personal evaluations can cause uncertainty and fear. Therefore, a pastor should first set his own realistic expectations for the ECE process. The Alban Institute, which provides educational resources, books, publications and consulting services for clergy and congregations, suggests that pastors set realistic expectations by asking themselves the following three questions to provide security in the face of potential uncertainty. 1) Is someone else imposing the evaluation on me for decisions to be made for the church, or am I imposing the process on myself to enhance my own ministry? 2) Who owns the findings once they are received? 3) Who is in charge of the process? If the clergy owns the findings (even if they are shared with others) and is a part of leading the process, then he will be engaged in an evaluation process with great potential for growth and development.¹²⁸ If not, ECE's main goal of mutual growth will be unattainable. Roy Oswald explains.

If the data are owned by someone else, and the process is controlled by others who decide what will be evaluated and how findings will be used, then what is proposed is an administrative review.

I am not trying to suggest that one process is right and the other is wrong. Administrative review is a necessary ingredient in the personnel system of any organization concerned about the appropriate allocation of its human resources. But it is a restricted focus and does not provide the kind of ownership that impels clergy to open up to further personal growth.¹²⁹

The pastor also has a responsibility to set proper expectations for his lay members. ECE may not be something that congregation members are used to or initially comfortable with. Members may have reservations about evaluating their pastor. Additionally, ECE is never intended to involve a large contingent of the congregation. The pastor helps to set expectations for the ECE process by answering the question, "Who will do the evaluation?" Roy Oswald and

¹²⁸ Ibid, 181.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 182.

the Alban Institute provide the following points of consideration to help answer this challenging question.

- Who can act as a support group throughout the process? The selection of members involved in ECE should include those with whom the pastor is willing to share the painful and vulnerable aspects of life and ministry, and those who are or have been at the core of the congregation and understand its dynamics. When seeking growth in the area of leadership, engage those who see clergy most often in a leadership capacity. When looking for insights on effectiveness as a pastoral counselor, people who have been counseled should be among those contacted.
- Members involved in the ECE process should accurately sample the congregation in one-third active leadership, one-third active attenders, and one-third fringe members.
- The laypersons selected need to feel totally invested in the experience. The pastor can help ease their anxieties by sharing with them the following:
 - His personal evaluation of a ministry area in very specific terms.
 - Why feedback would be especially helpful in that area.
 - Their specific role in making that feedback meaningful.¹³⁰

Congregation

“Congregations must state in so many words that the expectation of their pastor is this: ‘We expect that you grow.’”¹³¹ Now, if a congregation has that high expectation of pastoral growth, then they must also make that expectation realistic to fulfill. To expect someone to do something without allowing for it to happen creates frustration. If the issue is time (as it often is), how can the congregation help the pastor reallocate his time? Congregations can’t expect him to add CE on top of his usual ministry demands. Congregations must ask themselves, “What kind of things is the pastor doing that we could do, so that he can devote time to growth?” As stated above, there will be certain members intimately involved in the ECE process. Here is where the other members, in the spirit of Christian freedom, can really get creative in how they can help facilitate their pastor’s CE.¹³² ECE allows a pastor’s CE to engage the entire congregation.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 182-183.

¹³¹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

¹³² Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

Elders, board members, and congregational leaders will reflect upon evaluation findings in order to decide, with the pastor, a specific area of growth that will also benefit the congregation. Should members in leadership positions, however, expect to be involved in the actual evaluation of the pastor? In many circumstances this may make the most sense; however, at times, there could arise a conflict of interests. Here, it is important to keep in mind the timing of the evaluation and well as the specific area being evaluated. Regardless, all leadership should make it their priority to clearly state the expectation that adequate care must be taken to safeguard the ECE process and the ongoing needs of both the pastor and the congregation.¹³³

CE Provider

Those who provide CE opportunities have a responsibility in setting expectations as well. If the providers produce, endorse, or recommend any CE event or product as “beneficial”, there are automatically expectations placed on those who are meant to profit from the CE opportunity. Faulty or false expectations are intolerable. There can be nothing worse then seeing a well-intentioned program fail because of misguided or misunderstood expectations. Providers should take it upon themselves to specify realistic expectations for a given CE opportunity or resource that are in line with the realities of parish ministry.¹³⁴

Critical Move #3: Evaluate

Evaluations, around which this paradigm of CE is named, can be the cause of angst in any area of life. A certain amount of discomfort is natural when any person or group of people measures another’s abilities, knowledge, potential, performance, etc. Such discomfort need not wreak havoc on the psyche of the pastor as long as he and the congregation keep before them the reason for evaluations in ministry: growth in Christ to offer our best for Christ. That said, Kingdom work this side of heaven is messy since God calls imperfect people to carry it out. In this critical move of the ECE process a pastor and congregation must be especially cautious, as one bad experience here can potentially damage future efforts. This critical move will begin by addressing four challenge areas concerning evaluations within ECE.

