

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FEDERATION PASTORS IN PROMOTING SUPPORT AND
RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Area Lutheran high schools are an integral part of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's educational system. Of these 25 schools, many of them have less than one-hundred students and often depend on local pastors who serve association and federation congregations to provide them with time, talents, funds, and students. Is this role static no matter the circumstances, or do the roles need to be fluid and adaptive to each unique ministerial circumstance? Federation pastors do play an important role in finding support and creating recruitment opportunities for high schools, but the schools and pastors must work together to change and adapt the role of federation pastors to fit each individual's and each school's unique situation.

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INTRODUCTION

May 17, 2016 was a day I will remember for the rest of my life. That was the day when twenty-six of my classmates and I at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary received our first assignments to the full-time ministry as vicars. The excitement was palpable. Every one of us was looking forward to see where we would be heading for the next year. What kind of unique challenges and opportunities would be presented during that time?

When the moment arrived, I listened carefully as the presenter read my name and assignment: “Cale Mead, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Thornton, CO, Nebraska District.” Excitedly, I began to think about everything I knew about Colorado: the mountains, the traffic of Denver and its suburbs, and a beautiful state to spend a year of ministry. However, I also began to wonder what some of the peculiarities of my new call would be. What new doors was the Lord opening to me as I would continue my training to be a pastor?

One of the special circumstances which jumped out to me immediately was Lord of Life’s role in the area Lutheran high school (ALHS) for the Denver area: Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School (RMLHS). This would be my first experience working closely with a school of this kind, so I was eager to have an opportunity to work with Christian young men and women. I am a product of Luther Preparatory School, one of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s (WELS) high schools. Its focus lies with encouraging and training young men and women for ministry. I had only briefly considered attending an ALHS and had gleaned my only

knowledge of them from college friends who attended one. While still a high school, an ALHS differs in its scope and purpose from the WELS preparatory school system. Pastor Ronald Roth summarizes the goal and purpose of the ALHS well:

Christian education is more than imparting facts, but that the heart, conscience, emotions and will must be touched also. Its purpose is to give our youth a Christ-centered philosophy of life to prepare them for a life of service here and a life of bliss hereafter. That is accomplished best by providing a Christian setting in which all education takes place. To that end Christian schools, both elementary and secondary, have been established among us. Our elementary and secondary schools do not differ in essence, but only in scope and manner of operation. Our history shows that *it is valid to say that the Lutheran high school is an extension of the Lutheran congregation.*¹

Often times ALHS's depend on local congregations and, by extension, their pastors to provide support for their ministry. That means over 650 congregations and pastors² are involved, in one way or another, in aiding ALHS's across the country to complete their goal and purpose, just as my vicar congregation was. And, in Roth's view, these congregations and pastors should view the ALHS as an important arm of their mission and ministry. During my time working with Lord of Life and RMLHS, I began to notice that the different pastors in the federation had different thoughts about this role and ways of carrying it out. So, exploring the nature of the relationship between these pastors, their congregations, and the high school became something about which I wondered. I was interested to see what was being done in other ALHS's roughly the same size as RMLHS across the country and explore if some consensus has been reached on what works and what does not.

It is Roth's assertion which will direct the goal of this thesis: "When we speak of the Lutheran high school as an extension of the Lutheran congregation, therefore, we mean to say that it is integral to the purpose and functions of the congregation. It is not an addendum. It rather

1. Ronald D. Roth, "The Lutheran High School Is an Extension of the Lutheran Congregation," *WLS Essay File*, 5 September 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4043>, 2. Emphasis mine.

2. This information was gleaned from the WELS Yearbook, <https://yearbook.wels.net/unitsearch>.

forms an essential link in the congregation's program of Christian education for its members."³ With so many pastors and congregations tied to ALHS's through a federation or an association dedicated to supporting and promoting the high school, it makes sense to explore the role these pastors play in the ALHS.

If one is to adopt the view that the Lutheran high school is indeed an extension of the Lutheran congregations involved in its ministry, it stands to reason that the pastors of those congregations must play an integral part in helping the school carry out its goal and purpose. But what is that part? What is the role pastors who serve association congregations should have in the ALHS? This especially applies to small ALHS's, where the school may depend more on those pastors to help with support and recruitment efforts.⁴ Can this role be distilled to a single truth which can be applied to every pastor in any situation, or is it something which must be more fluid and adaptive depending on the needs of the high school itself? I wish to explore and shed some light on these questions. The education of young Christian men and women is important, so deciphering the best way to accomplish the goal of secondary Christian education is a continuous endeavor.

Thesis Statement

It is my intent to disclose information and procedures to strengthen the ministry practices for area Lutheran high schools and federation pastors while still maintaining their proper missions and purposes. To that end, I have researched the history of secondary education in the WELS and provided Scriptural basis for carrying out education in this manner. A brief history of the three

3. Roth, "Lutheran High School," 2.

4. "Small" is a vague term. By "smaller" I intended to see how federation pastors work with schools which have less than 100 students enrolled during the current school year.

ALHS's covered in this project will also be provided to "set the stage" for their current contexts. Different techniques for pastors and high schools alike will be determined and assessed based on the information gathered from a qualitative approach using interviews, which will be outlined in a following section.

Keeping this goal in mind, as well as an understanding of the importance and relevance of this topic, will be crucial. So, seeing the issue in the light of God's Word and including original research from interviews done with various individuals, I present this thesis: a federation pastor plays an integral role in these small ALHS's, especially in promoting support and recruitment opportunities in his own congregation. However, the ALHS and its federation pastors alike must work together to define and adapt this role for each current ministry situation.

CHAPTER ONE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE WELS

In the book of Deuteronomy, the reader finds Moses giving his last will and testament to the Israelite people before the Lord calls him to his eternal home. Much of his time is spent reviewing the laws which God had handed down to Israel forty years earlier at Mt. Sinai.

Alongside this review comes an admonition:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NIV).

The great law-giver reminds the nation of their responsibility to teach and to tell the next generation about the goodness of the Lord and take his words to heart. The works of God and his law were to be impressed on the young Israelites. Parents and elders were asked to share these things diligently and constantly. Even in the early days of God's people, the importance of education in his Word and commands was a crucial element of what it meant to be part of his family.

Over 1,500 years after Moses revealed God's will for teaching his statutes, the apostle Paul reiterates those Old Testament truths to his New Testament audience. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4 NIV). Paul recognizes that for proper, God-pleasing child rearing to take place, Christ and his message of salvation must be the focus. Christians are not only concerned with raising children to be good citizens, they are also concerned that their children live as citizens of Christ's kingdom, as well. When education is properly focused where it should be, parents are able to avoid one of the pitfalls which the apostle speaks of in the first half of Ephesians 6:4.

Setting the love of Christ on their hearts daily and in an in-depth way has a profound effect on children and young adults. That practice has eternal implications on the rest of their lives.

Fast forward to the early twentieth century in the United States. As the city of Milwaukee was beginning to emerge with its own unique identity in industry and government, American high schools were also taking shape. High school curriculum and the importance of education at a secondary level were things which were being addressed across the country. Private Lutheran education, especially in southeast Wisconsin, was also growing “and grade schools of Lutheran congregations were becoming a means for promoting religious education, preparing children to enter the workforce and American life, as well as preserving culture and language.”⁵ So, in 1902, Professor August Pieper suggested the people seize an opportunity to expand the education system for the WELS laypeople to include a Lutheran education at the high school level.

Pieper at the time was a professor at the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa and understood the importance of education for the youths. Gathering volunteers who were willing and able to teach, and by a joint effort of both Wisconsin and Missouri Synod congregations, the first high school of the Wisconsin Synod was born: Milwaukee Evangelical Lutheran Academy. The school opened in 1903 and utilized a room at Immanuel Lutheran School in Milwaukee. About twenty girls were enrolled during the day and young men took classes at night, and the teachers were those who had volunteered their time when they were available to teach one or two classes. By the second year, both boys and girls were taking classes together. It was a groundbreaking effort by the young synod. Only one other Lutheran high school was open at that time in the country, making the Wisconsin Synod a pioneer in Lutheran secondary education.

5. Carol Krause, “A History and Tradition of Christ-Centered Education,” *Wisconsin Lutheran High School*, 5 November 2017, <https://www.wlhs.org/page/about-us/history>.

Their goal in starting this endeavor was clear: “The aim of the school is to offer a general higher education in the Lutheran spirit to our youth, for the first, to the girls who have [completed] the course of our parochial schools or who have received preparatory training corresponding to the same.”⁶ This goal is one which is still on the forefront of the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools’ (CLS) mission statement: “to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools.”⁷

Because of its dependence on local congregations to support the school with facilities, volunteers, funds, and students, Milwaukee Evangelical Lutheran Academy⁸ was the synod’s first foray into an area Lutheran high school. The school operated under a group of individuals for the first fifteen years. Then, in 1918, the pastoral conference in Milwaukee suggested congregations in the area assume responsibility for the school their members were attending. What originally began with support by a few local congregations would eventually grow to twenty-seven congregations in 1952 and fifty-seven congregations with over 33,000 communicants tied together with the high school’s ministry today.⁹ And this small school, which opened in a spare room in one of the congregation’s Lutheran elementary schools (LES), would only be the beginning. These are statistics from only one high school associated with the WELS.

6. Roth, “Lutheran High School,” 2.

7. “Commission on Lutheran Schools,” *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, 6 November 2017, <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/education/lutheran-schools/>.

8. Milwaukee Evangelical Lutheran Academy would be known simply as Lutheran High School until 1955, when the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) moved forward with construction of their own school in Milwaukee. After this split, the WELS would rename the school Wisconsin Lutheran High School. For more information, cf. Dr. Carol Krause’s article, “A History and Tradition of Christ-centered Education.” <https://www.wlhs.org/page/about-us/history>.

9. Krause, “Christ-Centered Education.”

There are twenty-five synodical ALHS's¹⁰ today. They all began with the same goal and directive as Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS) when it opened its doors over one hundred years ago.

10. This number includes Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION AND LUTHERAN APPLICATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

To supplement the bulk of the qualitative research done, I also explored the biblical principles which are relevant to the issues at hand. This included exploring the importance of education in the Scriptures, the importance of education in Lutheran circles, and how we deal with a subject which is ultimately an adiaphoron.

Why Education?

As was briefly outlined above, education is something which God takes seriously. So seriously, in fact, it is something which he saw fit to address in his Word on numerous occasions. When his father-in-law advised Moses to choose some men who would be able to help him in his work, Jethro suggested, “Teach them his decrees and instructions and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave” (Exodus 18:20 NIV). Then, when speaking to the Israelites over forty years later, Moses echoed this idea of passing along knowledge through teaching to them, “Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, ‘Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children’” (Deuteronomy 4:10 NIV).

