Continuing Education

OPTION OR NECESSITY?
ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Continuing Education: Option or Necessity?

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Reflections
Living in the last decade of the 20th century is hectic. Everyone seems too busy. There are only 168 hours in a week, and that is too little time in which to accomplish numerous assignments. I am writing this during the last week of a semester at Concordia College. Saturday is graduation day, and during slightly more than 100 hours in this week, my wife and I will be hosting 30 people for dinner in our home on two evenings, hosting 25 colleagues for a conversation and dessert another evening, attending a banquet with over 100 in attendance, attending the Baccalaureate service (complete with pre-service music and a mini A Cappella Choir concert afterward) followed by a reception, participating in graduation exercises (complete with a noon luncheon), attending a wedding, and participating in a brunch honoring a new colleague. All of this will occur outside what some call "normal working hours." Knowing the schedules of many colleagues in ministry, whether serving as DCEs, teachers, pastors, or in other ministries, I believe our 100 hours are rather typical of the kinds of schedules church professionals face today.

In light of such time constraints, dare one suggest the need for continuing education for church professionals? Norbert Oesch, in the second article in this edition, writes:

"To my chagrin I have heard thirty-year veteran teachers brazenly say, 'I teach no differently now than I did five years ago.' For shame! A pastor told me with a smug look on his face, 'When I left the Seminary I closed my books and said, 'That's the last of schooling I'm going to take! And I've kept my promise! For double shame!'"

Who needs continuing education? You do. I do. Every church professional serving Jesus Christ does. Continuing education is one part in the complete stewardship of the Christian's life of service. This edition of Issues in Christian Education will help each of us in ministry answer three basic questions: 1) What is continuing education? 2) Why is continuing education important? 3) Is there a blueprint available for continuing education? The question is not if today's caring ministers, whether DCEs, pastors, teachers, or other church professionals, need continuing education. Rather, the question, in the form of a prayer, must be: Lord, with my limited God-given talents, how can I use continuing education to be the most effective servant of Yours, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with redeemed souls?

Orville C. Walz, President
Continuing Education: An Option?

Continuing education is generally described as non-traditional educational opportunities. Its definition can include programs leading to higher education degrees, or even more commonly, continuing education refers to off-campus individual interactions with the goal of student participation and completion certification. It may describe continuing education as necessary beyond a certain level of certification, lacking learning or not an option for Christians and in certainly not for Christian educators. Christian faith and values are often expressed in Christian living, as it stagnates and dies. The notion that education and continuing education can coexist in the same context or even share in the same degree level or terminal degree is a false construct. It is not possible to incorporate the continued education already taken place to a large extent among our church professionals. It is based on the needs of the individuals involved, offered by a variety of providers, and varies in quality and quantity.

Eugene M. Oetting
Dean of Education and Graduate Studies
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Continuing Education in Perspective

Do professional church workers develop at the seminary or college graduate level? The answer is certainly not. The average professional at God's pleasure personally affects others' perceptions of God's people effectively for a lifetime. The professional church worker has more opportunity to influence, thereby influence the continuing education workshops, conferences, and seminars, as well as formal academic avenues in order to acquire and enhance new knowledge and skills in their current ministry. The need for lifelong learning is not only grounded in the very nature of being a professional. In this modern era, the professional church worker has more opportunity to influence, thereby influence the lifelong learning of others in their current ministry. Each must identify the barrier to participation in this cost of continuing education, sources of funding are available for continuing education, and continuing education is a viable third source to include grants and those who are beneficiaries of the new knowledge or skills developed through continuing education. The university also assumes the responsibility of continuing education to invite freshmen, sophomores, and juniors into the life of the church. Church educators, first, must identify the barriers to continuing education, and then determine how best to overcome them.

Arthur D. Bacon
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Continuing Education: For Everyone?

Continuing education is not for everyone. It is not for those who are aware of the increased ministry demands placed upon them, who take seriously their responsibility to serve faithfully and effectively, and who desire to develop and strengthen the gifts God has given them. Continuing education in Christian Education is for everyone in the last group. It also assumes the responsibility of continuing education to invite freshmen, sophomores, and juniors into the life of the church. Church educators, first, must identify the barriers to continuing education, and then determine how best to overcome them.

What is continuing education? Most church professionals define continuing education as it narrowly. It is often seen as a purely academic endeavor directed at a specific task. While this dimension of growth is important, it is only part of continuing education, more is involved. Continuing education engages the spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical dimensions of one's life, as the intellectual. Continuing education is a dynamic process of growth and enrichment. Broadly defined, continuing education is continuing growth. Growth is essential, particularly for those who have committed themselves to being involved in the lives of children, youth, and adults.

Personal growth in the areas of our spiritual, emotional, and relational life is essential. "Professionals" are often identified as those who have the authority and skill to regenerate or improve the lives of others. We can use our professional skills, both in personal and professional relationships, to improve the spiritual, emotional, and relational life of others.]=

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Editorials

Growth and Support of the LCMS
What is Continuing Education?

David Zersen

ADULTS HAVE ALWAYS been lifelong learners! The challenges facing parenting, working, and aging individuals continually require new insights, skills, and knowledge. However, the pace of social and technological change within the past decades has been so rapid that normal coping and adapting techniques—either acquired through formal or informal learning experiences—make it increasingly difficult for adults to maintain their required competencies. As the following graph shows, it is not useful for education merely to transmit what is known, because rapid change quickly makes some aspects of past knowledge obsolete.

Therefore, “continuing education” (CE) has arisen not only to provide ongoing learning opportunities for maturing men and women in a rapidly changing world, but it has developed a discipline of its own with appropriate philosophy and methodology.

Continuing Education Revolution

Millions of adults now attend classes provided by schools, employers, churches, high schools and colleges, hospitals, social service agencies, and private enterprises. Many of the growth experiences are credit free, but the College Board says that six million, or 45 percent of all the students studying for credit in United States colleges and universities, are adults 25 years of age or older. This figure jumped 79 percent within the 10 years from 1969-1984, and within a few years the adult students will be in the majority in institutions of higher learning. These startling figures represent a revolution in U.S. society. Never before have so many adults been involved in so many formal and informal ways to equip themselves for present and future challenges.

The reasons this educational explosion has taken place are threefold. The “baby bust” of the previous decade has provided a shrinking pool of high school graduates. Schools of higher learning, therefore, must now count on the over-25 set to fill lecture halls and coffers. Additionally, the shift toward industrial and advanced technology has created education an attractive option for those needing to upgrade or retool their skills. Finally, the growing numbers of early retirees blessed with longevity and absence in U.S. society continue education as a means to provide long-delayed self-fulfillment.

Changed Learning Styles

The challenges of the new, rapidly changing society along with the needs of an adult clientele have changed higher education as well. Seventy percent of those adults who study for credit also work full time. This means that adult students cannot be expected to fit molds used for traditional students. They will be available for learning experiences only at certain times, and they will expect concessions from educational delivery systems in the way of flexible schedules, longer business and book store hours, on-site daycare, and more aggressive job counseling. Most interestingly, given who they are and what they have experienced, they will expect a different kind of education with less emphasis on instructor input and more opportunities for self-directed learning.