1) It is imperative to keep in mind *what* is being evaluated in general terms. Evaluative Continuing Education’s main goal is to evaluate a pastor’s gifts in light of the congregation’s

¹³³ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 182.

¹³⁴ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

ministry in order to pursue a course of pastoral CE that is of greatest value to pastor and parish. The evaluations have a purpose, targeting specific areas in which a pastor can aim his CE. Therefore, the evaluations must be positive in nature. This means that the focus cannot be on poor performance, or performance of any kind, but must focus on one's gifts and potential growth areas.

“Anderson and Han (1979) make the strong case for the call of clergy arguing that the call is more to a role than to a series of functions or a performance of a set of discrete tasks.”¹³⁵ There is a fine distinction here, but essentially this view dictates that evaluations must revolve around aptitudes, not accomplishments. “W. Edwards Deming believes that performance appraisal is a substitute for a primary function of organizational leadership, helping people function at their best.”¹³⁶ The idea that focusing energy on areas of weakness or moments of failure will cause people to improve has been clearly refuted, as it instead develops discouragement, disengagement, defensiveness, and negativity. Research backing the concepts of Tom Rath's *Strength Finder's* supports this.¹³⁷ Evaluations within ECE are not so much concerned with the past as they are with the future by focusing on gifts with the express intent of developing one's potential.

2) It is equally import to define what is evaluated in specific terms. “When choosing the area of ministry to be evaluated – such as preaching, pastoral care, or administration – it is best not to choose more than two or three. Although it is tempting to go for a shotgun approach: the more specific one can be, the more helpful the experience.”¹³⁸

3) The evaluation system must also consider the context of a church's ministry. Otherwise, the pastor becomes the sole focus of the evaluation and the goal of mutual growth is lost.

4) There are several types of evaluations and assessments available that could prove advantageous in a ministry setting; these are too many to list. Furthermore, theories abound regarding how assessments and evaluations are best carried out, and a study of which type of evaluation is best is far outside the scope of this paper. Though a healthy evaluation of a pastor's

¹³⁵ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 180.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 180.

¹³⁷ Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007) 1- 28.

¹³⁸ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 182.

strengths and weaknesses in light of the congregation's ministry is absolutely necessary for determining where a pastor and his ministry are to grow, in the end, there are limitless approaches as to how evaluations can be carried out.

Pastor

Right after Paul commanded that “it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2) he went on to say this: “I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court” (1 Corinthians 4:3). How was he able to say something so bold? Did Paul really not care what others thought of him? Hardly. He cared very much! That is why five chapters later he speaks about becoming “all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9). The reason Paul was able to make such a bold statement about people's evaluation of him was because he was devoted to working “with all [his] heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (Colossians 3:23). Paul's exemplary zeal was the product of an unshakable conviction in whom his identity was based – not in *what* his identity was based, but in *whom*. Paul realized that when he saw himself in view of Christ's cross and his empty grave, people's evaluations of him were not diminished, but set in their appropriate light.

Herein lies a valuable perspective for pastors as they wrestle with legitimate fear of evaluations. Seeing one's identity in the light of one's redemption through Christ is the blessed perspective a pastor (or any Christian) can take into personal evaluations. If he does otherwise, basing his identity in himself and his abilities, there lies the danger that he may slip into either despair or arrogance. As one interviewee said, “We have to get over assessing pastoral strengths and weaknesses in a spirit of neutrality and timidity and instead embrace evaluations with a gospel-emboldened spirit of love and support.”¹³⁹ Therefore, a pastor is tasked with the responsibility of developing a courageous spirit toward evaluation based on a Biblical understanding of the love and identity he has in Christ. He then can model and teach this spirit to the congregation, understanding that patience will be essential.

Though Christians are optimists, all are encouraged to proceed with patience and care in the area of evaluations. Far too often evaluations by congregational members have left pastors viewing their members like alligators who only wish to take bites out of their pastor. Likewise many an evaluation has left frustrated lay members viewing their pastor as seemingly unresponsive to their helpful critiques. It will not happen overnight that both pastor and

¹³⁹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

layperson come to the table with a Christocentric spirit of love and a feeling of comfort about the evaluation process.

As this thesis advocates ECE, it also acknowledges the fact that this paradigm of pastoral CE poses many challenges when it comes to carrying out evaluations of ministry and minister. There are long standing patterns within many churches that may need changing before evaluations of this kind take place. There may be certain habits of both pastor and congregation that will otherwise negatively impact how ministry evaluations are carried out. Prior to introducing ECE, some congregations might be forced to confront significant cultural or structural barriers in their traditional modes of operation that will affect how their pastor and congregation will together carry out a growth plan. Implementing ECE for the first time will require much patience in any church, but especially so where the history has been composed of silence, or worse, unloving attacks. We must ask ourselves: are these changes important to make? Yes. Are they easy? Not at all. Are they worth it? Most definitely. When the body of Christ within a given community humbly and prayerfully gathers together with the goal of pursuing ways they can better carry out the Great Commission, God's blessings will follow according to His plan.