The command to teach children is one which is reiterated again and again in the Bible. Solomon often outlines the importance of proper instruction and the benefits of following what God commands his people to do. Perhaps no passage better illustrates this point than Proverbs 22:6: “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” This verse provides a logical conclusion the Lord’s faithful would do well to heed. One

must continually stress the importance of educating children with God’s Word, because it will have a bearing on the future of those children!

The importance of Christian education is continued in the New Testament. The most notable *sedes doctrinae* for education is found in the words of Christ before he ascended, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV). Jesus makes it clear that teaching is one of the important efforts on which the Church is to focus. To simply baptize people into the Christian faith and leave them without further instruction would be a travesty and an affront to what God intended his Church to do in its mission to reach all nations with the gospel.

So, the ministry of the apostles throughout the book of Acts is characterized as “teaching,”¹¹ just as Christ’s earthly ministry was as well.¹² There was more than the simple proclamation of the gospel truths. There was also careful instruction and explanation about what that message meant for those people in their current contexts. And this instruction was not a one-time event, rather, it continued even after the apostles’ initial work had concluded. Paul told the struggling church in Corinth, “I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Corinthians 4:17 NIV).

The repercussions are immediately evident whenever there is a failure to obey the instructions the Lord has given. During the reign of Asa in Judah, the instruction of the law had been forgotten, “For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and

11. see also Acts 2:42; 4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28, 42; 15:1; 18:11.

12. cf. Matthew 4:23; 5:2; 7:28–29; 9:11, 35; 11:1; 13:54; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 33, 36; 26:18, 55 for examples from only one Gospel of this!

without the law” (2 Chronicles 15:3 NIV). What were the results? Israel had fallen from a worship of the true God, turned to idols, and all but forgotten about the Lord who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt. Solomon also speaks about the pitfalls of a lack of education in Proverbs, “I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors. And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God’s people” (Proverbs 5:13–14 NIV).

So, the wise king gives this advice: “Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I teach you today, even you” (Proverbs 22:17–19 NIV). In Proverbs, the law of the Lord is spoken of as wisdom. To teach these “sayings of the wise” and apply oneself to those teachings has a beneficial effect. What are those benefits? A deeper and more personal trust in the Lord.

Standards of Christian Education

Who provides the standards which direct our education efforts? If God’s Word provides the command, then it must also provide the standards. William C. Reitschel highlights some of God’s own standards:

1. Education is a lifelong process. Christians are continually to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).
2. Education requires a comprehensive program. Whatever else may be taught, that which God prescribes has priority. The great commission “to teach” also includes “teaching to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).
3. Education should be effective. Humankind’s eternal fate is at stake. God wants human beings to make the most of their life on earth. These thoughts are emphasized in the command “impress them on your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).
4. Education is also to include nurture and admonition in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). This involves instruction and disciplinary guidance.¹³

¹³ William C. Reitschel, *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 62–63.

Scripture not only provides the motivation and standards for why we want to educate our children with God's Word, but it also provides the goal of doing so. Professor John Schaller summarizes the purpose and where the power to accomplish that purpose comes from:

Whereas Christian education, if it succeeds, lifts the child out of the muck of sinfulness and sets him on a new plane, with a new outlook upon life and a strong tendency toward righteousness. This, again, is merely another way of stating the familiar axiom that the only educative force in the world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of God unto salvation, which creates spiritual life in man who otherwise is dead in sins and transgressions.¹⁴

This objective of Christian education is unique in that it goes above and beyond what normal, non-parochial education provides and promises. Mark Zarling, president of Martin Luther College, speaks about this perspective on education:

Does not Christian education, and especially the Lutheran school, provide the Church with a wonderful tool that God can use to "root" souls, "build up" souls, and help souls "take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ"? Can not the Lutheran school be a weapon of the Word so that God's precious people can take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one?¹⁵

While the primary responsibility for training children in their faith rests with the parents in the home,¹⁶ Christian schools are supporting partners in that work. While God does not say explicitly in his Word, "Support Christian education," as outlined above, he does place the importance of this type of education on the hearts of his faithful people. To be successful in this endeavor, having clear and attainable goals will prove to be an invaluable asset. Scripture must be the source which provides those goals.

14. John Schaller, "The Christian Church and Education," *WLS Essay File*, 10 November 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2026>, 15.

15. Mark Zarling, "Christian Education: A Matter of Life and Death-What the Mission of the Church Teaches Us About Lutheran Schools," *WLS Essay File*, 6 November 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4287>, 6.

16. see Psalm 78:4; Proverbs 22:6; 29:17; Joel 1:2; Ephesians 6:4

Goals of Christian Education

Christian education is set apart from secular education in a stark and unique way, especially in regard to its goals and objectives. “If the Lutheran school is true to its identity as part and parcel of the great commission work Christ has entrusted to us, then the goal and objective of this school is fundamentally different than any other educational endeavor the world offers.”¹⁷ Those involved in this process of bringing up young Christians in the Word must be aware of these distinct goals and objectives.

The first thing to remember in the objectives of Christian education is that God is the creator of all things. The praise song of the four living creatures around God’s throne in Revelation confesses this truth, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Revelation 4:11 NIV). Consequently, this central idea is one which must be kept in mind, that “children belong first to God... [so] it is for God to say what the purposes of man’s education ought to be.”¹⁸ This point is important, as God is the one who makes any teaching effort in his Word efficacious, “God himself is the creative agent.”¹⁹ Parents, schools, and the church are not the causes who bring about fruits of Christian education and, so, are not the ones who ultimately decide what the objectives of Christian education are. God instructing in his Word is the sole guiding principle.

Second, as with everything, a goal of Christian education must be to give glory to God. This is the very purpose for which he created the world: “the people I formed for myself...they may proclaim my praise” (Isaiah 43:21 NIV). Paul points to this being the goal not only of

17. Zarling, “Christian Education”, 28.

18. Allan H. Jahsmann, *What’s Lutheran in Education?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 7.

19. Rietschel, *Foundations*, 63.

Christian education, but Christian living in general in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Allan H. Jahsmann calls this “the first and final purpose of all education, and certainly of Lutheran education.”²⁰ Why so much emphasis on this goal of education? Because regardless of what the other objectives are, anyone who makes the glory of God the central focus of their endeavors and keeps things in harmony with this ultimate purpose will find God-given success. A program built around this truth will remind everyone involved that their purpose is to glorify God in all they are, do, and will become. The pinnacle of what it means to glorify the Lord will be outlined in the following sections.

The next point connects closely with the previous one and is integral to what Christian education hopes to accomplish. God intended mankind to live in closeness and harmony with him. “No doubt it was God’s intent and purpose that all men should continue to live in a happy, intimate communion with him.”²¹ But this doctrine of man also highlights the harsh reality of what sin did to God’s original plan for mankind. All humans have inherited the sinful nature from Adam and Eve.²² Thus, the first great need of every person is the removal of sin and the restoration of true communion and fellowship with his Lord. This communion and fellowship can only be restored through “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 NIV). Like any other field of ministry, this facet must be a great concern for Lutheran education. Without this goal, everything else someone attempts to accomplish in education will ultimately fall short:

20. Jahsmann, *Education*, 7.

21. Jahsmann, *Education*, 8.

22. see Romans 5:12–14.

We cannot find an adequate solution to the deepest needs and questions within us. *We need to know who we are and how we are in our finiteness and sin.* We need to know how other people are and how we are to be related to them. We need to know what the purpose of life is, where we are going for eternity, and *what we are and may become by reason of Jesus Christ.* The answer to our questions and problems...depend wholly on those redemptive events through which God gives us power to do that which we cannot accomplish of ourselves.²³

At the center of this endeavor must be true preaching and teaching of the gospel. This is not to discredit the purpose and role of the law in Christian education. It is only through proper presentation of God's law that the sinner is confronted by the demands of the Lord, his own sinfulness, and his need for the Savior. So, the law must be taught in connection with the gospel. But it is the final purpose of the law which must be kept in mind, often called the pedagogical use of the law.

The Lutheran view of the law is in line with Paul's presentation of the law, "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:27–28 NIV). Legalism has no part in the Lutheran classroom. Trying to develop God's children in their lives of sanctification by using only rules, demands, threats, force, and works righteousness is futile work and will result in the destruction of true faith in Christ. The gospel is the sole means by which God creates new life in sinful man and reconciles the sinner to him. For these reason, it is the gospel which must demand most of the attention and focus in Lutheran schools:

Is the Lutheran school a place where the Spirit of God can use the Word of life to create eternal life? To sustain this faith life? To raise up and train more life-bringers to carry the water of life to others? The answers to those questions depend squarely upon the presence of the Gospel of Christ in every classroom in every period. Only the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.²⁴

23. Reitschel, *Foundations*, 65. Emphasis mine.

24. Zarling, "Christian Education," 5.

Growing in that grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to empower sanctified living is another essential goal for Christian education. “It is not enough to teach the doctrine of justification without equally stressing its application to life. Both the gospel and life under the gospel must be taught.”²⁵ It would be a great disservice to both educator and the student simply to assume that all anyone needs to know is John 3:16.²⁶ It is something for which all involved in the ministry of a Lutheran school must pray and strive. Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is one which could be repeated by these ministers of the gospel:

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and 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, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:9–12 NIV).

Scripture clearly teaches that Christian faith is living and active. Through a reliance on God’s forgiving love in Christ and his atoning work, this faith will be active by expressing itself in love of God and love for neighbor. Proper presentation of the gospel in the Lutheran school will empower the Christian to live his faith and express love in a life of sanctification. This aspect of Christian education has deeper implications for young believers today. Christ reminds his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, “you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13–14 NIV), and he encourages them to live keeping this role in mind. Paul echoes similar words to the church in Ephesus, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8 NIV).

25. Jahsmann, *Education*, 13.

26. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

But what does living as salt and children of the light actually look like for young Christian students? It begins with a view of their peers. “No classroom in a truly Lutheran school will allow students to view their peers through any prism other than the Word of God which declares each one a precious life, loved by God.”²⁷ In order to accomplish this goal, God promises his Holy Spirit to guide and enrich the lives of his faithful. “This faith, through its grateful reliance on God’s forgiving love in Christ and his atoning work, is active in love. It expresses itself in love of God and fellow man because it is the working of the Holy Spirit, ‘who proceeds from the Father and the Son.’”²⁸ So, the goal of sanctification must start with faith in Christ and justification found through that faith, then continue with a faithful and diligent study of the Word. This goal is important because of the preparation it provides for the student’s life in a sin-filled world:

The lifelong student of Scripture learns even from an early age that a life of faith is not immune from bad things in life. Rather, the Spirit fills the child with the promises of God so that he matures seeing the reality of an evil world, understanding why such evil will always be present prior to the trumpet, yet having confidence that in the living Savior there is ultimate triumph, a victory he shares only because of the grace of God. Consequently, only in a truly Lutheran school will a student grow up to understand the truth.²⁹

The final point is one which serves one of the goals of this paper. Christ gave his church the Great Commission in Matthew 28, a goal for his people which is still ongoing. And if Roth’s assertion that the Lutheran high school is an extension of the Lutheran congregation holds true, then Lutheran education must play an integral role in carrying out the Great Commission. Part of what the Savior tells his Church to do in that commission is “go and make disciples.” This aspect of Christ’s command has received renewed emphasis in Lutheran education circles in recent

27. Zarling, “Christian Education,” 24.

28. Jahsmann, *Education*, 9.

29. Zarling, “Christian Education,” 27.

years. In Reitschel's opinion, this focus of Lutheran education is still in the infant stages, "in traditional Lutheran thinking, nurture is an end."³⁰ But recently, Lutheran church bodies across the nation have begun to see the seemingly limitless potential elementary and high schools hold in reaching new people with the gospel.