Obsolescent Professionals

Such observations about adults and continuing education within the United States have implications for the professional church workers in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Perhaps not so self-understood is the fact that those workers are also adults who have benefitted from institutional delivery systems tailored for their unique needs and experiences. The changing social structure in U.S. society has placed great demands on individuals and families with which pastors, teachers, and DCEs may not have been trained to cope. After all, colleges and seminaries provide, at best, an entry-level training for vocations, and even the course of a 40-year ministry, changes take place which no one could have envisioned during one’s undergraduate or pre-professional years. One scholar believes that a professional’s need for continuing education results from two kinds of obsolescence—rustiness resulting from lack of use of professional knowledge, and failure to keep up with new developments.

Without continuing education, he says, a professional’s half-life may be only six or seven years, which means that within seven years after initial professional training, a professional’s competency will decay by one-half that individual has not taken any continuing education.

Need for LCMS Worker Continuing Education

Professional workers in the LCMS may challenge the applicability of such statements in a ministerial profession established on unchanged truths. Occasional grumbling comes from those who fear that MCE (mandatory continuing education)multipart training for ministers devalues the professional insights of some ministers of some deep-seated freedom. However, a recent survey conducted with a random sampling of synodical pastors says that 62 percent of pastors believe that “the LCMS should require its ministers to do a certain amount of continuing education each year.” (No available statistics for teachers who, for purposes of certification, have traditionally done much more than pastors) Objections to continuing education among ministers (whether teacher, DCE, or pastor), on the other hand, probably should not be raised too loudly within Lutheran circles when one considers the kataphatic heritage on which Lutherans build and when one thinks of the continuing education modeling of some of our spiritual ancestors. It would, in fact, be good to review some of that tradition as a basis for sharpening the focus on the place of continuing education among LCMS professional church workers today.

Lutherans as Learners

It is interesting to imagine what support for ongoing growth among church workers might look like if the Lutheran tradition had been more ephphatic. Questions about the place of secular knowledge or intellectual pursuit generally have been raised by representatives of mystical or sola fide traditions from Thomas Muntzer to Tertullian with his famous “What is there in common between the philosopher and the Christian?” Despite strong misgivings about reliance on the human mind in spiritual matters, however, the tradition upon which Lutheranism has built most strongly has prized competency in such cerebral activities as exegesis, philosophy, and catechesis.

Such a tradition also prizes Jesus of Nazareth, the mentor who provided ongoing growth for a traveling band of disciples and the teacher who challenged people’s minds with his radical “You have heard, but I say…” It is no surprise that Paul who in addition to his visions used his scholar’s knowledge of the Old Testament and the Greek world to fashion to his contemporaries a profound appeal rooted in the incarnation. It heralds Augustine whose conviction was “to grasp the truth, not by belief alone, but also by understanding.” And it cherishes Luther who respected not only his inner call, but also his doctorate:

“I would not take all the world’s goods for my doctorate, for if I did not have this great, heavy responsibility which rests upon me, I would surely be driven to despair and to doubt whether I had not begun this cause without call or command, like a sneak preacher. But now God and all the world must bear witness that I began publically, in possession of my doctorate and my preaching office, and that I was led to it by God’s grace and help.”

Luther’s Continuing Education

Our appreciation for the gift of mind and all that knowledge contains is illustrated only too clearly, Christians should not readily abandon ongoing learning even when formal
Early Lutheran Continuing Education

Luther's modeling gave rise to some fascinating episodes in early Lutheran continuing education. Consider those first pastors in the process of becoming Lutherans in Ernestine Saxony. Most of those who were later to call themselves pastors were former Roman Catholic clerics, many of whom had little theological understanding and only rudimentary concerns for pastoral care. Although many had received some university training (in their early teens) without having graduated, gradual improvement resulted only from the "church's insistence that clerics study regularly throughout their careers, increase their knowledge and [live morally]."

To help equip them to be preachers and teachers of the new faith, Luther prepared a number of in-service training works. Below them in the century alternative and continuing education. As the Visitor's Instructions to the Pastors in Electoral Saxony" offered expositions of doctrinal matters as well as items of pastoral care. In addition, Luther's postils explained the texts from the gospels and epistles. The publication of the Luther's Short Homily in 1527 provided more help for the maturing pastors. This well-known challenge from the preface to the Large Catechism makes clear the seriousness with which Luther took lifelong education:

"Therefore, I once again implore all Christions, especially pastors and preachers, not to try to be doctors prematurely and to imagine that they know everything. Let them continue to read and teach, to learn and meditate and ponder. Let them never stop until they have proved by experience that they have taught the devil to death and have become wiser than God himself and all his saints."

Such valuing of the intellect and its place in increasing professional competency can be identified again and again in the Lutheran church's history. Three other examples will suffice to make the point. Marten Chemnitius reported that every district in Saxony in 1554 found in Braunschweig from 1554-1555 to explore a variety of doctrinal and pastoral topics in a remarkable early form of in-service training. Bohemian pastor of Der Lutherarner heralded the soon-to-be-published Lehr und Wehre, theological journal of the eight-year-old Missouri Synod, he made it clear that the publication was only to report what was happening in the church in the various localities of the emigrants, but attention would be given to the needs of contemporary preachers, to the struggling pastoral counsellor, and to those who had written, seeking support for their efforts in the form of responses to letters, for publication.

Ten years later, the sister publication for teachers, the Evangelische Lutherschule in Munich, had expanded itself into a magazine. The contents included devotional aids and current books for their library. Ten years later, the sister publication for teachers, the Evangelische Lutherschule in Munich, had expanded itself into a magazine. The contents included devotional aids and current books for their library.

Understanding Who Learners Are and How They Learn

Inspired by such a witness to lifelong learning (limited as it often was to the cognitive realm), it would be helpful to attempt to define continuing education within the context of contemporary worker needs, to clarify the theological rationale for having the church develop learning experiences, and to provide a listing of growth areas and methods appropriate for use among professional church workers in the 1990s. The focus, in this discussion, will be placed on the individual or group responsible for developing programs in conferences, districts, and institutions. In order to develop a definition of continuing education, it is appropriate to begin with a discussion of what adult learners are and how they learn. Such a discussion is necessary in order to identify the proper content and form for an adult learning setting.

Wholistic Learners

Adult learners are whole people who are in process. The implications of this statement about content in adult learning settings are significant. Two parts of this discussion are first, wholistic; and second, stages of development.

The strongly "katabolic" nature of the Lutheran tradition encourages us to define continuing education as a largely intellectually oriented process. Some scholars have challenged this perception by reminding ministers that Hebrew and early Christian concepts regarded a person as an indivisible whole. Gary Harbaugh, for example, says that "while a person may be addressed in terms of body, mind, emotions, or in the variety of other contexts when God or the believing community speaks, the appropriate response is that of the whole person with... heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)." Harbaugh's wholistic model shows four personal dimensions (physical, social, mental, and emotional), all centered in the letter "E" (symbol of the Hebrew "El" for God). His contention is that there is no specific spiritual dimension of the person is identified, "there is a God-

Biblical Model of Wholeness

In my

I am

PHYSICAL

RELATIONAL

thinking

feeling

bodily being

rotating

A HOLISTIC MODE OF WHOLENESS

Continuing education for those ministering in Christian settings is, therefore, surely not merely a matter of a cerebral exploration of theological abstractions. Given the physical, social, and emotional dimensions of the minister, a discussion of homosexuality or women in ministry (to choose two current debates) involves more than a presentation from a dogmatist. Additionally, the problems associated with conflict or poor use of interpersonal skills in the community (this is perhaps one of the most popular issues) may need analysis from an internist, a theologian, and a psychotherapist. It is always self-understood in constructing a learning environment around such or other issues, that wholeness recognizes the psychophysical unity of the person as well as relationships with the community (e.g., Jesus tells the lepers to show themselves to the priests—Luke 17:14) integrated by wholehearted love of God (Mark 12:30). The fear of some that discussing social/emotional/physical concerns in continuing educational settings for ministers will be somehow superficial is not a theological concern so much as a concern for format. If a growth setting is properly constructed, the "God-questions" cannot help but be ministered by the process of becoming self-directed learners.