Congregation

The congregation that holds their pastor in high regard may likely be tentative to evaluate him. This is understandable. For one, assessment of a pastor does not fit in the traditional pastor-congregation relationship. Second, many Americans are not particularly accustomed to giving constructive criticism in a professional setting.¹⁴⁰ Third, these evaluations may require difficult conversations.

However, Christians have that which encourages and empowers pastors and congregations alike to engage in this challenging task, that is, the gospel. Understanding that evaluations are wrapped in the gospel demonstrates the real responsibility of the congregational leadership. Their main goal is to use the gospel to take away any feelings of guilt that burden a pastor by pointing him to Christ, and also to encourage him to use his gifts, skills, and resources for Christ's glory.¹⁴¹ What a unique opportunity for a congregation to serve its pastor!

¹⁴⁰ This is the American author's personal opinion based on ministry experience, though limited, in Asian, African, Caribbean, and American-minority cultures.

¹⁴¹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

The congregation gains ownership of a growth plan when it supports a pastor's CE with financial and verbal encouragement. However, nothing can personally invest them in a pastor's growth the way that their evaluations can. A holistic view of evaluations allows congregations to see how their specific planning, which is aimed at their pastor becoming a more useful instrument in God's hands, is for their benefit as well as his.¹⁴²

CE Provider

Evaluations applied to ministry within CE are perhaps some of the more uncharted waters that pastors and their congregations will navigate. Natural fears, inexperience, less than positive past experiences, and unawareness of how helpful evaluations in ministry can be are all reasons why evaluations are difficult for pastors and for their congregations. It could be the responsibility of the providers to be proactive in setting evaluations in their proper light: that is, the freedom, love, support, and encouragement that flows from the gospel. Providers could also assist by working to make relevant assessment tools readily available for the congregations.

Being proactive in encouraging certain evaluations, however, requires caution on the part of the provider. While a rubric with rationale for how to carry out evaluations in ministry might be a helpful resource that providers could create, care is needed to ensure that such a rubric remains simple.¹⁴³ Remember, varying ministry contexts will undoubtedly call for different evaluation models. While it is the CE provider's responsibility to establish evaluations in a positive light, here is where maintaining flexibility in ECE is essential. Otherwise, the danger exists that this paradigm shifts away from a grass roots approach into one that is top-down.

Critical Move #4: Follow-Up

If the fourth and final critical move of ECE is not fulfilled, all is lost. Follow-up is understood as any actions that will bring to fruition previous efforts aimed at accomplishing ECE's main goal: mutual growth. Here is how each group can follow up on the first three critical moves to maintain focused, targeted growth throughout the ECE process.

Pastor

The single most important action that a pastor can take to follow up on the evaluations that have taken place, meet defined expectations, and keep communication positive is the

¹⁴² Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

¹⁴³ Interview with a WELS leader in education, October 2015.

implementation of his learning. According to the survey conducted with WELS pastors this critical move in ECE is a severe shortcoming by most. Only four of the thirty-three (12%) pastors reported an intentional, measurable, and recognizable implementation of newly acquired skill, knowledge, or technique acquired through CE.¹⁴⁴ “Knowledge does not change behavior, practice changes behavior.”¹⁴⁵ Behavior, or implementation, is simply evidence of growth.

In his blog article entitled “Making Professional Development Count,” Dr. John Meyer, Director of Continuing Education at Martin Luther College, makes a well-supported case that one’s CE must be implemented, that is, put into practice with sufficient regularity and job-embedded continuity. His reasons are summarized as follows.

Effective professional development must be job-embedded (*take place during ministry*), intensive (*haphazard and occasional learning is not intensive*), ongoing, collaborative (*involve laity or ministry peers*), and connected and aligned to school goals (*in a pastors situation, church goals*). (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Gulamhussein, 2013). Such training can only occur alongside classroom teaching (*in a pastor’s ministry context*)...¹⁴⁶

The end goal of implementing one’s learning as a demonstration of growth greatly affects the way one approaches CE plans from the beginning. No longer can time, energy, and money be spent on CE opportunities that have a low capability of being implemented in ministry. Instead, an intensely thoughtful and purposeful approach is required from the start.

Yet, consider the opposite view. What if a pastor was to lament the heavy emphasis ECE places on planned and purposeful CE, which seeks immediately valuable outcomes? What if a case was made that this approach deprives a minister of spontaneous growth opportunities that God might use in wonderful ways down the road? What if a pastor was to say, “My CE planning is not reactionary to the needs of the church or community. Instead it is consistent with what the historic church says provided the most benefit,”¹⁴⁷ as was heard from one survey respondent?