The reason for this is because of what can be accomplished through this education. Students not only learn about the church and its mission, they learn how they can be an active part of the church. They acquire the knowledge of how the Lord has equipped each of them to be an integral member in accomplishing the mission of his Church. This objective of Lutheran education cannot be stressed enough, because "the Scriptures indicate that...[the students] are to fulfill specific service for Christ as members of His church. A great Lutheran educator [is one who] has emphasized that the training of the young for participation in the life and work of the church is a major aim of Christian education."³¹ The role of Lutheran high schools in outreach programs and endeavors in federation congregations is an item which will be discussed at further length in a later portion of this essay.

Why Lutheran Education?

To say education was important to Martin Luther would be an understatement. Not only was Luther a life-long learner of the Scriptures, but he was also a skilled educator, though one may not always find his name immortalized in the hallowed halls of education like one could find his contemporary, Philip Melancthon.³² This attitude, however, shifts the focus away from an

30. Reitschel, *Foundations*, 72.

31. Jahsmann, *Education*, 10.

32. Arnold J. Koelpin, "Luther, as Father and Educator." *WLS Essay File*, 14 October 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2602>, 1.

aspect of the Lutheran Reformation that adherents to Luther's dogma continue to analyze and strive to do better. Efforts to explore, explain, and expound Luther's thoughts concerning education abound.

Perhaps the best summary of these efforts is V.F.N. Painter's "Luther on Education," where he summarizes the reformer's impact:

We realize that the great Reformer accomplished scarce less for education than for religion. Through his influence, which was fundamental, wide-reaching, and beneficent, there began for the one as for the other a new era of advancement. Let us note a few particulars:

1. In his writings..., he laid the foundation of an educational system which begins with the popular school and ends with the university.
2. He exhibited the necessity of schools both for the Church and the State and emphasized the dignity and worth of the teacher's vocation.
3. He set up as the noble ideal of education a Christian man, fitted through instruction and discipline to discharge the duties of every relation of life.
4. He impressed on parents, ministers, and civil officers their obligation to educate the young.
5. He brought about a reorganization of schools, introducing graded instruction, an improved course of study, and rational methods.
6. In his appreciation of nature and child-life, he laid the foundation for education science.
7. He made great improvements in method; he sought to adapt instruction to the capacity of children, to make learning pleasant, to awaken mind through skillful questioning, to study things as well as words, and to temper discipline with love.
8. ...he advocated compulsory education on the part of the State.³³

It is Painter's fourth point which is especially pertinent to this paper. Luther recognized from Scripture that the primary responsibility in education lies with parents, but they must be aided by the government and the church in this endeavor as well. He acknowledges the growing need for school in the church. This is largely in part because of his take on the deeper necessity of education. Luther often "portrayed education as a contest between God and the devil," and

33. V.F.N Painter, *Luther on Education* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889), 166-168.

that Satan “realizing he can no longer control education...attempts to drive people from it.”³⁴

This spiritually realistic view of why all children need to be educated fueled his writings and efforts to bring education of all types to the forefront of his reforms. For him, the core of all learning must be Scripture, and the goal of education must always keep Christ as its true focus. All of his suggestions and education-focused writings hone in on this facet of educating young Christians.

At a time when many parents were failing in their duty to teach children and bring them up in the truths of God’s Word, it is easy to understand why Luther was such a great proponent of education. “He believed that education was the *only avenue to maturity*. He gave the world a faith that set human beings free and thinking, a philosophy of education that opened new vistas, and a vernacular Bible.”³⁵ With a special focus on secondary education in this essay, the subject of maturity is one which captures our attention. Maturity is an oft-discussed topic when dealing with teenagers as they prepare to be young adults. But Luther’s emphasis was not merely on social maturity. Rather, his focus was on spiritual maturity. But, how does one ensure that young Christians continue to grow and mature in the gift of faith with which the Holy Spirit has blessed them?

In our current social climate, it is the contention of many that “a grade school education in religion will not adequately serve the spiritual needs of high school and college youth.”³⁶

Luther’s thoughts about education extended beyond the classroom; he understood the real-life implications education had on the lives of people. He saw education “as a liberating

34. Marilyn J. Harran, *Martin Luther: Learning for Life* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 192.

35. Reitschel, *Foundations*, 21. Emphasis mine.

36. Jahsmann, *Education*, 115.

enterprise...he advocated teaching that leads children to discover and appreciate the world.”³⁷

While discovery and appreciation of the world were surely ideas which Luther advocated in his work, the greater “liberty” which he sought was freedom from sin, death, and the devil through lifelong faith in Christ. This kind of maturity and freedom would serve young Christians well in a world which seeks to separate them from church life and their Savior. Should not the enterprise of teaching young men and women at the high school level keep this perception of Luther’s in mind? This objective is one which is pivotal to the idea of education which Luther plotted out during his lifetime.

Conclusion

A goal of secondary Lutheran education must always be to give glory to God by making his grace shown in Christ the focal point and to enrich the spiritual lives of students so that they might rise above the temptations of this world and the devil. A failure to strive for this objective will undermine what Scripture says and what Luther held in such high regard about the subject. The church has Christian freedom in the way it carries out the Savior’s command to teach. While the way in which the church carries out this ministry is a matter of adiaphora, the purpose and objectives in teaching are not. WELS has decided that secondary education is a God-pleasing way to accomplish those goals. The federation program of congregational and pastoral support for ALHS’s, while not addressed explicitly in Scripture or by Luther, is a way in which WELS hopes to continue the ministry of educating all people in the knowledge of the truth.

37. Harran, *Martin Luther*, 271.

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF THE THREE AREA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS

I spoke with members of three ALHS's and their federations/associations: RMLHS, along with Evergreen Lutheran High School (ELHS) and Northland Lutheran High School (NLHS). A brief historical background for each of the schools studied closely in this paper must be provided. Having at least some grasp on where each school is coming from, and where they pray to be going in the future, is important to understanding the relationship between the ALHS and the pastors with whom it is associated. I will also be providing current statistics for the three schools to supplement the historical context.

Evergreen Lutheran High School

A Brief History

Christians in Washington planted the seed that would eventually grow into Evergreen Lutheran High School in 1970, when Lakewood Lutheran Church hosted the Lutheran Education Forum to focus on the possibility of opening a high school in the DuPont, WA area. Only fourteen individuals from two WELS churches and two Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) churches were part of this early committee, but that was enough for the seed to begin growing. By 1973, the idea for an association was conceived, an association which would take root in 1974 under the name Pacific Northwest Lutheran High School Association (PNLHSA). They had a simple dream: "The purpose of this Association...shall be to establish, conduct, control, manage, and maintain

one or more high schools in the Pacific Northwest District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and to promote the cause and extend the scope of Christian Education.”³⁸

The PNLHSA would experience some growth over the next few years. That growth would slow, however. With 230 families now a part of the PNLHSA, the board of directors had to face some financial facts: there was not yet enough support to open a high school for the 1977 school year, as was planned. The PNLHSA did not let this setback deter them from attaining their goal. In fact, it served to unite them and steel their resolve. They began to scout locations, a difficult task given the size of the district. Finally, the western half of Washington was chosen as a prime target. Their reasons for choosing that particular area were many, “Largest number of youths; most Christian day schools; most enrollment in schools; the probability of the largest number of commuting students; good transportation in and out of the area.”³⁹

By the end of 1977, the PNLHSA had grown to include 340 families and over 1,195 souls!⁴⁰ The financial needs of the new school were slowly met through various donations from individuals and association congregations. An old school building with a reasonable rent was found in DuPont, WA, a location where the school would remain until 1988, when the local school district sold the building. After calling together an association meeting on April 1, 1978, a vote of sixty-seven for and forty-eight against was taken, and the resolution to open a school at the DuPont location was passed by the PNLHSA. Evergreen Lutheran High School was officially born.

38. PNLHSA Constitution, Article II, as quoted by Joe Johnson, “Evergreen: The First Ten Years” Evergreen Lutheran High School—History, 19 September 2017, <http://www.elhs.org/home/140001978/140006806/140133501/History%201978-1994.pdf>.

39. Johnson, “Evergreen,” 11.

40. Johnson, “Evergreen,” 13.

The initial years of ELHS were as one would expect for a new, privately funded high school. Twenty-six students were enrolled for that first school year, a number which would increase to thirty-two before year's end. There were a few extra-curricular events to occupy the students and allow them to develop their talents; their sports teams were not the most successful, but the kids still had opportunities. Choir was a highlight for many, both inside and outside the school. But one of the greatest elements introduced by a synodical ALHS was the fellowship. Congregations were brought together under one banner, even participating in a local grade school basketball tournament. Members of congregations from two synods, the WELS and the ELS, enjoyed a deepened relationship as they both worked together to promote and advance the high school. Despite the small size of the school, the experience of the students was extremely positive.

In 1980, the school opened its doors as a full four-year high school with dorms for both guys and girls. Enrollment had risen to seventy-one students by 1983, and, in 1986, the school would see its largest enrollment in the first ten years. While that number would decline steadily until 1994, the measure of the school's success went beyond the raw numbers. The principal at that time, Wayne Baxmann, recognized that the true purpose of ELHS was being carried out: giving young men and women an opportunity to learn in a Christ-centered environment.⁴¹ The move from the site in DuPont to Kent, WA (about 35 miles northeast of DuPont) for the 1988-1989 school year resulted in an expected loss of some students simply due to travel restrictions. But one important thing to note: the entire rising senior class returned for their final year at ELHS, no matter where the classes were held.⁴²

41. Johnson, "Evergreen," 38-40.

42. Caleb Schoeneck, "Built Together in Christ: The Story of Evergreen Lutheran High School 1988-2003," *WLS Essay File*, 19 September 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2829>, 19.

Current Situation and Statistics

As it did in the infant years of carrying out its mission, ELHS continues to experience the blessings and challenges that come with being a privately supported school. Student enrollment continues to fluctuate. It has been as low as thirty-four in 1989-1990, the lowest since the second year of classes being held, and as high as 137 students. They have had to deal with not just one move, but three: DuPont to Kent, Kent to Gig Harbor, and Gig Harbor to Tacoma. Finances have been and continue to be an oft discussed item for the board of directors and the PNLHSA.