Stages of Growth

The other issue dealing with content at continuing education events concerns the stage of life in which learners find themselves. Significant studies by Erickson, Kohler, and Fowler are well known and have applications to the range of professional church workers. While there are a number of differences between the growth needs of the various student groups, the following needs are identifed for teachers in three stages of development have some mutual application.

In the early years of teaching, growth experiences should provide clear direction and emphasize expectations. Among the needs are a desire to:

- Know the content and technical skills needed for the job
- Learn what to do when
- Find useful examples, anecdotes, and case studies
- Master personal behaviors
- Learn how to work in teams
- Complete group projects
- Discuss professional survival

In the middle years, teachers have a desire to:

- Analyze, explore, clarify teaching styles, methods, and curricula
- Formulate personal philosophies
- Evaluate career affects (administration, colleagues, and family)
- Assess mid-life problems (family, alcohol, etc.)
- Choose between offerings on what to learn and how to learn

In the later years, teachers have a desire to:

- Practice self-assessment
- Deal with adult development issues (guilt, self-worth)
- Do retirement planning, stress counseling, and coping
- Develop non-directive in-service programs

Important conclusions for program developers from such a review include the need to recognize differences in professionals and the importance of seeing continuing education as a means of enhancing professional competence. Often, district presidents tell stories about their reading at the criterion of some layperson, indicating that the minister's presumed incompetence, who "stand up to them as a seminary student?" The answer, of course, has to be that it is not possible to learn everything in pre-professional training. The length of time available, cost factors, and the rapid pace of change in society are certainly involved. However, the insight that a student is not psychologically prepared to receive all training with a "front-load" approach is crucial. If the LCSM invests annually approximately $8 million (6 percent of its total budget) in higher education which includes preparation of professional church workers for ordination/certification, one might ask, recognizing the human need to learn in stages, how much should be prepared to expend for the lifelong learning of professional church workers? The question is not a criticism of existing
Active learners celebrating God's good gift of grace can make "continuing education" a sign of hope in the church.

**Formats/Techniques for Individual Study**

- Guided readings
- Home study booklets
- Audio/video sets
- Educational software
- Sabbatical
- Internships
- Personal retreats
- Mentor relationship
- Study/travel
- Interview

**Formats/Techniques for Groups**

- Seminar
- Clinic
- Workshop
- Forum
- Lecture
- Demonstration
- Modular units
- Field trip
- Socratic method
- Value clarification
- Colloquia
- Round table discussion
- Audio/visual cassette
- Telelecture
- Closed circuit conference
- Telephonic access
- Computer assisted instruction
- Case study
- Role-playing
- Simulation
- Team teaching
- Programmed learning
- Cooperative learning
- Distance instruction

**Ministry**

Effective ministry, a concept rooted in the doctrine of the public ministry, implies that continuing education for ministers always involves those to whom one is called in service. It is for that learning and growing which is entirely personal (as stated above). Ministers, however, are to be regarded as "servants of Christ" (1 Corinthians 4:1). The very word "minister," in its Latin rootage, means to "serve." When, therefore, professional church workers talk about continuing education, they will consider the growth necessary among adult laymen in order that all those who seek to grow in skills and knowledge should edify them.

To want to be effective and competent belongs to the grace of serving well. While newer translations of 2 Timothy 2:15 no longer use the word "study," the implications for the growth of the professional church worker remain. No Christian servant/steward should want the shame of being ill-equipped when opportunities for growing in effective service abound.

**Wholeness/Wellness**

Personal wholeness/wellness is surprisingly often neglected as a growth area by dedicated and effective servants. Putting "no" fast cannot mean as non-Biblical as putting "no" first. It is Biblical for ministers to believe that they have as much need to be served as to serve those to whom they are called (St. Francis of Assisi, notwithstandingly). The symbolism in these words of the Song of Solomon warns the overly zealous servant: "They taught me the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!" (Song of Solomon 1:6; KJV). Jesus' words to "love your neighbor" are to be kept in the context of "as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

**Defining Continuing Education**

With this background it is now possible to attempt to define continuing education for professional church workers. As a personal or professional experience, it is a lifelong process, increasingly self-directed, spurred by the Spirit of God, leading to epistemic, psychosocial, spiritual, effective ministry, and personal wholeness/wellness. As a program of the church, rooted in its katharifisic tradition, it is a means to edify professional church workers together with the whole people of God, helping them to grow wholistically according to their needs and varied styles. Through such growth, windows are opened and horizons broadened so that stress can be reduced, competency can be increased, and joy in the ministry can be shared between workers and laity. If continuing education is to bring such blessing, then the passive paradigm of the authoritative podium faced by dependent learners needs to be replaced with active

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metaphors like body-building, home building, forging metal, marathoning, childbirth, springboarding, even playground. Active learners celebrating God's good gift of grace can make "continuing education" a sign of hope in the church.

Twenty-five years ago when continuing education as a discipline was in its infancy, Jesse Ziegler, then president of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), prophesied ominously:

"The one thing that has become crystal clear is that, if the minister is to cut into the culture to which he ministers, he must be a continuing learner. At a time when more people are enrolled in adult education programs than in all the colleges and universities, the continuing education of the minister can be ignored only at great peril to his own effectiveness and to the peril of the church."...

Twenty-five years later, with the pace of social change intensifying, his words are even more poignant. Simultaneously addressing their recruitment, growth, and privilege, it makes glad the heart.

Notes
3. Tift, 91.
5. John O'Hara, 1990 Continuing Education Survey (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, December 6, 1990), 5.
9. Martin Luther, Werke 30: Zwanzig Vorlesungen (Heimr: Heinrich Behaus, 1969), 649. This letter to the anonymous "N" was not included in the American Edition of Luther's Works. While Luther was actually delivering the teaching office of his Call, he respected the hearing symbolism by declining the invitation at one time regarded as peculiar.
14. J. A. O. Prest, telephone interview, 11 April 1991. Every two weeks some two-dozen from hundreds of pastors from the area were required to attend these in-service programs. Sessions could not be attended unless the session was passed twice or three times. Premises could not be attended unless the session was passed twice or three times.
20. Judith Christiansen, Peter Burke, Ralph Feinberg, and David Haysgreaves, Stages of Pastors' Careers (Washington, DC: GBHEM Clearinghouse, 1984), 76.
22. Knowles, 4-5.
25. Growth to Excellence in Ministry? (St. Louis, LCMS Commission on Ministerial Church and Society, 1987), 4.
28. Barbara W ether, "The Educated Preferences and Practices of Talented Ministers: Report on an Exploratory Study," Auburn Theological Seminary, 1984. The study demonstrates that the more talented, sophisticated, a student minister is, the less likely he/she is to participate in prepared programming and the more likely he/she is to commit, self-directed learning. Continuing education developers need to remember such individuals by preparing guided readings, independent studies, and other strategies.