There may well be seasons in one’s ministry where evaluations discover that no particular ministry need requires immediate growth and instant application. In fact, more often

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix F

¹⁴⁵ Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, 30.

¹⁴⁶ Dr. John Meyer, “Making Professional Development Count,” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. April 14, 2015 (accessed September 2015),

<file:///localhost/Users/mattrothe/Library/Application%20Support/Zotero/Profiles/fmccxsgk.default/zotero/storage/PR22IX2W/making-professional-development-count.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Survey response from WELS pastor.

than not, such seasons of ministry may present themselves. Here, a less targeted approach to CE may be suitable, and unforeseen growth may well be the result.

While this thesis strongly encourages a plan of targeted growth, it also honors the truth that growth is often unquantifiable or indemonstrable. Two different interviewees joyfully retold similar stories that took place the Sunday after returning from a CE opportunity. A congregational member approached the pastor and said, “Pastor, I can just tell you are rejuvenated!” Was this because the pastors did a Bible class on “The Top 10 Ways My Study Caused Growth?” No! These pastors’ members could “just tell.” How can people possible quantify renewed zeal that flows from a Spirit touched heart that grew after spending time in the Word? There will be times when growth will manifest itself in ways that pastors and congregations did not and could not plan for.

This said, in times where a pastor and his congregation are more open to choose any area of growth for the pastor to pursue, we are reminded that the goal remains the same: mutual growth. Therefore, implementation is still encouraged to the extent that it is possible, and a planned and purposeful approach to CE will aid in accomplishing this. How can the congregation rightfully benefit from their growth investment if the pastor does not share the return interest it has gained? Even if one’s CE is not immediately applicable in the sense that it addresses or meets a current need in ministry, would a pastor not desire to share his learning as soon as he can, for himself as well as for his congregation?

Congregation

Follow-up that is carried out by the congregation should prove to be the most enjoyable critical move for both the congregation and their pastor. A congregation’s follow-up need not be anything structured or formal, although it would not hurt if it were. Congregational follow-up might best be described as a loving check-up that incites the congregation to consider how they can say in love, “What can we do to serve you, pastor? How can we help you grow more?”¹⁴⁸ It is during this critical move where the pastor receives emotional and individualized care and support.

There may very well be times when a pastor, because of the challenges of meeting ministry demands, is falling behind on the growth plan he and his congregation set forth. When a congregation follows up with their pastor, it gives the pastor the opportunity to admit that he has

¹⁴⁸ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September 2015.

not made time or that the congregation has not given him time for growth. A congregation's follow-up is a proactive approach to a pastor experiencing guilt or shame in not "doing enough," and a reminder to the congregation of their ownership of the growth throughout the ECE process.

CE Provider

The most significant way a CE provider can deliver further support and follow-up within this paradigm of CE is through their legitimizing of the pastor's and congregation's methods of continuing education. There are countless practices and paths of continuing education that may be appropriate for a congregation and its pastor to select; it all depends on what will give them the greatest value and result in the most growth. Many of these approaches are informal and non-traditional compared to what is conventionally understood as continuing education. Examples include self-directed learning projects, peer group studies, personal reading, and of course, personal devotion. The providers of CE can legitimize a pastor's continuing education by backing and supporting the informal work that he is doing. Too often pastors are left with the impression that "real" continuing education must be formal; enrolling in a program for a further degree, taking classes online or in a classroom, or leaving their ministry context. One of the many benefits of ECE is that it liberates congregations and pastors who cannot or do not wish to participate in formal CE by endorsing and encouraging informal CE. Providers of CE can further legitimize informal methods of CE by doing the following. 1) Direct pastors and congregations to an ever-growing catalogue of informal methods. 2) Provide assistance to self-directed learning study; an example would be a self-directed learning approach that encourages the student to partner with a mentor or guide. 3) Track all methods of pastoral CE equally. One interviewee suggested devising a tool along the lines of a pastoral portfolio as a way to recognize all types of CE as legitimately beneficial.¹⁴⁹ This author agrees, and further theorizes that an electronic portfolio may prove to be a tool that yields blessed results. The University of Texas at Austin's College of Engineering¹⁵⁰ introduced the use of an e-portfolio that may have several applications for pastoral ministry.

In 2001, the mechanical engineering faculty at UT Austin needed a way of documenting and sharing student projects, tracking the achievement of learning objectives, reinforcing the link between class work and real-world engineering concerns, and encouraging

¹⁴⁹ Interview with a WELS leader in education, September.