But in the face of the challenges, there are also tremendous blessings. Enrollment is currently at eighty-eight students for the 2017-2018 school year. What began with four churches forming the PNLHSA has now grown to twenty-one congregations. The school has successfully seized an opportunity afforded by the Lord to serve multiple international students from places like South Korea, China, and Japan. These are just the beginning of what many at the school hope is a growing trend. Enrollment numbers have been steady, but that is projected to increase in the coming years, as the faculty, staff, and student families become more accustomed to the new location of the school. The school and association are currently preparing to celebrate the fortieth year of providing Christ-centered secondary education in the Pacific Northwest District. The Lord has truly blessed ELHS throughout the ups and downs of its work to serve young Christians.

Northland Lutheran High School

A Brief History

Northland Lutheran High School finds its beginnings during a boom in the WELS. In the late 1970's alone, ten ALHS's were founded, including four in 1979 alone! Though classes would officially begin in September of that year at NLHS, the roots of the school go back even further. One must travel back to 1973, when a small group of WELS members gathered to discuss the possibility of opening an ALHS in the Wausau, WI area. They were initially disheartened, "After conducting a feasibility study in the Wausau area, they determined that there was an insufficient base to support a high school in the Wausau area alone."⁴³ The idea was shifted to the back burner until 1975, when a similar conference was held in Eagle River, WI involving pastors and teachers from the area. At this conference, a committee was formed to look more closely at the prospect of opening an ALHS in northern Wisconsin.

Because they already knew there was a large support base in Wausau, the committee focused its efforts on the areas surrounding nearby Rhinelander. The feedback was, on the whole, positive. The next step involved organizing and moving towards an association of individuals and congregations, who would lend their support and prayers to the endeavor. While this informal group had been growing throughout the survey process, it was not until February 1976 that the organization was formalized. They elected a new president to serve them, Robert Otterstaetter, and three other men to serve as officers. These four men were given the task to look into a name for this new high school, build a stronger association of individuals to support it, and then to lead the organization through the different phases of incorporation with the final

43. Benjamin Kratz, "Northland Lutheran High School: A Quarter Century of God's Grace," *WLS Essay File*, 19 September 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2695>, 3.

goal being the formation of an ALHS.⁴⁴ Zion Lutheran Church and School in Rhinelander would play an integral role in providing support and space necessary for the school. Along with support from the WELS and the guidance of a consultant from nearby Fox Valley Lutheran High School, the small association grew rapidly over the next few years.

One important publication during this time was the “Northland Lutheran High School Association Update.” These short newsletters provided “not only information as to what the association and the board were doing, but also described the process of starting Northland, the importance of Christian secondary education, offered encouragement to those who supported the efforts to establish a high school, and [encouraged]...prospective students and their parents.”⁴⁵ The association called its first administrator for the school in 1978, Mr. John Schultz, and, again, things were moving quickly. Eleven congregations would join the association in two months and pledge over \$22,590 for the upcoming school year alone. The Northland Lutheran High School Association (NLHSA) voted unanimously to open the school in September 1979 and to call two teachers to aid Schultz in the work at the school, along with six part-time instructors.

Temporary, movable buildings in Merrill were the small high school’s home for the initial years of operation. Twenty-four students enrolled that first year: twelve freshmen and twelve sophomores. That number, by God’s grace, would grow to twenty-eight before year’s end. More re-locatable buildings were purchased and placed at a permanent site, named the “Jopke property,” with plans to build a permanent facility in the works.⁴⁶ The faculty and staff were growing as needed, as was the student body. Things would not remain rosy, however. Despite every attempt, even going so far as to open a thrift store with proceeds going to support

44. Kratz, “Northland,” 4.

45. Kratz, “Northland,” 7.

46. Kratz, “Northland,” 17.

NLHS, they were unable to meet the financial obligations necessary to complete their building plans. So, in 1987, the board recommended the re-locatable buildings be liquidated, the property in Merrill be sold, and the school be moved to a rented facility in Wausau.

A former Catholic middle school would be chosen as NLHS's new permanent home in Wausau. Blessings were found at this time of seeming distress, and support by stalwart congregations and families continued through this transition. Booster activities to up recruitment opportunities were commonplace. 129 young men and women had graduated through NLHS during its first ten years of operation.⁴⁷ The time in Wausau would pass by uneventfully, save for a few changes in faculty as some took calls to serve in different areas. Though building a permanent home had been placed on the back burner, it emerged once again in 1998. At that time, the board recommended the school move forward with construction in Kronenwetter. This second move would be the young schools final one, as classes are still held in Kronenwetter today.

Current Statistics

As NLHS continues to grow, they have experienced the highs and lows that come with being an ALHS. At one time, the school had 145 students within her walls. Today, that number hovers right around seventy. This year, there are sixty-nine students at NLHS, up from fifty-four a year ago. This slight increase in enrollment may be connected to the work of a new mission advancement director, Mr. Jerry Worden, who is in his second year in the position.

Finances have been a persistent challenge for NLHS. On multiple occasions in their nearly forty year history, they have had to borrow money from nearby Fox Valley Lutheran High School to help make ends meet. This is simply one of the expected hurdles for a school of

47. Kratz, "Northland," 32.

NLHS's size and age. Waves of support for the school have come and gone, as well. Whether it is from individuals or congregations, the support has ebbed and flowed. At one point, three congregations left the NLHSA in one year!

Like its sister school in the Pacific Northwest, NLHS also has moved locations multiple times in its storied past. Things like these can bring a lot of stress on a place like NLHS. Nonetheless, they have remained appropriately flexible and, despite these setbacks, NLHS continues to serve the Lord to the best of its ability, as they train students to be Christian leaders in all aspects of their lives.

Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School

A Brief History

Though much younger than the other schools covered in this paper, RMLHS still has a colorful past which accompanies it. Ideas for setting up an ALHS in the Rocky Mountain Front Range area around Denver had been mulling in the heads of members in those churches as early as 1979. That is when the idea for an ALHS was first planted in the hearts and heads of congregations in the Colorado Conference. But the going would be slow at first: only \$28,000 would be raised for this project from 1979 to 2000! More money would be needed if the hope for an ALHS could move from idea to reality. This money would come in the form of a large offering from an anonymous source to the tune of \$225,000. This money was designated to pay the salary of one person for three years. The goal was to call someone who could gauge whether

there was enough support in the area to maintain a high school and give a report on his findings. The man who was called to fill that role was John Barenz.⁴⁸

What Barenz would find was a need which could be filled by an ALHS. The Front Range was a prime place for private, religious education. The area north of Denver was growing at a rapid pace, and most of those people were unchurched. But some speed bumps along the way made him question whether the typical model for a WELS ALHS would work in Colorado's unique circumstances. Barenz spent hours of his time talking with pastors, parents, and teachers, and not all of them from Christian schools, to find out what kinds of things were being done in other schools that students enjoyed and were enriching for them. This would go on for almost two years, as Barenz collected more information and made his presentations to the congregations in the area. On January 27, 2002, twenty-three out of twenty-four delegates voted to move forward with the plan to open an ALHS which the federation congregations could be proud of calling their own. By August of the same year, ten students enrolled as freshmen in the first class at RMLHS.⁴⁹

With no money to hire more staff or lease a building, RMLHS started off small by anyone's standards. All classes were taught by one of the two faculty members at the time: Barenz or Rick Lohmiller. They worshipped, held classes, and played sports at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Thornton. But these arrangements were only temporary. They would rent facilities from North East Middle School, only a mile and a half from Lord of Life, the following year. An attempt to buy the building was ultimately stymied by legal action from the city, but this would end up being a blessing in disguise. Again, an anonymous donor would commit to

48. Ben Schmeling, "A History of Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School: The Formation of John Barenz's Vision for Mission," *WLS Essay File*, 5 September 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2542>, 5.

49. Schmeling, "Rocky Mountain," 8.

giving a twenty to thirty-acre parcel of land for a future RMLHS building project. Today, RMLHS is on that donated land, enjoying the generous gifts God has moved his people to give by his Holy Spirit.

Current Statistics

RMLHS's situation has been unique from the time it began and continues to be unique today. The school has been blessed throughout its relatively short history with large donations, faithful teachers and staff, and by a clear purpose and goal in its ministry. The facility it uses today is shared. Living Hope Lutheran Church, a local mission congregation, shares the building in Reunion, CO with the high school. There are blessings and challenges for both sides which will be discussed later in this paper.

Enrollment has fluctuated, as it has for any ALHS which is still as young as RMLHS. The number of students this year is fifty-eight and, with nineteen congregations a part of their federation, there is a consistent need to seek students outside of those congregations to fill the desks every year. The faithful faculty works hard fulfilling multiple roles, and these men and women have truly been a blessing and a boon to the young school. The Lord continues to provide for the school through generous donations; a recent large gift will allow the school to pay off some obligations on their land and begin a project to add an athletic field on the campus. One must keep in mind the age of RMLHS, as it is younger than the other schools studied in this paper and is one of the younger ALHS's in the WELS, so some aspects of their situation are still being figured out through prayerful consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FROM INTERVIEWS CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PASTORS AND THE ALHS'S

I conducted interviews with faculty members at the schools who would most often be working with area pastors. The positions interviewed included principal, dean of students, mission advancement director, and campus pastor. The interviews were kept short, simple, and pointed; the goal was to keep each interview around the half-hour mark. Then, using the information which I gleaned from the individuals working at the ALHS's, I also interviewed association pastors who were recommended by the faculty and staff of the schools. I used a different set of questions for each group: one for the people working for the ALHS, and another for the pastors who are part of their association or federation.

The reasons for this type of qualitative research were threefold: 1) the WELS does not yet have a substantial amount of scholarship on this particular topic, 2) the best way to understand what the role of these pastors is and should be ought to come straight from the source in order to see what is working and what is not working, and 3) one goal of this project is to provide practical application for parish ministers and ALHS's alike. It would be pertinent to this discussion to see what is being practiced currently.

For each case of research presented here, I will relate the comments and thoughts from those individuals interviewed according to the methods mentioned previously. When interviewing the faculty from the ALHS's, three questions served as focal points: 1) What are some of the blessings and the challenges of working with federation pastors? 2) Would you equate the number of students currently enrolled in your ALHS to the activity, or lack thereof, of your federation pastors? 3) In what area of your ALHS's ministry do you expect the federation

pastors to be the most active? Other follow up questions were also asked to explore issues further.

When interviewing federation pastors, these are the questions which were integral: 1) Could you outline some of the blessings and challenges of being a pastor connected to ALHS? 2) What does being a federation pastor mean/look like for you and your congregation? 3) Would you view the school as an extension of the ministry at your church? As noted earlier in the paper, the purpose of this method was to get everyone in the same room, so to speak, on these issues. That way, we might identify some of the strengths and weaknesses in the relationships these three schools currently have with their federation pastors.