Why is continuing education important? Because I'm not sure one can effectively survive without it.

The accent of the previous statement is "effectively." Oh, professional workers in the church can survive—indeed maybe too many of them do. Having learned little to nothing new since they graduated, they repeat many times what they did when they first got out. To my chagrin I have heard thirty-year veteran teachers braggingly say, "I teach no differently now than I did five years ago." For shame! A pastor told me with a snarpllook on his face, "When I first entered the ministry, I closed my books and said, 'That's the last of school I'm going to take!' And I've kept my promise!" For double shame! They are surviving, but are they ministering effectively? Even if they may think they are effective, do they have any knowledge of how much more effective they could be had they made learning a lifelong venture and continuing education the vehicle for such learning? I offer my life-story romance with continuing education as a witness to its necessity. My life has been changing continually. These changes demanded new learning: This in turn will urge each person to develop a carefully thought-out growth plan because of 1) changes in the professional ministry, 2) changes in congregational and individual needs, and 3) changes in the demands on professionals. Continuing education, in my opinion, is mandatory for effective ministry.

My Story

Thoughts about continuing education became serious my last year at the seminary. I passionately desired to be a seminary professor some day. "That would require a doctorate," I thought. So I applied for the German equivalent of a Fulbright Scholarship. When I was rejected and a classemate accepted, I was, to put it mildly, upset. However, "Call Day" arrived, and my assignment was to Texas—San Antonio to be exact. Eager to win the world for Jesus, I set off with pride beside me to the place where quickly the people would recognize the astounding mental capacities of their new pastor. I just knew they would appreciate how capable I was, preaching sound doctrinal sermons and developing outstanding Bible lessons based on an exegesis of Greek and Hebrew texts.

However, when the Chairman of the Board of Elders one month after my ordination asked if our meeting would be and wondered what we would do in it, I could only wonder the same thing. When the Sunday school teachers asked for training in disciplining the children and planning a lesson to hold their attention, a creeping
realization came over me: "Maybe I didn't learn at the seminar because I never needed to know." When a sister congregation closed and asked to merge with us and brought twenty families of different ethnic origins with them, I realized how much I had, indeed, learned and believed it. I was, however, Catholic, so I knew I was in trouble.

Crisis. Oh, not crisis like "in bail out" or "die," but crisis as in "administration needs help." I clamored for it. I scrambled. Seminars. Workshops. Cross-cultural events. Kennedy’s Evangelism Explosion. Four Spiritual Laws Seminars. Mission Life workshops. Elder training workshops. The list was long; the pattern was need-oriented. Whatever need pressed the hardest, and whatever course provided practical help to meet that need found me a participant. Even Spanish language was a crisis course. I signed up for one in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and headed down there knowing only Buenos Aires. And, although I didn’t know it, the six weeks flew by. I started dreaming in Spanish and had to pull up Senora Madrid’s case too early. So I hedged south of the border the next year, studying three more weeks.

LIFERS (I don’t even remember what the acronym stands for) was another great help. Week-long experiences in cross-cultural understanding opened my eyes and sensitivity. Weekend encounters with Mexican-American and Black leaders helped me see the issues. To reach a community for Jesus, one must know the community.

Then came the challenge to manage a church that grew from 90 to nearly 500. More education could help. The University of Texas in Dallas offers courses for clergy, so off I went to study management, marketing, and advertising. Back home I used what I learned by putting on retreats for leaders. And we continued to grow.

The move to Bakersfield, California, interrupted the plan for another church, but I knew I needed help. Skills were needed. They especially needed and wanted to learn how to exercise the priesthood of all believers. I took on more leaders. I led many leadership training experiences involving members.

Then across my desk came what I hoped (and, yes, prayed for)—a doctoral program that would allow me to keep on shepherding the congregation while doing systematic, intentional learning. I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry course offered by Fuller Pacific Lutheran Seminary. Since my LCM congregation had budgeted for such a program yet only offered such a program yet and PLTS and LFTS were a mere 300 miles north, I signed up for their first class. What a joy—and what work! The syllabus stated, "Read the following twelve books before your first course begins on campus!

The degree demanded more reading and coursework. We had to use and involve our own congregational resources. An advisor group was selected. They studied with me, and they held me accountable. Most important, the dissertation had to be on a project we developed together and implemented in the congregation. It was to have implications for other churches. My project was to develop and extend congregational planning and included training experiences for laity and a shepherding program not unlike Kenneth Hauck’s Stephen’s Ministries. This program provided 22 different planning and training experiences in the congregation. The members were in continuing education as we learned. Here are a few courses titles: "How to Train a Local Preacher," "How to Care for Shut-ins," "How to Help Those Struggling Through Relocation Loss," "How to Refend the Dying."

Having hung my diploma on the wall, I asked, "What's next?" Education was not an end; a Dr. "Dr. is written in front of your name, does it?" The timing was right. Synod’s continuing education committee launched a program called "Developing Your Personal Growth Plan." What a blessing it was to me.

My plan included intentional development of spirituality, it meant deliberate and disciplined time for prayer, Bible reading, and meditation, as well as journaling. Time, place, and resources were set aside. Growth on another realm worked.

Likewise, growth in the congregation dictated that staff be added, with a Youth Minister, a Minister of Evangelism and Stewardship, a Minister of Music, and a Director of Preschool being called. Parastaff personnel were added. I needed skills in team ministry. I read such as "The Team" by Gary L. Woychuk and "The 3 Systems" planning and management books. Continuing education comes in many packages. I had to learn new communication skills. The professional hierarchy was study in a warship setting. Could I learn how to preach in an expository style? Could I teach the Scriptures in a way the congregation can learn how to learn. So I learned. And God blessed us with growth.

The ministry at Bakersfield, too, was interrupted. A call came to get a job in a multiracial church in Orange, California. The membership at Bakersfield had grown to 1,700, but the Orange congregation had a membership of 3,000. How do I learn to shepherd a church that size? Continuing education was the answer. "This church needs a VISION," I was told. So I aligned myself with people who had vision. Change was needed, so I read books on conflict. Conflict arose, so it was right to take seminars in conflict resolution and management.

I founded a network of senior pastors of large congregations. Cross-denominational training experiences were especially useful. Useful, too, has been the experience of taking my whole staff to another congregation significantly larger than ours in order to experience leadership. As you can perhaps see, continuing education is the key to leadership change and more on specific questions, such as "What is the role of the Senior Pastor?" "What are twelve keys to an effective church?" "How can team building help grow among busy staff in a large congregation?" Specific needs were driving us to seek specific educational events.

Will this take a long time? Of course it will, but it’s all I go from here? I’m fifty-one. I suppose I have only forty more years or so to continue to learn on this earth! So it is time to develop other personal growth plan. I am not sure of all that I will write down as a plan for the next five years, but no doubt some of it will include mastering Spanish. There are, you know, people all around this congregation. If I wish to be effective, I must be better able to share the Gospel in their language. In addition, I want to begin training in consulting work. I am beginning to believe I have something to share with others about large congregations.