¹⁵⁰ This school now goes by the following name: Cockrell School of Engineering, The University of Texas at Austin.

students to reflect on their own learning processes. Polaris, an in-house e-portfolio system, was created. UT engineering students not only use their e-portfolios to showcase their best work and evaluations for prospective employers; Polaris also supports the learning process. The system uses a “metacognitive” strategy that encourages students to study their own learning patterns in an effort to improve their performance over time. In addition, a feedback cycle allows students to post their individual work electronically, perform intra-group and extra-group reviews, question project assumptions, and learn to critique their peers constructively, as they must do throughout their engineering careers. See <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI5015.pdf>.¹⁵¹

Imagine the benefits of an online portfolio that not only tracked learning, but also helped improve learning for pastors, and enabled collaboration among pastoral peers. The use of technology in this regard would create ease of use, which could provide increased benefit for pastors, congregations, CE providers, as well as synodical leadership with whom these portfolios may be shared.

The “Most Critical Move:” A Final Note about ECE’s Four Critical Moves

Evaluative Continuing Education promotes targeted, mutual growth for a pastor and his congregation, resulting in more effective ministry. When it comes to carrying out Word and Sacrament ministry we recall what we have stated above: “Any doctrine of the Holy Spirit that relieves [a pastor] of [his] work and its responsibility is plainly false.”¹⁵² To this end pastors and their congregations seek ways in which they, as the ministerial causes of salvation, can mutually grow to become more effective tools in God’s hand. The Four Critical Moves of ECE provide a clear and focused path that pastors, congregations, and CE providers can take toward more targeted growth.

Allow the final note about Four Critical Moves to address what is most critical. “Without the sin qua non of personal growth in the Word, all other efforts in continuing education would easily be useless or counterproductive.”¹⁵³ While it is an attitude of giving our best that compels us to grow, we must remember that it is only his love and his gospel at work in us that causes

¹⁵¹ Marilyn Lombardi, “Authentic Learning for the 21st Century: An Overview,” *Educause: Learning Initiative*. ELI Paper 1: 2007 (May 2007), 6.

¹⁵² Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, Rev. and with new sermons (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2001), 31.

¹⁵³ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching,” 92.

that growth. As God's people look to bear fruit, that is, evidence of growth, they hold dear the Savior's words on growing.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

(John 15:5-9)

The most critical move in ECE is accomplished only through the saving faith worked in us; it is the bending of one's knees before the King's throne, with humble hearts and prayerful voices, fully relying on Him to work in us the growth we desire.

PART V

Conclusion

“God will never become a useless relic irrelevant to current culture, but a pastor can become precisely that.”¹⁵⁴ Therefore WELS pastors agree that continuing education (CE) is an important aspect of pastoral ministry. Statistics reported above support this assertion demonstrating that an overwhelming majority of WELS pastors are currently taking advantage of some form of CE whether formal or informal. Continuing education is important since Scripture commands that we grow, and CE is a God-glorifying way in which pastors, compelled by the gospel's message, can give their best to the one they serve. Pastors are not “finished products” upon graduation from the Seminary; rather, a lifetime of efforts first begin to continually offer their most excellent service for the King. For this reason pastors, realizing they are but “jars of clay”, seek to grow in their knowledge, skills, and abilities so that they never become a dull tool in the Lord's hand.

A pastor's growth is not his own, nor is he alone in his pursuit of growth. All believers, that is, pastors and congregation members alike, are responsible for each other's growth. St. Paul's apt analogy in Ephesians 4:11-12, 15-16 demonstrates this.

¹⁵⁴ Richard L. Gurgel, “The Unending Pursuit of Growth in Gospel Preaching,” 37.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

However, while most pastors and congregations strive to grow, many of their CE efforts are conducted “impulsively and without planning and forethought to the array of continuing education opportunities.”¹⁵⁵ Why is this? What challenges do WELS pastors face as they pursue CE today to cause such an unplanned approach? To answer this question, interviews were conducted with ten WELS leaders and a survey synthesized from thirty-three WELS parish pastors. These research studies identified four specific challenges inhibiting a pastor’s growth.

- Challenge #1 – Infinite Demands, Finite Time: Pastoral ministry in the 21st century increasingly has more demands placed on a pastor’s schedule limiting time necessary for continued growth.
- Challenge #2 – Ministry isn't actually structured to make pastoral CE happen: Due to multiple ministerial infrastructures pastors often experience more competition than cooperation in formulating an effective approach to CE.
- Challenge #3 – Ambiguity leading to decision paralysis: An unprecedented amount of freedom afforded a pastor in planning his own CE coupled with a vast array of CE opportunities often overwhelms pastors causing decision paralysis, i.e. indecision.
- Challenge #4 – A “haphazard” approach to pastoral CE: With no clear understanding of how best to approach CE, well-intentioned pastors often take a haphazard or “shotgun approach” to continuing education. This approach robs pastors of a solid basis and a needed depth of learning required to do effective ministry today.¹⁵⁶

As these four challenge areas were explored, this thesis’ research then focused on a new question: how could pastors better engage in targeted CE that has as its goal mutual growth for the pastor and the congregation?