Evergreen Lutheran High School⁵⁰

One of the first issues which arose in all of my discussions with anyone working at ELHS was distance. ELHS is in the Pacific Northwest district of the WELS, a sprawling area which covers the northwest corner of the lower forty-eight states and includes Alaska.⁵¹ In fact, three of ELHS's twenty-one supporting congregations are located in Alaska, the farthest one being Grace Lutheran Church in Kenai, AL, some 2,450 miles away! This presents a challenge not only for the school, but for the pastors of those congregations. How do you get the people of those congregations to think of ELHS as their school when it is miles away? How does a pastor of those congregations stay involved in ELHS's ministry? How do you become a "presence" in the school, when physically being there on a regular basis during the school year would be impractical and impossible?

50. Due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, I was unable to meet with any pastors from the PNWLHSA to discuss their views on the role of pastors at ELHS. This is a deficiency in my methodology regarding the information from ELHS to keep in mind as one reads this information.

51. See attached Appendix 1 for a map of the PNWLHSA churches.

One of the ways they have addressed this issue is through the use of technology. A clause in the school's constitution allows pastors to utilize Skype or similar software to participate in chapels and delegate meetings. These chapel services and delegate meetings are two areas where association pastors are expected to be active and present in the school. Technology allows pastors in places like Alaska and Oregon to participate without making an impractical journey to do so. Faculty members at ELHS noted how imperative technology has become to the cohesion of their association.

But if the relationship between the school and the churches is truly to be, in the words of one interviewee, symbiotic, how are relationships maintained over such a great distance with people who may never actually utilize ELHS? The distance also puts a strain on the amount of energy and time a pastor can truly dedicate to the school, at least, from the perspective of the faculty. This is understandable, as it is difficult to imagine spending a lot of time talking about the benefits of a Lutheran high school education at a place which feels like it is on the other side of the world.

These feelings do not only apply to the pastors and congregations in Alaska. Some of the churches that are an hour drive from the school also feel this way. Outlooks like these are only exacerbated by the transient nature of the school's facilities over its forty year history. They are in their fourth year at their current location, and the waves of this transition can still be felt today. Some congregations which were closer to the school location-wise are now far away, while some churches are now closer. This has led to the perception of a "roller coaster" like effect of congregational support for the school. And this phenomenon is certainly on the minds of the administration of ELHS.

One way this challenge has been addressed in this situation is by pastors reminding the congregations of their role at ELHS: they are all co-workers and co-owners. By definition, association congregations in the PNWLHSA have a financial and a ministerial stake in the high school. But not every pastor emphasizes this role and purpose as much as he could, according to some. There are some pastors who may even view the ALHS model as redundant in view of the synodical prep school system in the WELS!⁵² The reasons for this type of thought vary, ranging from deep connections to an alma mater to cost comparisons. But the fact remains that these beliefs, when verbalized, have an impact on congregations and their attitudes towards ELHS. And these attitudes are clear to the faculty and staff at the school.

But some at the school view the issue of distance as not only a challenge, but also a blessing. The varying locales of the Pacific Northwest district afford ELHS the luxury of serving people from metropolitan, rural, and suburban areas. The varying geographical and social areas of ministry afforded the association pastors, therefore, is also a boon for the school and the work which they pray to accomplish. The faculty at ELHS recognizes the Lord's hand using pastors to reach out to all these different people in different areas with different backgrounds to the benefit of the school and God's kingdom. As a school where around forty percent of the student body is not a member of any WELS congregation, the role of the pastor as an evangelist and recruiter for the high school is one which the school views as integral and is appreciated.

The financial needs of ELHS were another point which was often brought during my research. According to the constitution of ELHS, around fifteen percent of the budget should be coming from congregational support every year. The issue, from the perspective of the school, is that many churches which are part of the ELHS association do not have a line in their monthly

52. The goal of this thesis was not to discuss ALHS's vs. prep schools in the WELS, but the subject was one which was brought up often during interviews. This would be an issue which could be explored at greater length in a future project.

budget to meet this obligation. This creates a cycle which has been difficult for the high school to break. They often have to ask congregations and individuals for donations to help them meet their financial obligations. However, it is the contention of some that if the congregations were able to give more consistently, some of these issues with money would be mitigated. In fact, this is one of the chief reasons which holds some pastors and churches from being more involved with ELHS. It is understandably difficult for a pastor who wants to support ELHS's ministry, but is bound to serve a congregation who does not share his enthusiasm or is not in a financial situation to provide that support.

Another aspect of the federation system at ELHS which I asked about was the role of association pastors at the school: has this role ever been discussed amongst the faculty and/or the board of directors? In short, no, or at least not in a formal capacity. There is recognition that perhaps some guided discussion along those lines would be helpful for both sides. The ELHS faculty and staff have been exploring new ways to try and get pastors and members into the building more often. This would allow pastors to witness the ministry of ELHS firsthand, see the lives which are being touched by the school, and experience the need for such work in the area. But the fact remains that there are no guidelines which have been provided to address this issue. Both the principal and dean of students are serving in their third year. The mission advancement director is only in his second. Consequently, there has been some recent turnover in the faculty. Much of the leadership is handed down in an implicit manner, and this can make things difficult for the newly called people. The current principal, Ted Klug, is currently working toward codifying roles and positions at the school.

Along the same line, I also took time to address the integration of pastors who are newly called to the association. Again, there is nothing formal written in stone about welcoming these

new pastors, but the faculty at ELHS is taking measures to address this need. Obviously, the distance factor makes a face-to-face meeting difficult, if not impossible. But when it is possible, a representative from the high school is usually in attendance at the pastor's installation. The reason for this is so the new pastor can become familiar with some faces from ELHS, and the school can begin the integration process of explaining who they are at the school and how the pastor could potentially fit into their work. ELHS gear is given as gifts to pastors in the association to show appreciation for the work they do. This also gives a pastor some more opportunities to show support for the school.

When dealing with the expectations the high school has for its pastors, the interviewees recognize that expectations go both ways. The high school's faculty realizes it cannot make demands of the pastors and state what they expect without in turn asking themselves, "What should they expect from me?" But the number one thing pastors can do for ELHS is support the mission and ministry of the school, in their opinion. This is a wide-open statement for good reason. ELHS has noticed the varying circumstances which surround the pastors in their association and has adapted their view of what support looks like accordingly. But the biggest thing would be encouraging members to see ELHS as a part of their mission, so that they might see the school as an extension of their Christian education efforts. It is the hope of the school that pastors are vocalizing this message and are not simply letting it remain implicit. There has been a clear connection in the past with pastors who are the most vocal in their support of ELHS and the importance of Christian education, and the number of students who come to ELHS from those congregations.

The work of association pastors recruiting for the high school has borne fruit which is apparent to the faculty and staff at ELHS. It is the hope of those working at ELHS that the gap

between those pastors who are diehard supporters of the school and those who are less enthusiastic will shrink in the coming years. Enrollment at ELHS has been steady, if not trending downward slightly in recent years. The members of the faculty with whom I spoke did not see a direct correlation between the activity of their association pastors and the current downward trend of the number of students enrolled.

They are aware of the downward trend in Lutheran elementary schools (LES) enrollment and how that would also affect ALHS enrollment as well. This trend is not localized to the PNWLHSA alone. WELS has experienced a downward trend in LES enrollment across the board. From 2000 to 2011, the synod experienced a sixteen percent loss in LES enrollment.⁵³ The faculty at ELHS is not oblivious to this statistic. They recognize that if LES enrollment is trending downward, enrollment at the secondary level will also suffer alongside of it. The administration at ELHS is currently working with association pastors to see how the high school can aid their association congregations in addressing this issue.

The high school is in need of support in the area of recruitment, but they would also like pastors to know that their view of support comes in all different kinds. Even something as simple as wearing an ELHS shirt to a church event is something which is noticed and appreciated. ELHS recognizes that support comes in many different forms and need not be pigeon-holed to only those who can be present at the school in the flesh whenever possible. But they would encourage pastors to continue to find good evangelical ways to encourage their congregations to step up their commitments to ELHS and provide the finances, students, and prayers the school needs.

53. Donald W. Patterson, "What Practical Experience Teaches Us About Lutheran Schools," *WLS Essay File*, 5 September 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4283>, 3.

Northland Lutheran High School

Distance is also a factor for the NLHS association, but not to the same degree as ELHS and their congregations.⁵⁴ The farthest supporting church is St. John's Lutheran Church in Cornell, WI, about ninety-six miles from the school. While this distance might seem small in comparison with other ALHS federations and associations in the WELS, it does present a hurdle for the relationships at NLHS. More than half of the other churches in the association are over an hour drive from Kronenwetter. This makes it difficult to keep the school in the minds and hearts of the members in those churches. Getting pastors and lay people involved and staying involved in the goings on at NLHS is an ongoing struggle.

The school does share the NLHS Connection, which includes a video and newsletter update, with congregations in the area to draw attention to the school, keep people informed of what is happening, and where there may be some needs. This helps cover the physical distance between the high school and those far-off churches. But the Connection is dependent on the pastors sharing this information with their congregations. It does not do either party any good if it is not being shared the way it was intended. But the Connection can aid an NLHS association pastor in presenting the high school as an option for the young men and women who are preparing to move on to high school. A pastor who emphasizes the importance of a place like NLHS and makes his people stop and think, "Why not at least consider NLHS as an option?", is important to the overall goal of the school.

This underlines one of the most important facets, from the view of the faculty, of this relationship. The congregations are the ones who own NLHS. The high school is an extension of their ministry, especially from the standpoint of education. NLHS wants to be viewed that way by these churches, and they wish those congregations would see them as an extension of their

54. See attached Appendix 2 for a map of the NLHSA churches.

Christian education programs. And, for the most part, the pastors I spoke with agree with this idea. One pastor, however, did note that while he and his family definitely view NLHS as an extension of his congregation, perhaps the congregation itself does not. He imagined this is a struggle for other pastors and their churches that do not have students at NLHS currently. How does a pastor energize his people to see the connection between the school's ministry and their own, even if they may not be using the high school?

This question is important because the faculty sees that there is a correlation between the excitement level of the pastor for NLHS and the excitement level of the congregation he serves. It also goes along with one of the expectations of the high school for the association pastors: lead by example and be involved! This has been both a blessing and a challenge for NLHS. On the one hand, many of the younger pastors in the area are extremely active in the school, even serving on the board of directors. But some at the school would like to see more activity across the board. Willingness to serve on the board is waning. Currently, only three pastors out of twenty-four serve in this manner. One member of the faculty whom I interviewed simply stated that more pastoral activity needs to be happening than is currently. The recruitment committee, which includes local pastors and faculty members at the school, has not been active lately, mostly because there are more pressing matters at hand.