The Changing Nature of the Professional Ministry

Not everyone may agree, but I believe the day of "Herr Pastor" and "Mrs. Classroom Teacher" is nearly over. The church of today and certainly every congregation needed only one pastor, but he was the center of the ministry. "Herr Pastor" was an appropriate title. But the way of the future (and the future here is team ministry—multiple staff situations.

As for "Mrs. Classroom Teacher," who sees her ministry as teaching twenty-five students concerned with continuing education is based on the truth that the professional nature of ministry, congregation and people’s needs, and the demands on church workers keep on changing. Every professional needs to keep growing.

People from every climate and nation are flooding to America. We scarcely need to look to the world, it’s coming to us! But are we equipped to minister?
needs are being met. Consequently, the family with preschoolers looks for more interaction and what looks good, clean and suitable to them as parents. How clean and well organized is the nursery? How well staffed is it? Do I want my child to play there? Will it be safe for my child? These are the significant questions.

When a family has children five to thirteen years old, needs change. So the questions they ask are: "What does this church provide to help my child?" "How good is the school?" "What extra-school activities are available for them?" "Is there musical education?" Many of our new family’s parents told us they visited twelve churches before choosing ours. People are particular. They are selective.

When the children become teenagers, they will look for a church with a vital youth program. The adults want to grow, too. Adult education is in. So are specialty groups. A congregation addressing the needs of people that always feel themselves to be the "second class" is the need for support groups such as divorce recovery, merging families, and chemical dependency groups. Maybe this is the concern of only larger churches, but I doubt it. More likely it is everyone’s concern, because in today’s more open society, problems are more likely to surface. People are admitting their pains.

The above changes all relate to loyalty; meeting needs has replaced loyalty. There are many other changes too.

I have stated already that LCMS congregations are getting larger (if they are growing at all), and there is no longer a need in increasing membership. In most of our churches two or more pastors are trained for team ministry. DCEs are way ahead.

The role of music is becoming much larger than twenty years ago. If we were to start a new mission congregation, the first staff person to be added would be a Minister of Music. That person would be trained in music and classical training. (By way of illustration, in Los Angeles and Orange counties where population numbers in the millions, only two out of every thousand is a Lutheran. It goes this way the appeal of a church that utilizes only classical organ and German chorales?)

People desire less formal setting. The word in the mind of those seeking a church home is "comfortable." "Will I feel comfortable there?" Warmth, friendliness, and caring are qualities sought. This should put some change demand on those who want everything to be formal and proper.

Still further, people flock to places where they feel they are learing things because they are being preached at. Thus, expository sermon style and teaching methods that utilize an open Bible are parts of the forward movement.

Major changes are happening in the area of schools. As recently as the early 1960’s, few, if any, articles could be found regarding evangelism through schools. Indeed, it is correct to say that schools were viewed as safe places for our own children to go and be kept free of the world. LCMS schools were basically for LCMS children. There were exceptions, of course, but in 1991 the LCMS preschools be the responsibility of the LCMS. The pastor, the school is our number One evangelical agency. In the first three months of 1991, we have baptized forty-nine children; both children and adults. About half of them came via the school ministry. Even greater is the movement towards early childhood education. The LCMS Day School Network now has 770 centers, new centers are in the planning stage; 328 existed just ten years ago. Related are other changes, changes specific in society or community.

Society and Community Change

Let us begin with the breakdown of families. It is no longer surprising to have children tell you about their mom, their biological father, their stepfather, and their ex-stepfather, and yet not name all who have been parents to them. Divorce, remarriage, and the like have caused this. This number has 30 percent to 50 percent of the children from broken homes. The impact is overwhelming. Holistic approaches might be sought. Again I make my case for teachers to learn how to be shepherds of families. The argument that the student will be the loser will not wash. The student is a loser if the teacher does not take into account the family situation and address it.

In our school 80 percent of the children come from homes where both mom and dad work outside the home. This means much more than fatigue on the part of parents when it comes to helping with homework. Bigger issues are child care before and after school. Two questions are: What programs are needed? What training is mandatory to run such programs? Perhaps because these parents are away from their children, so many have been turned to school for increased efficiency. Parents expect the program and the environment to be above average. Affluence in some neighborhoods could contribute to their expectations. With two incomes there is more money, and parents will pay higher fees if the program and facilities are superior. Some would be more inclined for greater sophistication throughout society. Mediocrity is not acceptable to many.

Of other significance in urban and suburban areas is the continuing increase in ethnic peoples. Most communities are multiethnic, and the make-up is not only Anglo. It is a rich mix of Asian, African, Asian, French, German, Japanese, East Asian, Indian, and people from Muslim countries. Demands for cultural understanding and language diversity is increasing.

How about the significant increase in healthy, experienced and learned retirees? People retire earlier in many cases, and life expectancy is rising. One analyst predicted, "In an average year by the year 2000, up twelve years in one decade! Here is a tremendous pool needing resoling and needing to be challenged to be in ministry through the church. Continuing education is also for laity.

People and communities are changing. It only stands to reason that professional workers will have increasing and changing demands put on them, too.

Changing Demands on Professionals

Let us consider first the professional teacher. I see three areas demanding continuing education among teachers.

First, more and more people are going back to school, even after graduating from college. Continuing education is important for them. There are people eager to learn. We have older people and younger adults enrolling in courses. Advanced degrees are sought in our schools, too. Many schools tip the salary scale to advanced credits and degrees. The pressure is on!

Second, and more important, if teachers are going to meet the needs of the families, they will, as I stated earlier, a necessity for more training in family issues. They will need to learn how to detect family dysfunction, abusive situations, and chemical related symptoms. Basic counseling skills and referral skills will be needed, as well as crisis intervention skills. Perhaps, too, additional courses should be taken in active listening and dealing with family conflicts.

Third, learning deficiencies are being discovered (seemingly at a higher level than before over). What once passed for a child being a slow learner is now receiving another look. Dyslexia is only one of many reading problems; Retention difficulties, hyperventilation, and so forth. Classroom teachers will not be able to send all children with learning problems to the principal, and the principal cannot send them all to public school. Continuing education is a must.

Directors of Christian Education face the same pressures. They must learn to know just how adults learn best. Studies continually are being made to investigate how people learn, adult learning cycles, and faith cycles. DCEs, too, need to learn more about family systems. Even if their prime focus is the adult, their work still spills over to the children, just as a teacher’s prime focus on the child also will need to involve the parent. Youth development cannot all be learned in undergraduate classes. Parent/teenager conflict resolution is best learned in the laboratory of actual ministry or in-service training. Leadership skills, too, are best learned after one is recognized as a leader. Many of these skills will be learned at the time a DCE recognizes he or she is sixty-five and considering retirement.

Is it different for pastors and deacons? I cannot believe. Even though each pastor was declared "fit for ministry in every way" when graduating from the seminary, I agree differently. We were fit only to begin to learn ministry. We had our theory taught and possessed some techniques for putting together a sermon or Bible class, but ministry skills were a long way from honed. Consider specifically specialization skills: Ministry to families, ministry to ages, disciplship training, specialization in evangelism and church growth, and ministry to senior adults. Few courses, if any, are geared in on these skills in seminary.

I have already mentioned team ministry, its dynamics and inter-relationships. How about the recognition and affirmation of spiritual gifts, leader style, and management concerns? How many pastors or deacons have training in being a change agent or are skilled in conflict resolution?