After first studying what Scripture says concerning matters of growth and also considering a historical study of three proven paradigms of CE in current use in WELS, this author determined that a new paradigm of CE could enhance the previous three paradigms while

¹⁵⁵ Glenn L. Borreson, “Clergy Continuing Education: Fast Food or Planned Meal?” 59-60.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 60.

simultaneously diminishing the present challenges. This new paradigm, termed Evaluative Continuing Education (ECE), is a growth-oriented, evaluation-based approach to CE that considers a pastor's gifts in light of the congregation's ministry in order to pursue a course of pastoral CE that is of greatest value to pastor and parish for the express purpose of mutual growth aimed at God-pleasing, excellent, effective gospel ministry.

Through a study of key scriptural principles regarding the interconnected and interdependent growth needed for the body of believers and by scripting four critical moves, this paradigm shift allows pastors and congregations to take clear aim at targeted growth in the face of the four present growth challenges. ECE directs pastors, congregations, and CE providers to carry out the following Four Critical Moves:

- Critical Move #1: Communicate and Educate. It must be the conscious effort of congregations and pastors to have open, vulnerable yet safe, and candid communication about pastoral/congregational growth. This includes discussing any obstacles that prevent a pastor's growth, and therefore a congregation's growth. This critical move also prompts all involved in a pastor's CE to be educated on what CE opportunities and resources are available.
- Critical Move #2: Define Expectations. Ministerial infrastructure within a congregation or within a synod has the potential to confuse expectations of a pastor's CE. Clearly defining realistic expectations of the pastor, the congregation, and the CE provider ensures accountability, which achieves a healthier and safer evaluation process.
- Critical Move #3: Evaluate. A myriad of CE choices a pastor is forced to make often causes decision paralysis and cripples a pastor's and his congregation's walk towards mutual growth. Evaluations that considers a pastor's gifts in light of the congregation's ministry removes haphazardness from one's approach to CE by targeting a course of pastoral CE that is of greatest value to pastor and parish.
- Critical Move #4: Follow-Up. A pastor follows up on the CE plan he and the congregation developed by sharing with the congregation how he grew so that they might grow as well. Follow-up by a congregation provides opportunity for them to support their pastor as he conducts his continuing education.

The four critical moves are, by no means, a magic bullet to shoot down all challenges that impede pastoral CE. There are significant challenges even within the ECE process itself. ECE

may involve confronting and changing complex patterns, habits, or traditions in certain contexts. This thesis attempts to acknowledge and address the challenges posed by this paradigm of CE. Even so, ECE is not meant to be portrayed as simple; rather, this thesis hopes to advocate ECE as an exceedingly valuable approach to CE despite its challenges.

This thesis intends to give an overview of the ECE paradigm and how it can be carried out. Pastors and seminarians could still explore a wide range of areas not included or not fully developed in this thesis regarding CE applied to pastoral ministry or ECE specifically. Specific surveys could be conducted with WELS pastors to determine the limitations and potential presented by each of the four critical moves. Case studies could be conducted with churches that are currently employing concepts similar to those endorsed by the ECE paradigm to study firsthand accounts of how ECE's concepts are specifically resulting in effective ministry and in what regards they are not promoting effective ministry.

One avenue this author regrettably did not have the opportunity to pursue was briefly mentioned above as a suggestion by one interviewee. The idea was given of a "pastoral portfolio" that a pastor, congregation, and possibly the synod could use to systematically and categorically store a pastor's past CE accomplishments. The author suggests the possibility of obtaining or developing an online profile or portfolio format with similar capabilities to the University of Texas at Austin's College of Engineering's e-portfolio, Polaris, LinkedIn®, or the Gallup® Strength Center website¹⁵⁷ and its "My Strengths Community."

Finally, pastors and seminarians could also consider developing resources that would train and better equip lay members and pastors alike to perform ministry evaluations that consider a pastor's gifts, a congregation's strengths, and ministry context in the light of Scripture. Evaluations, if not done correctly, can easily oversimplify or objectify the pastor or congregation's role on the assumption that all ministry work is quantifiable.¹⁵⁸ Additional study is required to determine which evaluation philosophies and models can most appropriately and most effectively be used in ministry settings.