But one way a pastor can show his congregation how important the school is to his church is by participating in chapels, openings services, and graduation when he is asked. Both pastors and faculty members interviewed agreed this is vital to the relationship. There is some understanding on the part of the faculty that many of these pastors are serving large congregations and often times are stretched too thin to help out at the school in an effective and meaningful way. The faculty keeps this in mind and is appreciative of any and all time pastors

are willing to give in support. Even the small and seemingly insignificant things, such as showing up to an NLHS 5K, are noticed by the school, and they are thankful for that time.

One point which was made by all three of the faculty members I spoke with from NLHS was the importance of pastors sending their children to NLHS. In their minds, there is no better way to demonstrate the importance of Lutheran secondary education to your parishioners than sending your children to NLHS. Both pastors with whom I spoke noted that the proximity to NLHS was one of the reasons why they accepted the calls to serve in their current congregations. But not every pastor in the association feels that way. The reasons for this range from distance being too great an issue to being faithful to your alma mater, like a WELS prep school.

This is an expectation of the faculty, however. They would like all their area pastors, at the very least, to consider NLHS as an option, so that they might model for their congregation that it is important. ALHS's like NLHS may not be the best option for everyone, but if it good enough for the pastors' kids, this might be the kind of leading by example which would benefit the high school. This falls well within the expected role of association pastors. The recognized difficulty with this aspect of the association pastor's role is that enrollment at LES's in the NLHSA is also trending downward. Even if pastors are sending their children to NLHS, this demonstration of the importance of Christian education may not be enough to sway people to consider NLHS as a viable option for their children.

But this hurdle has not deterred the pastors who are committed to the school from carrying out what they see as an integral role in NLHS's ministry. Both pastors who participated in my research noted the remarkable blessings the Lord continues to pour out on NLHS students and, by extension, on their congregations through NLHS. There are life-long friendships which are made at the small, close-knit school, and those friendships forged in the gospel can be

important for preparing those young men and women against the assaults of Satan and the sinful world. They recognize the challenges the school faces, and they are willing to do whatever they can to help their co-workers in the ministry overcome those obstacles.

One of the most consistent of those obstacles has been finances, as was noted above. One pastor noted that his congregation had to leave the NLHSA because they were unable to keep supplying NLHS with offerings. The other noted the church he is serving does not have a line in their monthly giving to support the high school. The church does provide special offering envelopes for members to give to NLHS when they feel compelled. However, the pastor and his family were the only ones who have exercised that option recently. These circumstances have not deterred these men, and they continue to serve to the best of their ability as their time allows. Even though the first is no longer part of the association, he still attends as many events as he can and even substitute teaches! He expressed his wish that more of his brothers in the pastoral ministry would look for more ways to be seen at NLHS events.

Both pastors sent their children to NLHS and continue to encourage their youth, especially confirmation students, to consider NLHS as their high school. This can be difficult at times, as in one case, the church closed their LES. So, the importance of Christian education is something which needs to be presented to the people over and over again to reestablish how integral a part of Christian living education can be, and how important congregational support is to an ALHS. Both sides of the relationship noted in our discussions how this diminishing support and perceived need for an elementary school education is a devastating blow to the mission of an ALHS like NLHS.

It must be noted that both sides see the wonderful blessings God continues to provide in this church/school relationship. Both recognize the relationship is a symbiotic one. NLHS

provides a special niche for continuing the Christian education of teenagers in the area, and the pastors and their congregations provide support through finances, time, talents, and recruiting new students. Even though the NLHSA is spread out across northern Wisconsin, the school provides a common point of ministry for all the churches which work with NLHS. The small school setting has led to close-knit relationships between the faculty and some of the pastors who work closely with the staff.

NLHS is working to reestablish some relationships that have been weakened over the years and also makes sure to welcome new area pastors into the association. Though nothing formal has been established in that regard, the NLHS principal, Ryan Wiechmann, makes sure to get in touch with them as soon as he can, so they can be plugged into the school's ministry as soon as possible. This step is important so that the new pastors do not have implied roles thrust on them when they arrive. Instead, they are integrated and brought into the NLHS family in a deliberate and precise way.

Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School

A Unique Circumstance

Earlier in this paper, I noted that RMLHS would serve as the central case in my research. This was not simply because of my past experience working with RMLHS, but also because of RMLHS's unique situation. As noted above in the history section, RMLHS currently shares its facility in Reunion, CO with a mission congregation, Living Hope Lutheran Church.⁵⁵ This type of situation is nothing new for the school. When they first opened their doors in 2002, all school

⁵⁵ I was also blessed to serve Living Hope during a vacancy time before Pastor Sternhagen accepted the call to serve the congregation.

activities were held at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Thornton. The school also briefly held classes at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in nearby Westminster during a time of transition from the rented building to the current location.

While the students and faculty have been in this kind of situation before, the current one is still new for Living Hope and their pastor, Joshua Sternhagen, who has just entered his second year at Living Hope after sixteen years as a missionary in Antigua. If this relationship between ALHS's and federation congregations is symbiotic, to use the words of many of the men I interviewed, the situation between Living Hope and RMLHS takes that idea to the next level. How do these two organizations conduct their individual ministries? What kind of dynamics, both blessings and challenges, does the relationship bring to both parties?

Pastor Sternhagen noted in discussions that, while there was nothing expressly written in his call letter about working with RMLHS, the congregational leadership at Living Hope and the principal of RMLHS, Rick Lohmiller, did discuss the history between the school and the church. There was a desire on the part of the people and the school to do joint ministry work together. It is because of this history together that there was a certain level of expectation for a new pastor at Living Hope. Pastor Sternhagen and Mr. Lohmiller have met numerous times over the past year to further discuss this history and the expectations which accompany it. Pastor Sternhagen has made it abundantly clear in their discussions that the needs and ministry of Living Hope must come first, since that is where his call lies. This does not mean he is completely closed off to helping out the school in their unique circumstances at all. He is open to the idea of helping RMLHS by teaching a religion class, as some federation pastors have done in the past, but also recognizes the need to get situated and familiar with his role as pastor at Living Hope first and foremost.

This partnership has led to positive things for both church and school. Living Hope has access to a much larger facility now than if they had not partnered up with RMLHS, which affords them the ability to carry out some unique ministry opportunities compared to other mission congregations. Sharing the costs associated with the upkeep of a building and grounds has also been a blessing for both parties. As part of the agreement between Living Hope and RMLHS, the congregation can also “employ” students to help the church in outreach efforts like canvassing and other evangelism work for the church. Living Hope is also presented as an option for worship and Bible information classes to those students and their families who may not yet have a church home or desire to learn more about the Lutheran faith. Pastor Sternhagen tries to be seen by the students and looks for opportunities to talk with them. But, so far, these have yielded little fruit. One of the issues is being able to meet with parents of those students: the opportunity to have a meaningful discussion with the students’ parents does not present itself all that often.

There are a few challenges which come with this close-knit relationship, however. One of those has always been balance. Pastor Sternhagen recognizes the needs of RMLHS and the help they require at this point in their ministry, but, as noted earlier, he must put the needs of Living Hope ahead of the needs of RMLHS. It is a struggle to balance these two not only for him, but also for his congregation. Mission congregations do not always have the time and the resources to divide among multiple ministries. So the question remains: how do you help out your brothers and sisters in the ministry while being sure to take care of your own responsibilities?

Living Hope, RMLHS, and their leadership teams are continuing to learn how to overcome these obstacles which stand in the way of their joint efforts in ministry. But, most importantly, both sides recognize the overall blessings the situation provides them and look

forward to the continued blessings the Lord will provide in the future. It would be interesting and pertinent to this project to revisit the relationship in future years to see how these challenges were addressed and the fruits which this partnership has produced.

Relationships with Other Congregations

As with the other associations studied, the RMLHS Federation has to deal with some considerable distance between the school and many of the churches.⁵⁶ There are two congregations which are one-hundred or more miles from the school: Crown of Life Lutheran Church in Pueblo West, CO is about 120 miles south, while Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, WY is one-hundred miles to the north. These are simply the extremes. In fact, six of the other seventeen churches are an hour's drive or more from RMLHS! Obviously, this amount of distance puts a strain on the relationship between those churches and the school. Those faculty members whom I interviewed recognized it is wishful thinking to consider students coming to RMLHS from those congregations. Consequently, they also realize the role of those pastors at the school must be completely different than those who are much closer.

In a growing metropolitan area like Denver, where transportation can often be nightmarish, the RMLHS Federation members are aware of the limitations they face when compared to other ALHS's. In many other associations and federations, the ALHS serves as a focal point for churches and called workers in the area. This is a desire of some at RMLHS, but is not realistic for their current situation. It was also noted during research that the distance has an effect on the way the school communicated with its federation churches, since they are not meeting pastors and delegates face to face as often as they might like. In an ideal world, there

56. See attached Appendix 3 for a map of the RMLHS Federation churches.

would be nineteen pastors at every high school delegate meeting, but the viability of this has been questioned in recent years.

One item which pastors in the RMLHS Federation spoke about during the interviews was how the churches that have a deeper connection with the high school now are the ones who have the most history with it. They also have an LES where students are encouraged to continue their Christian education at RMLHS. The pastors whom I spoke with that fit in this category said the story of RMLHS has become theirs and their congregations' story as well. When speaking about Christian education opportunities with people, they will often speak of their system as a K-12 program, and it begins at the church's LES and continues at RMLHS. These pastors have more success getting members who may not have any students or never had any students in the LES to take ownership in the high school and get involved in any way they can. They emphasized their efforts to lead by example and demonstrate to their people that RMLHS is their school and is an integral part of the teen ministry for these congregations.

This perspective of the ministry of the school, and how it fits into the ministry of the federation pastors, is in line with one of the key expectations which the high school has for its federation pastors: they are the recruitment arm for RMLHS in their congregations! Many of the pastors in the federation I spoke with recognize this role and strive toward it to the best of their abilities. They see that for a young, small school like RMLHS, they are the front line recruiters who are able to encourage more and more teenagers to consider RMLHS as an option. Having another opportunity for young people to get connected and stay connected to Christ is something these federation pastors view as worth their time and some extra effort.

These are the thoughts of pastors who are relatively close to RMLHS location-wise. But what about the pastors for whom distance is a big obstacle? Do they view their role in the

ministry of RMLHS the same as everyone else? In short, no, but they provide sound reasons. Many of the congregations in the Denver area are still considered mission churches. This means they receive outside support from the WELS to supplement their offerings. They are also growing churches and may not have the manpower to spare for other ministry efforts. This is especially for those which are an hour or more away from the high school and may not have many teens who would be likely candidates for RMLHS. Therefore, the idea of the ALHS as an extension of these churches' ministries is not as viable as it is for churches which are closer to the school and in a better position to provide students and support, according to my interviews.

That is not to say, however, there is no kind of support from these churches and their pastors, but it looks different than it does for others. Some often try to find a way to work RMLHS into their stewardship plan, though they may view that portion of their offering as going toward a home mission rather than a school they own. Though attendance at RMLHS events like graduation, games, and delegate meetings may not be as frequent as some, these far-off churches do attempt to send someone when schedules allow it. They also recognize RMLHS provides a community of Christian kids who are being enriched by God's Word every school day.