One critical area of pastoral leadership is developing vision. I did not know what a mission statement was when I graduated, or recognize that a parish needs a vision, or else it will perish! How does a congregation develop a vision? How can a church be organized to carry out the Great Commission rather than maintain its own self? Diversity is an important in congregational life. People seek options. Pastors, teachers, DCEs, and deacons do not care anything the same way it always has been. Diversity demands new skills.

Finally, we are in the age of world-view Christians. We no longer are isolated and insulated. If we do not broaden our view, we will be eliminated! For most of us, the world is at our back doors. People from every climate and nation are flooding to America. We scarcely need go to the world; it is coming to us! But are we as called ministers of the Gospel equipped to minister to these people in all the Gospel?

What is the answer? Continuing education is critical in our day. If there are many things for a DCE to learn when living in a formal setting, the same generalization applies to all church workers.

Think of the joy! There is great joy in expanding horizons and new ways of exercising. As new worlds open, new potentials are realized.

So what can you do? What can you do new? What can you do better? You can start immediately on a growth plan. You can get a form or a course guide from Synod’s Professional Growth and Support Commission. Or you can simply sit down with a trusted friend, talk about ministry, where the needs are, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and what would be helpful for you to do a better job. Plan to work on making one strength you have better (you will have fun that way), and isolate one weakness you would like to change into a strength in the next three years. Then discuss your plan with your spouse. I am sure it will be wonderful—especially when you discover how much more effective you are in ministry.

Is this an educational investment? Because you can do more than survive. You can be effective.
PLANNING FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION: A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Stephen J. Carter

IN OUR RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, every professional worker needs a planned approach to continuing education so that faithful, joyful, and competent ministry results. This article will first describe a personal learning plan approach, useful in preparing an annual growth plan. Second, you will glimpse The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod blueprint for continuing education as coordinated by the new Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support.

PART I: THE LEARNING PLAN APPROACH

NEED IDENTIFICATION
Explore your current ministry in the parish. Take a look at yourself as preacher, worship leader, counselor, visitor in the home, teacher of children and adults, educational planner, minister to youth, administrator of the parish, evangelist, community leader, and leader in your home as spouse and parent. Identify your areas of strength and weakness. Consult with key lay leaders and get their assessment of the same personal and professional ministry areas.

Select at least one strength area for further development and one problem area where you are motivated to grow because of the priority needs of the congregation.

Make these two areas the subjects for your personal learning plan. Begin to ask yourself what knowledge, skill, and qualities or attitudes you would need to improve in order to grow in your two learning plan choices. Your selection of continuing education areas may include personal or professional concerns. Many ministers have selected personal devotional life, constructive use of leisure time, personal time management, and marriage and family growth to go along with sermon delivery, adult education, presessional counseling, working more effectively with volunteers, teaching confirmation classes, and ministry to the elderly. The growth areas selected should be uniquely appropriate to your own ministry needs and to the current situation in your parish or school context. The more specific your identification of the need, the more meaningful you will find the personal learning plan and the results of your efforts.

GOAL SETTING
After you have selected two growth areas based on identification of your needs, the next step calls for development of a goal statement or two for each area. The goal needs to be specific, measurable, and achievable. For example, if you are working on preaching, you might write as a goal: “To improve my sermon delivery within the next six months by eliminating the need for a manuscript in the pulpit.” Goals are not easy to write. Taking the time to develop them will greatly increase your chances of accomplishing your learning plan. You will know, for example, whether you are using a sermon manuscript in the pulpit after six months. You would not choose this goal unless you had determined that you were so chained to the manuscript that your preaching delivery was impaired. You also would have decided that one month would not allow you enough time to wean yourself from the manuscript and that one year was too long.

Your chosen goals may need midcourse correction. You may find that four months were adequate to reach your goal or that eight months were required. But setting a measurable goal for yourself starts you in the right direction toward growth without letting you become either frustrated or bored. Most of the workshops to develop learning plans give you the opportunity to get feedback from colleagues on your goal statements as a help to you in formulating measurable and achievable objectives.

RESOURCE SELECTION
With needs identified and goals stated, you move on to the next step of selecting appropriate resources for your personal learning plan. This step is extremely important. You need, first of all, to be sensitive to your learning styles. If you are primarily a structured learner and feel most comfortable with teacher-directed learning, then you will want to choose formal courses or degree programs that are available to you. Your learning plan will guide you to choose those formal courses that are most helpful to your needs for growth. If you work better alone, you will seek out a bibliography of books, periodicals, correspondence courses, or independent studies that will help you meet your needs. You may also investigate computer-based learning and/or audio- or video-cassettes for learning. Other resources such as drama, music, travel, and physical exercise programs may also be helpful. If you learn best through interaction with others, you may want to identify resource people in your community—a congregational member skilled in administration, education, or computers; a local counselor; human resource development manager; audio-visual expert, or youth worker; a colleague in ministry who excels in preaching, evangelism, or teaching adults. Many people will share willingly of their time and expertise when asked. Your desire to interact with others may also lead you to make full use of your local pastoral or teacher conferences, workshops, and seminars that teach skills through a group process.

Second, in addition to considering your learning styles, you need to become familiar with the available resources in your geographical area. What colleges and seminaries offer courses nearby or have extension programs available to you? What programs does your church body sponsor? What independent providers offer workshops and seminars? What libraries and resource centers are in your area? Do you have hospital or mental health centers? How accessible are these resources available to you? Do government, education, and human service agencies in the community provide resources to help you in your growth? How about business and industry? The list goes on and on. Many times as you explore resources, one contact leads to another in an exciting chain reaction.

Your resource selection, therefore, ties in closely with your need area and your goal statements. Your resources reflect your unique learning styles, your time and money limitations, and their accessibility to your geographical location. By considering a wide variety of resource possibilities, you expand your horizon of growth and find new ways to become more effective in ministry.

TIME TABLE
With needs identified, goals stated, and possible resources selected, you need to establish a workable timetable to accomplish your goals. This timetable may order your work load in ministry and tries to chart a realistic, achievable course for your learning experience. You will probably start with a short-range timetable of six months unless you are choosing a degree program or a particular sequence of courses.

Make your timetable as specific as possible. For example: I will read one book a month for the next three months. I will select those books by the 15th of this month. Or, I will enroll for a course in the spring semester at the local college and select that course by the next three weeks. Or, I will make an appointment to meet with the district education executive within the next month to explore further resources. Try to work in natural contacts in your ministry schedule as opportunities for growth. For example, if you want to use a colleague as a resource, make arrangements to visit with him or her at the regularly scheduled pastoral conference. If you are working with a lay leader, tie in your meeting with monthly board activities. When you know you will be busy with special Advent-Christmas or Easter services, do not schedule heavy continuing education experiences, or else choose growth issues
experiences that will help equip you for those events. In short, regular growth experiences as part of your learning plan can be a natural outgrowth of your daily ministry. A carefully worked out timetable will serve as a monitor for this continuous growth. You will find much more satisfaction and much less frustration if you plan realistically and carefully.