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). How? Why? We grow because Scripture demonstrates growth in our faith is important, we grow spiritually because the gospel causes us to grow, we grow personally and professionally because

¹⁵⁷ www.gallupstrengthscenter.com

¹⁵⁸ Hunt, Hinkle, and Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, 179.

the gospel compels us to do so, and we desire to grow because our King deserves our best. It is this author's prayer that those who have read these pages see that one of the ways a pastor and the congregation he serves can grow together is through a joint approach toward pastoral CE. May we always remember that it is the salvific gift God's people have received that will lead a community of believers to never settle for a lukewarm approach to growth, low standards, a minimum effort, or ineffectiveness in ministry. It is the light of the gospel that ignites pastors and congregations to band together to mutually grow and build themselves up for God-pleasing, effective gospel ministry. "To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:18b).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

SUMMER QUARTER AND ONLINE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

SQ ENROLLMENT STATS	
1972	41
1973	45
1974	27
1975	38
1976	34
1977	42
1978	51
1979	57
1980	42
1981	56
1982	48
1983	67
1984	53
1985	63
1986	57
1987	52
1988	57
1989	73
1990	75
1991	71
1992	76
1993	86
1994	109

1995	101		
1996	93		
1997	88		
1998	111		
1999	84		
2000	76		
2001	115		
2002	97		
2003	117		
2004	96		
2005	126		
2006	103		
2007	93		
2008	106		
2009	74	ONLINE ENROLMENT STATISTICS	
2010	87	26	76
2011	68	50	57
2012	62	47	55
2013	53	70	75
2014	60	44	56

Appendix B

THESIS INTERVIEW: INTERVIEW WITH WELS LEADERS IN EDUCATION

1. What are the greatest benefits of continuing education (CE) in pastoral ministry?
2. Does the climate of CE amongst WELS pastors today reflect a clear understanding of its importance *or* a lack of concern for it?
3. How would you rate the importance of a pastor continuing his education throughout his ministry? (5-Very Important; 4-Important; 3-Slightly Important; 2-Neither Important nor Unimportant; 1-Unimportant)
4. Speaking personally or generally, what is (are) the greatest motivator(s) for a pastor to pursue CE?
5. What unmet needs exist for pastors today in the area of CE?
6. What external barriers (cost, time, etc.) pose the greatest threat to pastoral continuing education?
7. What internal barriers (assumptions, ideas, etc.) are most self-defeating for a pastor's pursuit of continuing education?
8. What types of CE (resources, opportunities, or methods) should pastors seek to achieve the most growth?
9. It has been suggested that the need is not so much to convince pastors of the importance for learning. Instead, the greater need for many is to turn haphazard continuing professional education into more planned and purposeful growth. How might you suggest that be done?
10. Specifically, what areas of ministry are most important to focus on as a pastor pursues CE?

11. What role do you see evaluations (any assessment of the pastor's strengths and weaknesses and/or of the congregation's ministry) taking in the CE process?

12. What benefit(s) do you see in evaluative CE?

NOTE: Evaluative Continuing Education is best understood as assessment of a congregation's ministry in light of the pastor's gifts in order to pursue a course of CE that is of greatest value.

13. How might evaluations be a troubling issue for some?

14. What is the congregation's responsibility in regards to the CE of their pastor?

15. What are the benefits for a congregation when their pastor "intentionalizes" his CE?

16. Should CE be required of pastors?

17. What question(s) should I be asking about this subject that I have not asked?

Appendix C

THESIS SURVEY: SURVEY WITH WELS PASTORS

1. Your Name (first and last):
Year of Seminary Graduation:
District(s) you have served:

2. What have you done/are you doing in the area of continuing education (CE) whether formal or informal in nature?

3. Is pastoral CE a part of your congregation's regular ministry plan?

4. In what ways do you include personal factors, specific ministry needs, and congregational input as you plan your CE?

5. What have you found to be the greatest benefits of CE in your ministry?

6. What are your greatest external challenges (cost, time, etc.) to pastoral CE?
What internal challenges (perceptions, ideas, etc.) do you sense as you pursue CE?

7. What areas of ministry do you believe are most important to focus on as you pursue CE?

8. In what concrete ways is your congregation able to see the fruits of your CE?

9. How important is pastoral CE to your congregation? For example, do they provide (non-vacation) time, resources, etc.?

10. What ideas do you have to improve CE for WELS pastors?
What unmet needs exist for pastors in the area of CE?

Appendix D

Information from Question 2. See Appendix C					
Respondent No.	Seminary Graduation Class	Participated in any form of CE X= Yes	Participated in <u>Informal*</u> CE X= Yes	Participated in <u>Formal**</u> CE X= Yes	Usual type of continuing education F= Formal I= Informal B= Both Equally
1.	00	X	X	X	I
2.	10	X	X	X	I
3.	90	X		X	F
4.	00	X	X		I
5.	10	X	X	X	B
6.	90	X	X		I
7.	00	X	X	X	B
8.	00	X	X	X	B
9.	00	X	X	X	I
10.	90	X		X	F
11.	10	X	X		I
12.	10	X	X	X	B
13.	10	X	X	X	B
14.	10	X	X	X	F
15.	10	X	X	X	F
16.	00	X		X	F
17.	00	X	X	X	B
18.	10	X	X		I
19.	90	X	X	X	B