The distance situation is especially important to keep in mind when discussing one of the expectations RMLHS has for its federation pastors: they will send their children to the school to set an example for their congregation about the importance of Christian education and how RMLHS fits into that idea. This is the ultimate show of commitment to the school. Again, it is easy for the pastors who are closer to the school to send their children to RMLHS. These pastors had almost no questions about seizing the opportunity to lead by example, show support, and demonstrate what benefits the school can provide by sending their own children there. But what

about those pastors who live farther away? Is this expectation a reasonable one for them, or is it just setting both parties up for failure and frustration?

The Lord has blessed the work of RMLHS and the pastors who serve the school as part of its federation. The faculty and staff at the high school recognize the Lord has blessed them with an excellent group of men who serve in the area. They see the pastors as the “front line” guys when it comes to their work outside the walls of the school. Pastors are invited at least twice a year to present a chapel service to the students and these short services have been a boon to the work of sharing the gospel message at the school. The chapels are seen as a supplement to the Christian education the teens receive in class. This means the pastors are really co-teachers when they are in the pulpit preaching God’s Word.

The federation pastors also have a great history of getting along and working well with the faculty at RMLHS. While this may seem like a minor point, it is an important one in an area where called workers are not as densely packed as they are in other areas. The pastors who are heavily involved often wear multiple hats at school. Two of the pastors I spoke with even seized the opportunity to teach religion courses when they were needed! The reason for doing this is twofold: 1) the pastors realize RMLHS is a young ALHS still in need of some help from pastors who are willing to go above and beyond what they were called to do and 2) the faculty and staff at RMLHS are overworked and they need outside help when it is available.

It is also important to note RMLHS is the only one of the three schools I studied which does not currently have a campus pastor or a full-time mission advancement director on staff. This stresses the importance of federation pastors playing a role even further. RMLHS faces the same financial challenges many young ALHS’s face. Meeting their financial obligations and balancing the budget is a yearly challenge. Federation pastors are confronted with the daunting

task of leading their members to take ownership of the school and to view their commitments of time, talents, and money as an investment in the future of young Christians. The gospel ministry of RMLHS is an important factor for many of the churches' ministries in the Denver area, and they see the wonderful blessings an ALHS can provide for advancing Christian education and preparing young men and women to face the struggles of this world.

CHAPTER FIVE: APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

In my interviews and throughout this paper, I often used the word “expectation.” When asking faculty members and pastors about their expectations for one another, I felt compelled to qualify the question by saying we have to understand “expectation” in a very evangelical way.

Otherwise, we may fall into the ditch of motivating others with our expectations and what they should do rather than motivate with the gospel and a desire to serve others to the best of our abilities. But in my research, no one objected to any mention of expectations. In fact, many of them agreed we must have expectations, or else we risk running into the other ditch of no responsibility in carrying out our work of ministry. One interviewee even said that expectations are a must; you have to have them in ministry. Healthy and attainable expectations can benefit both sides of the relationship.

Keeping that in mind, one area where all parties can improve is in communication. We are great at having expectations, but not always as gifted at transmitting what those expectations are to one another. None of the schools which I focused on in my interviews have taken the time to formally and constructively discuss expectations for the federation pastors amongst the faculty or board of directors. Consequently, none of them have seized an opportunity to discuss the role pastors should be playing more intimately with those pastors. This would be something which I would recommend that these ALHS’s take the opportunity to focus on in the future. If some already have, great. But also make sure you are staying current with your expectations as ministries and situations change for both your school and individual pastors. Then take the time to communicate these expectations with your federation pastors, and vice-versa, in order to get on the same page with everyone.

I suggest doing this in both a delegate meeting and in private with each pastor. I believe utilizing both options gives time for open forum discussion and time to bring up cares and concerns in private as well. But I believe it is integral to this process to have both faculty and pastors involved at every stage of discussions. It does little good for either party involved if the faculty or the board of directors at one of the schools sets expectations and then thrusts them upon the pastors. The thoughts and concerns of each individual pastor are crucial in forming these expectations in a responsible and evangelical way. If a particular pastor has concerns or circumstances which may prevent him from carrying out his expected role in a responsible manner, he then has the chance to discuss this with the principal, or whoever is taking charge of these discussions, in private. This will then allow the two parties to work amicably on an arrangement which suits both sides. Keeping every channel possible open for communication is a key factor to clarifying expectations concerning the role of federation pastors in their ALHS.

In my opinion, there is a narrow road which needs to be walked by both faculty and federation pastors affected by the distance factor. On the one hand, many at the ALHS's I spoke with feel that pastoral support for the schools is beginning to dwindle somewhat. This could be for any number of reasons, but the fact remains that dwindling support from the pastors will have an effect on lay member support as well. If a pastor can lead by example and show the value of Christian education by sending his kids to his ALHS, then he should do so. But for some pastors and their families, this will not be the best way for him to show his support and may, in fact, be a detriment to his family and, therefore, his ministry as well. At some point, the expectation that a pastor will send his children to the high school has to be dampened or thrown out altogether because of the distance factor. The ALHS administration must be mindful that not sending your

children to the high school because of distance does not mean there is no support from that pastor. However, it means his view of his role at the ALHS is different than it is for others.

But one thing I discovered was a bit of an inconsistency in the high schools' understanding of how distance affects a congregation's ability to view an ALHS as an extension of its ministry. It is easy for congregations which are in close proximity to view the school as an extension of their ministry, but there must be some kind of distance threshold at which point the role of the church and its pastor at the high school has to change. What is that threshold? It is difficult to pin down one precise number one could apply across the board, due to the unique surroundings for each of the three schools. More research, communication, and prayer are needed to determine the best way to move forward in each situation. Expectations for these pastors affected by long distances must be adapted to accommodate such situations.

The ever burgeoning field of technology can only help to serve these situations. ELHS has made excellent use of the technologies available to them when they allow association pastors to video call into chapel services and delegate meetings. While the distances for many PNWLHSA churches are extreme and demand technological intervention, I was disappointed to see a lack of technology mentioned in the other ALHS's I used in my research. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, and WhatsApp are only a few of the free software programs which are readily available and could be used to "close the gap" between the ALHS and those congregations and pastors who are a greater distance away.

There is a scriptural basis for working towards keeping all avenues of communication open. Paul encourages the church in Ephesus to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3 NIV). There can be no room for disunity between called workers who are striving together toward the same goals. The best way to accomplish that

is by being clear in our expectations of one another, keeping all lines of communication open, staying specific about what our goals are, and elaborating how we plan on attaining those goals.

Pastor Don Patterson lays out some ground rules he believes will aid in building relationships between pastors and principals/faculty members:

1) Disagree in private all you want, but outside of the privacy of your office, speak the same things after one another. 2) Refuse to evaluate each other's ministry to other staff, church members or school parents. Leave that for the times you talk frankly among yourselves. If we talk about one another and not to one another it erodes trust and destroys our ability to advance our cause together. In a parish setting, the parents see the school and church as one unit. The relationship that the pastor and principal have is a guiding symbol of that oneness. 3) Learn to appreciate each other's education and experience.⁵⁷

Patterson was applying these tips to the relationship between LES principals and pastors, but they also hold true in the partnership of an ALHS and its association congregations. Again, a key component in applying these suggestions is communication. Without that critical component, the relationship will be strained and can even fall into disarray. And his tips go both ways, as they not only apply to the faculty at the ALHS but to the pastors, too. It has to be a two way street of communication for everything to run smoothly. A lack of appreciation for one another's work and ministry can be the unfortunate result, otherwise.

When this happens, one would do well to remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:1, "knowledge puffs up while love builds up." Love for Christ and for one another reminds us that we have the greatest cover-up for our mistakes: the gospel. The gospel provides freedom, comfort, peace, and "the gospel also empowers us to make honest assessments of what we do and why. We do not need to fear discovering any area for improvement. Gospel freedom always

57. Patterson, "Practical Experience," 5.

breeds honest assessment.”⁵⁸ This facet of the gospel message invites ALHS’s and their federation pastors to communicate openly about the expectations they have for one another.

More on the church side of the relationship, pastors must be aware of how federation pastors have historically functioned in ALHS’s ministry. Roth notes that congregations ought to make the fullest use of their ALHS. This has implications for the pastors, too:

That means intensive recruitment efforts. The principle enunciated strongly suggests that recruitment for the high school ought to be an activity of the congregation and not the high school. For various reasons the high school ought to continue to produce recruitment materials, but actual contact of prospective students and their parents by congregation members, day school faculties, and pastors would serve two good purposes: 1) it would be extremely effective, and 2) it would be an excellent demonstration of congregation “ownership.”⁵⁹

That idea of ownership was another concept which came up often in my interviews. The current WELS model for ALHS’s involves congregational support. So, this means those churches are the owners of the school, and they should use it and support it in a way which reflects that idea. Pastors play a critical role in emphasizing this concept to their lay people. Whether ownership means many young members are using the school, you choose to send your children there no matter the circumstances, or you support the school with some kind of budgeted offering every month are some viable option. These are not the only options, however. The fact remains: simply find a way to show your support for this part of ministry, of which you are a co-owner!

Tuition assistance is another way Roth suggests congregations can demonstrate their support for the ALHS. Pastoral leadership can aid in putting plans in place at churches as a show of their commitment to Christian education and, more specifically, their support of their ALHS. While many of the churches are working towards fulfilling their obligations in this field, most of

58. Patterson, “Practical Experience,” 3.

59. Roth, “Lutheran High School,” 5.

the faculty members I spoke with pray for more consistent support. Financially speaking, times are difficult for churches everywhere. But still providing for the financial needs of your ALHS, in spite of a dire financial outlook on the church level, can serve as a prime example of the importance of secondary Christian education for a pastor's congregation.

If federation pastors do play such an integral role in rounding up support and recruiting new students for the high school, which I believe has been proven true in this project, then there must be time set aside "for pastors to meet with their member[s]/students to discuss various aspects of this joint ministry."⁶⁰ While the primary responsibility for facilitating such discussion would fall on each pastor, the ALHS faculty can provide ways to aid in this endeavor. If any of the faculty or staff of the high school is a member of that congregation, they can provide more insights into the goings-on at the school and are able to keep the congregation in touch more readily because of their work. When administrators, faculty, and staff from the ALHS are involved in the life and work of their respective churches, it only serves to enhance the "visibility" of the school and make the pastor's job stressing support and recruitment easier.⁶¹ The high school can also be sure to provide relevant, up-to-date promotional materials to their federation pastors to accompany the work he does to promote the school.