**Accountability Structure**

The personal learning plan is based on your taking responsibility for your own professional growth. Based on your ministry needs and the needs of your parish, you identify growth areas, set clear goals, select resources, and establish a timetable. But experience has demonstrated that we also need an accountability structure—other people to support and encourage us toward completion of the learning plan. Otherwise we may be tempted to abandon our goals. Other pressures and demands for our time can stand in the way. When we clearly announce our intentions to other people and ask them to keep us honest, we are more likely to follow through on our plans.

One level of accountability can be our colleagues in ministry. If we work out our learning plan in our local pastoral conference or faculty, it can provide an ongoing area for reporting and feedback. Perhaps one or two colleagues with whom we have a close relationship could help hold us accountable—edit, education, stewardship, or whatever is appropriate. We could ask individual lay leaders to help. They could give more individual attention to our progress. In cases involving a major continuing education endeavor, such as a Doctor of Ministry program, the whole parish through its growth councils may be called to help us accountable. We are much more likely to follow through on our personally designed learning plan if we know that these people are encouraging our progress. They are also more likely to support us with time and financial resources if they are holding us accountable.

A third potential level of accountability is our own family. When we choose personal areas of growth, such as personal devotional life or marriage and family growth, the family stands in the best position to hold us accountable. They live with us day after day and are in a position to encourage us. But even when we select professional areas for growth, our spouse and children can support and help. Accountability may hold the key to successful learning plan implementation. We bear responsibility for ourselves at every level of development, but other supportive elements can help to reach our goals. Mutual accountability leads to better partnership and teamwork.

**Comprehensive Approach**

A comprehensive program of continuing education includes the following eight elements: motivation, need identification, support system, resourcing, coordination, evaluation, development, and follow-up. In the long run, the most important task is to be sure we fulfill the fullness of Christ in our lives, but the program needs to be structured in such a way that we can develop all aspects of the ministry. The program designed by the Committee on Continuing Education at the LCMS included the following components:

- **Motivation**: This is the driving force behind the program. It is essential to have a clear vision of where we are going and why we are going there.
- **Need Identification**: This involves identifying the needs of the congregation and the church at large. The needs are identified through various means, such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
- **Support System**: This component involves establishing support systems that will help members of the congregation achieve their goals. This may include mentoring, coaching, and advocacy.
- **Resourcing**: This component involves providing the necessary resources to support the program. This may include financial resources, training, and other support services.
- **Coordination**: This component involves coordinating the various elements of the program to ensure that they work together effectively.
- **Evaluation**: This component involves evaluating the effectiveness of the program. This may include assessing the needs of the congregation, the success of the program, and the satisfaction of the participants.
- **Development**: This component involves developing the program to meet the changing needs of the congregation. This may include updating the program, adding new elements, and expanding the reach of the program.
- **Follow-Up**: This component involves following up with participants to ensure that they are benefiting from the program and that their needs are being met.

**PART II: CONTINUING EDUCATION PLAN FOR LCMS**

**Background**

Over the past five years an LCMS Continuing Education Committee developed a national coordinated approach to continuing education. The committee worked to develop a systematic approach to continuing education that would be effective in the local church. The LCMS Continuing Education Plan was introduced in the districts of the Synod. The training phase brought contact with districts presented in both the LCMS and the Synod. In the case of pastors, the circuit local conference offers a natural setting for mutual encouragement and accountability. Lay leaders can be helpful to pastors by working with them on a basis of mutual encouragement and accountability.

A second related element of continuing education involves group learning. As parish and church leaders are encouraged to identify their needs, they gain a clearer focus for their growth. The district becomes a center of support for continuing education resources to meet individual needs.

A third element of continuing education involves providing an effective support system for the workers. In the case of pastors, the local circuit conference offers a natural setting for mutual encouragement and accountability. Lay leaders can be helpful to pastors by working with them on a basis of mutual encouragement and accountability. The individual family of the worker likewise can be of great assistance. In the case of teachers and other professional workers, the appropriate conference can serve as support, and lay and family elements would allow for greater accountability.

A fourth element of continuing education involves resourcing the district and synodical levels. The district continuing education group serves as a broker of resources. As the needs are identified, providers are found for the necessary services.

**Societal and Seminaries are likely candidates to develop workshops and seminars. The district itself may devise various resources and programs to meet the needs. The district can take initial training and orientation of the regional and district representatives, the committee conducted an orientation for continuing education leaders from all the LCMS colleges and seminaries. They represent a valuable resource to help meet the needs of the individual districts. A catalogue of offerings from these schools has been developed for use throughout the LCMS.**

**A fifth element of continuing education involves coordination.**

The LCMS continues to develop as an organization to monitor the many types of continuing education opportunities provided with the district from official and outside resources. In this way the resources can be used in the most helpful manner, avoiding unnecessary duplication and filling gaps where they exist. The synodical continuing education leadership also needs to provide coordination on a broader level involving synodical boards and agencies and synodical seminaries and colleges.

A sixth element of continuing education involves credentialing. The synodical leadership has developed standards for offering continuing education units (CEUs). Districts are able to offer CEUs if they adopt synodical standards and report on a yearly basis to synodical leadership. Concern for CEU and graduate credits can help to elevate the importance of continuing education and serve as a positive motivator. Appropriate recognition needs to be given to the workers in the district who complete various continuing education experiences.

A seventh element of continuing education involves providing a financial plan. The financing of continuing education needs to be seen as a priority with both-parish and seminary and the professional workers. Continuing help and encouragement along financial lines will contribute significantly to the participation of workers in continuing education.

An eighth element involves the communicating of standards for continuing education in the Synod. The committee proposed standards that will be based on an agreed-upon definition of effective ministry in measurable terms and some guidelines for an initial shipment of the ministry. The LCMS and synodical standards for ministry and appropriate continuing education growth need to be developed on a synodical basis. The standards will provide guidelines for individual needs and structure an ongoing program of continuing education.

These eight elements—motivation, need identification, support system, resourcing, coordination, credentialing, financing, and standards—combine to generate a comprehensive plan for continuing education in a particular context. The plan takes into account the needs, resources, and characteristics of the congregation, district, and synod. Each unique district program should keep these elements in mind. It needs to be understood that continuing education is valuable and that accountability, evaluation, and reporting procedures are to be in place so that the program may grow and become increasingly effective. District leaders should take a proactive role in resourcing and evaluating the growth of workers. Synodical leadership receives evaluation from workers and parishes and is committed to the effective and efficient resourcing of the continuing education effort of the Synod and the effectiveness of district and local programs. Together the continuing education effort gains momentum.
GROWTH IN EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY (GEM PROJECT)

Under the direction of the new Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support, and through the support of Lutheran Brotherhood, a new project has been launched to implement the synodical vision of continuing education. This GEM (Growth in Excellence in Ministry) project aims to accomplish the following outcomes:

Each Professional Church Worker

- Develops an annual growth plan with congregational leadership for more effective ministry
- Commits 25 hours annually to study/learning activities which accumulate CEUs, academic credits, or other accomplishments of stated goals in a growth plan
- Sets aside the necessary time/money with congregational/district assistance to reach growth goals
- Seeks the necessary support from peers, laity, and family to reach growth goals (using conferences and regularly scheduled events for church professionals)

Each Congregation or Agency

- Participates in and supports the worker's annual growth plan
- Provides the necessary time/money for the worker to reach growth plan goals

Each LCMS District

- Develops an ongoing structure for ministerial growth and support through continuing education structures, by beginning the CEU program in a coordinated, quality manner, and by linking the resources of colleges, seminaries, districts, and local experts to meet the felt needs of workers. This program operated on a regional level in stages will provide quality offerings in the broad areas of congregational growth, effective ministry, and personal wellness.