20.	10	X	X	X	I
21.	00	X	X		I
22.	10	X	X		I
23.	90	X	X		I
24.	90	X	X		I
25.	90	X	X		I
26.	90	X	X	X	I
27.	90	X	X	X	B
28.	00	X	X		I
29.	90	X	X		I
30.	90	X	X	X	I
31.	00	X	X	X	F
32.	10	X	X		I
33.	90	X	X		I
		32	30	20	Formal – 6 Informal – 19 Both – 8
		100%	91%	61%	Total = 33
<u>*Examples of Informal CE</u> Conferences – conventions – study clubs – circuit meetings – symposium – Satellite SQ and Pastor Institute <i>not</i> for credit			<u>**Examples of Formal CE</u> WLS Summer Quarter - Satiata SQ <i>for</i> credit – online course- MLC course – Pastor Institute		

Appendix E

Information gathered from survey questions 3, 4, 8, and 9. See Appendix C.					
Respondent No.	Seminary Graduation Class	Demonstrated joint congregation/pastor <u>planning</u> of pastor's CE? X= Yes	CE is <u>evaluative*</u> in nature. X= Yes U= Unofficially/ Generally	Congregation supports CE <u>financially</u> . X= Yes	Mentioned congregational support in areas <u>besides</u> finances? (Encouragement, time off for CE, accountability etc.) X= Yes
1.	00				
2.	10			X	
3.	90	?			
4.	00				
5.	10	X		X	X
6.	90				
7.	00	X	U	X	
8.	00	X	U	X	
9.	00			X	
10.	90				
11.	10	X	X	X	X
12.	10	X		X	X
13.	10			X	
14.	10		U	X	
15.	10	X	U	X	X

16.	00				
17.	00		U	X	X
18.	10				
19.	90				
20.	10			X	
21.	00			X	
22.	10				
23.	90			X	
24.	90		U	X	
25.	90				
26.	90		U	X	
27.	90			X	X
28.	00			X	
29.	90				
30.	90				
31.	00		U	X	
32.	10			X	
33.	90			X	X
		6	Yes = 1 U = 8 Total = 9		6
		18%	Y=3% U= 24% Total = 27%	64%	18.75%

Appendix F

This following is information gathered from survey question 8: Do you intentionally <u>IMPLEMENT</u> your CE in the congregation? See Appendix C.			
No	WLS Class	X= Yes	Comment
1.	00		Hopefully I've learned and become more evangelical and firmer in faith and conviction
2.	10		May have noticed a slight change
3.	90		Gives me a new way to share
4.	00		
5.	10	X	I've taken CE course work and turned it into Bible studies. That's immediate fruit and our people love it. The people are encouraged that I'm growing as a pastor, just as I encourage them to grow as God's people. They can sense that I come back from courses, CE opportunities refreshed, and eager to share the Word.
6.	90		In weekly sermons and Bible studies.
7.	00		Are there Preaching cycles or Bible Study thoughts?
8.	00		
9.	00		It is difficult to answer for the congregation. I do not usually consider specific ministry needs because I do not love Continuing education. I hated school and still do.
10.	90		I cannot speak to this. You would have to ask the congregation members...maybe increased confidence.
11.	10		Bible Classes
12.	10	X	I took an intensive graduate level course on Mark. Over the last 8 months, we've preached through Mark, I prepared about 300 pages of material, and I'm teaching through Mark 3 times. We've produced a lot of material because I had time for a careful study.
13.	10		I don't think they are in a position to know or see that, unless I make a big

			deal out of it.
14.	10	X	Bible studies, sermon applications, presentations, newsletter articles
15.	10	X	I have Bible classes that create from what I learned in CE
16.	00		They have seen how I could take the Book of Leviticus and make it come alive for them in Bible Study.
17.	00		Youth becoming involved in ministry. Offerings and attendance increasing new worship, serving and learning opportunities the community responding to what the congregation offers, especially the Gospel
18.	10		Don't really know, sorry.
19.	90		It has become the fabric of who I am.
20.	10		I don't think it's something obvious they see, but hopefully it comes across in the attitude and excitement I have to do gospel ministry with them.
21.	00		The congregation has not given me any direction as far as CE. Better sermons, better worship services, better Bible classes and Confirmation Classes...
22.	10		I don't know if they recognize the fruits,
23.	90	X	Every year my associate and I talk after symposium about what ideas we gleaned and how to put some of them into practice.
24.	90		I would hope with my sermons and at Bible Classes.
25.	90		I think it has made me a better teacher...I've been able on several occasions to take a conference paper and adapt it into a BC format.
26.	90		It helped with Bible Classes, as wells as improved sermons.
27.	90		Hopefully they benefit from the rejuvenation and renewed excitement
28.	00		I don't know if there's a way to quantify it other than taking time to consider these factors... Better teacher, I think. A more eager pastor, I think. A fresher pastor, I think.
29.	90		
30.	90		The added knowledge spills over to them.
31.	00		It is probably most visible in my preaching.

32.	10		I don't know
33.	90		
		4	
		12 %	