Finally, I would stress the importance of implementing specific guidelines on welcoming and integrating new pastors into the federation. This orientation process needs to be thorough and ought to clearly point out the purpose, organization, and activities of the ALHS. What this might look like in practice for different ALHS associations would largely depend on some factors like where and when the pastor is being installed. It would be impractical for the mission advancement director or campus pastor from ELHS to travel to Alaska every time a new pastor is

60. Roth, "Lutheran High School," 3.

61. Roth, "Lutheran High School," 4.

installed. But the faculty and the board of directors of each school should make a point to discuss what their integration plan for new pastors might look like and adapt that plan to fit the needs of their association. Again, technology can aid in this endeavor. Even a simple phone call could work wonders in helping a pastor become familiar with this new aspect of his ministry. Anything an ALHS can do to help their pastors “hit the ground running” would be beneficial for both sides of the relationship.

CONCLUSION

There are about 1,400 congregations in the WELS today. A few more than 650 of them are in some way or another associated with an ALHS. Many of these churches have multiple pastors serving the congregation. Using these rough numbers, that means well over a fifty percent of the pastoral calls are ones to serve a congregation which has made a commitment to be a part of an ALHS association or federation. The topics covered in this thesis apply to a majority of the pastors who serve a WELS congregation, not to mention many of our synod’s teachers at ALHS’s.

Exploring the role a federation pastor plays in an ALHS is an important one. Not only because the subject has often been left on the table in discussions and meetings, but because of the great blessings provided to both sides of the partnership. Christian education is a valuable asset in the lives of our members. The ALHS federation system allows congregations to take ownership of a place where the gospel is put on the hearts of teenagers every day, so they may grow in the knowledge of the truth. The congregations and their pastors, in turn, provide support in the form of finances, time, talents, and student recruits. But these blessings are contingent on

both pastors and faculty getting on the same page, so both may serve the other in a beneficial and God-pleasing manner.

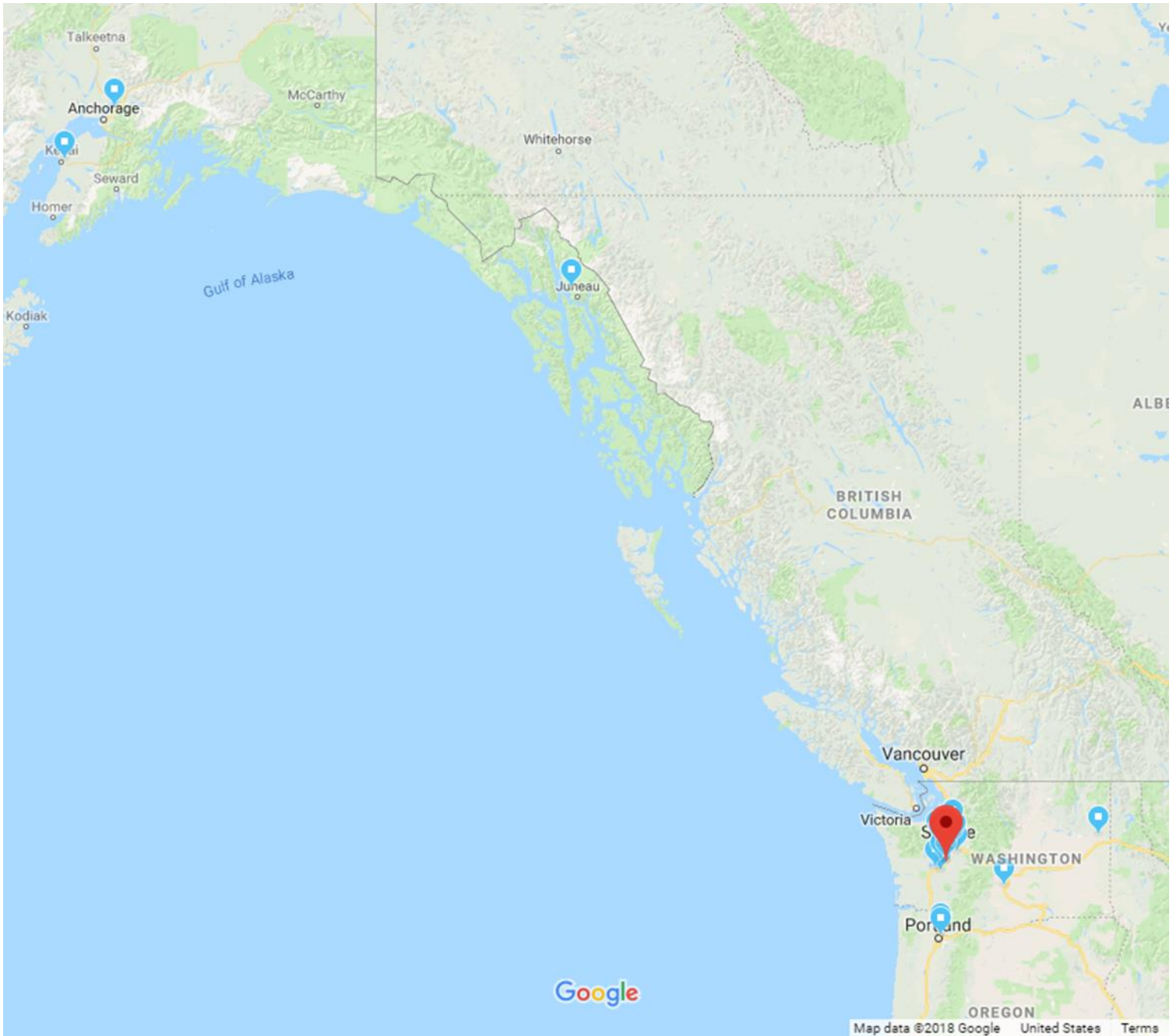
My research only encompassed three of twenty-five ALHS's in the WELS and only included a small selection of pastors and faculty members. It is by no means comprehensive. If one wished to explore this subject further, one might expand the criteria to include larger ALHS's and their federation pastors to see how the role changes as the school grows and perhaps becomes less dependent on the local pastors. Another topic which stems from this one is the relationship between LES principals and their pastors or the relationship between LES and ALHS principals. These subjects often came up during interviews, but did not fit into the matters I wished to address in this thesis.

Does the federation pastor play an important part in the ALHS? He most certainly does, especially in smaller ALHS where help is needed and greatly appreciated. He is the one in the trenches every day for the high school, drumming up support, looking for new recruitment opportunities, and keeping this extension of his congregation's ministry in his prayers. But the role cannot be exactly the same for every pastor. It must evolve with various and changing ministries. If members of the ALHS faculty and staff want the federation pastors to be aware of their needs, then they, in turn, must be aware of and sympathetic toward various ministerial circumstances which influence a pastor's ability to serve the high school in a beneficial manner. This point is one which Roth addresses and is seen as a focal point of this important relationship between federation pastors, their churches, and ALHS's:

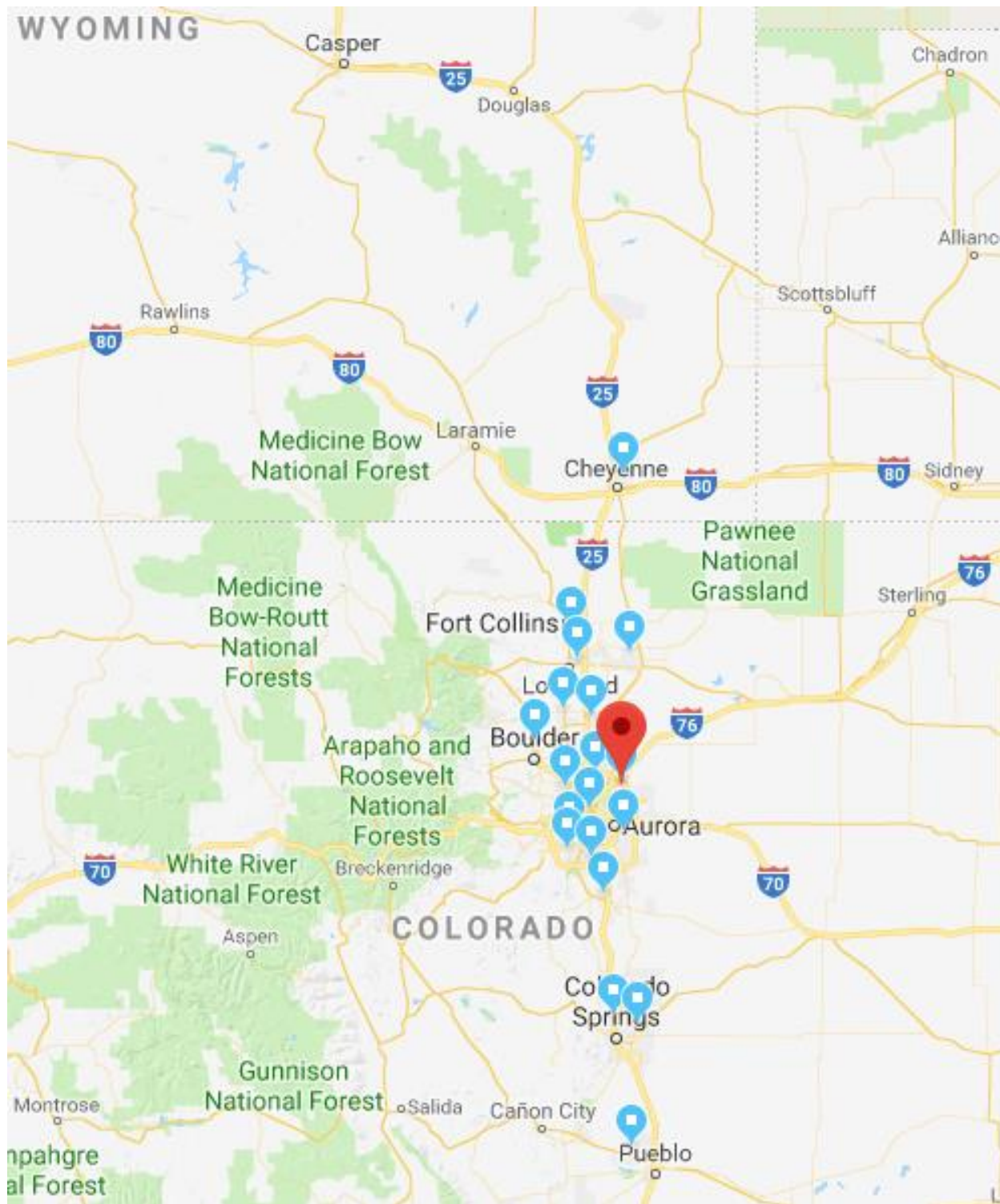
[The school] needs to have the flexibility to work with congregations on an individual basis according to agreed upon guidelines. Not all congregations are the same—some are center-city and some suburban, some are old and some young, some are strong and some weak. As an extension of all the congregations...[the school] must have the ability to work with congregations in such a way that harmony and growth are the result.⁶²

62. Roth, "Lutheran High School," 4.

APPENDIX 1. MAP OF PNWLHSA CHURCHES



APPENDIX 3. MAP OF RMLHS FEDERATION CHURCHES



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