Second, professional church workers will be supported upon entrance into ministry with emphasis on the first three years of service. As part of a larger plan developed by the Standing Committee on Pastoral Ministry of the Board for Higher Education and under the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support will provide workshops on the transition process for seminary graduates at the six and eighteen month stages of service. These workshops will utilize both seminary personnel and district leadership for a balanced growth experience combining theological study with process components for personal wellness and more effective ministry.

Third, the Commission will encourage a full usage of growth opportunities in circuit and district conferences by continuing to provide the Professional Development Series with basic offerings for pastoral ministry such as preaching, personal spiritual growth, leadership and education. The Commission will also assist districts with broad based tools and resources for promoting growth in all denominational districts, by continuing the Professional Development Series and resource tools for theological discussion in the church.

Each region and area of these three major areas will help the synodical continuing education effort to take a significant next step in reaching the needs of professional church workers in the local church that congregational ministry will be strengthened and grow.

The Synodical Commission

- Stimulates ongoing needs assessment
- Helps to build the district structures
- Assists colleges and seminaries in providing resource people and offerings responsive to the needs of professional workers
- Provides assistance for financing ministerial growth and support
- Coordinates resources on all levels
- Provides help for new graduates and ongoing conference resources
- Assists districts to establish and maintain a workable CEU system

The three major areas of the GEM project are as follows:

First, the focus on the church professional at the local level needs to be strengthened by encouraging each worker to develop an annual growth plan, by firming up district continuing education structures, by beginning the CEU program in a coordinated, quality manner, and by linking the resources of colleges, seminaries, districts, and local experts to meet the felt needs of workers. This program operated on a regional level in stages will provide quality offerings in the broad areas of theological growth, effective ministry, and personal wellness.

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A specific offering of these three major areas will help the synodical continuing education effort to take a significant next step in reaching the needs of professional church workers in the local church that congregational ministry will be strengthened and grow.

MINISTRY WITH FAMILIES IN FLUX: THE CHURCH AND THE DILEMMA OF LIFE

by R. P. Olson and J. H. Leonard, Jr.

This succinct, straightforward, non-technical book is about the changing American family, the wide diversity of family types in our society and congregations, and the mission for Ministry of Higher Education. What are the facts about families in America today? What are the Christian responses to the facts? How do we apply the Scriptures to the multitude of familial scenarios? This book will assist church professionals and lay to answer these vital questions.

The authors believe that the Scriptures lead to the perspective that "Christian churches should do everything they can to hold the covenant of marriage and family and to equip people to marry honorably and permanently." (p. 17.) On the other hand, they also hold the conviction that "the work of our creating, redeeming, reconciling God may be seen in changing families." (p. 18.) These statements inform the tension many of us experience in ministering to the diversity of families today and these statements also reflect a theological perspective informed by the Gospel.

A number of important topics are addressed in this book: the effect of changing employment patterns, the single-parent family, remarriage, marital infidelity, families with religious or value differences, couples without children, gay and lesbian members who have disabilities, diversities of family membership, and the church's response. Are these topics of interest to you? Would you like to know more about two parents bring their college age children with you to a church? Check out this book to find out the answers to these questions! This book, then, may be for you. Further, if you are looking for some of the good, more recent resources concerning these topics, this book may be in the section on Resources and References at the end of each chapter.

The closing statement of the book captures what Olson and Leonard want to do in supporting us in our ministry to families in the church. "We are convinced that, both actually and potentially, the church is the best friend the family ever had." (p. 181.) Their book is how the church can be more family-friendly.

A. Paul Vasconcellos
Professor of Theology Concordia College-Steward

SUMMER 1991

ISSUES


The Whiteheads provide a provocative, optimistic, contemporary description of model for ministry. The theological, sociological, and psychological foundations are well documented. The examples and illustrations are drawn from within the Roman Catholic Church; however, this book is illuminating and practical for all Christian ministers—lay and clergy, male and female. Their authentic concept of partnerships is exhilarating, and the reader benefits from the excellent organization. The content is thoroughly presented, skillfully edited, and is an excellent resource for inversive team development within congregations.

The premise of this book is that Christian life is about relationships or partnerships. The authors postulate that the corporate model utilized by churches must be replaced by a partnership model. The former model fosters and reinforces passive expectations of the laity. Partnership is an authority of free love. Partnershipal leadership advocates Christians from the dangers of growing up. In their view, the Roman Catholic Church has perpetuated a perception among Christians that there is a scarcity of the Power of the Spirit and that the church must cultivate the active effort of the church hierarchy to control the spirit-carrying capability of the Spirit has manufactured scarcity. They argue that if lay people are not permitted to preach, then the Good News will suffer emptiness. If a church church restricts ordained leadership to unmarred men, it guarantees that the Sacraments will be held in short supply. In their judgment, the invention of equality reached its heights with the theological judgment that "there is no salvation outside of the church." The Roman Catholic Church, and others, condemned this as a "cynic view of salvation." The book is an analysis of the church's position and its consequences. The premise of the book is that...

The author digs deeply in sociological studies, research, and evaluations of religious lifestyles, doing so with the determination to convince mainline churches that without serious understanding of the Cultural Left, the Cultural Middle, and the Cultural Right, their churches will continue to shrink in membership. The 90's present the church with the baby boomers who opted either for self-fulfillment or self-denial as a way of life, with various choices in between.

The Cultural Left, committed to lasting relationships and a just and peaceable society, brings along a tolerance in personal moral choices, little tolerance for those critical, and little tolerance of churchy indifference to great social issues. Consequently, mainline churches will not win the Cultural Left with ease, but will find them the most difficult to reach. New Age theologies find their biggest membership within the Cultural Left. To reach such, parish strategies are suggested.

The Cultural Right, suggests the author, is less career-oriented, more concerned to have a satisfying life than to achieve greatness. This group tends to gravitate to Fundamentalist and Evangelical churches, responding to the values highlighted by the leadership within such groups, e.g., family, home, neighborhood, or community, faith, and flag. Sample places popular religion and folk theology within the Cultural Right. Again, suggested strategies for reaching the Cultural Right are identified.

The Cultural Middle seeks to combine the best of both extremes, but in terms of the analyses of Niebuhr's The Social Sources of Denominationalism, the values and religious values distinguish them significantly from the social concerns of the Cultural Left and from the private and social concerns of the Cultural Right. Strategies are again suggested. The final section examines implications for the local parish in attempting to identify the local demographics and to develop staff, programs, and outreach ministries sensitive to the lifestyles at hand.

The research, humor, pathos, and sociological research are commendable. His strategies and observations regarding the mainline churches' failure to reach large populations within cultures are commendable. The reviewer cannot commend the author's theology, but I take seriously his word that mere "tinkering" with programs or the worship service will suddenly fill the churches. In fact, the study would imply that major battles between Evangelicals and Lutherans, "Entertainment worship" versus Historic Lutheran Liturgical worship, and "Community Mega-Churches" and Lutheran Churches, is a struggle to win a very select and narrow segment of the American population, sometimes not from paganism but from one congregation to another, from one "sheep pen" to another, while the "unreached" remain so.

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