

Pastor-Elder Handbook
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Central Illinois District
1985/2012

Herein is presented for your consideration studies we believe will better equip your elders. You will note a three-year program is offered with a three-month summer respite.

The January meeting each year is devoted to orientation. Of course you may revise the order...combine some subjects...or extend to more than one session. We merely seek to assist you in strengthening your elders in rendering them more effective instruments in the hand of the Lord Jesus!

The supplements at the end of this handbook may be used at any time during the three-year program.

Pastor Geo. Beiderwieden
Pastor Gary D. Fortkamp

Digital version with updates prepared by Mary Lou Parchert and Pastor Mark Eddy of Zion Lutheran Church, Taylor Ridge, Ill., 2012.

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Pastor – Elder Handbook

YEAR ONE

SHEPHERDING BY THE BOARD OF ELDERS
(Loving Care for Souls Redeemed by Jesus Christ)

I. THE CHURCH

A. God’s gathered people, the called-out ones.

(1 Peter 2:9—“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”)

B. The Church, God’s people, is in need of constant renewal. That means growth in the Word of God.

1. This is needed because of our spoiled human nature.

2. The process or the 8 steps of renewal are: (taken from Training & Equipping the Saints)

- One: Awareness “What is the problem?”
- Two: Acceptance “Recognizing the problem.”
- Three: Readiness & Commitment to Action “Let’s do something.”
- Four: Diagnosis & Search “Get facts down on paper.”
- Five: Application “Identify some solutions.”
- Six: Measurement “Everything we do needs to be evaluated.”
- Seven: Institutionalized “Make the solution a part of the church program.”
- Eight: Renewal “Growth is taking place. Something is new all over again.”

And that leads us right back again to awareness. We are never finished being renewed!

The cartoon message says: “Be patient with me, God isn’t finished with me yet!” His mercies are new to us each morning (Lam. 3:22-23).

When there is life in the congregation, you will find the process of renewal taking place.

II. THE PLACE OF THE ELDER

A. The Scriptural Basis

- 1. Acts 6:7 “Obedient to the faith.”
- 2. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 “Tried, tested and proven Christians”
- 3. 1 Peter 5:2-4 “Good Examples”
- 4. 2 Peter 1:5-8 “Fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

B. Some observations based on the above passages

- 1. Being an elder (deacon, discipleship committee) is the most important office to which a layman can be elected.
- 2. Serving and functioning as an elder involves responsibility for the spiritual life of fellow members. An elder is promoting and safe-guarding the spiritual life and we-being of the entire congregation. (Ephesians 4:12-16: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ ...”)
- 3. The elder represents the congregation caring for the pastoral office.

III. SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO MAY BE AN ELDER

- A. One who recognizes himself as a redeemed child of God; a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; an “evangelized” man.
- B. One who is regular in attendance at worship and Holy Communion.
- C. One who is involved in regular Bible study.
- D. One who cares about people.
- E. One who is emotionally balanced.
- F. One who can approach people positively.
- G. One who is loyal to the congregation and to the pastor.
- H. One who is often in prayer.
- I. One who has a personal life and language that is above reproach.
- J. One who is teachable and willing to grow.
- K. One who by time and action reveals maturity.

IV. SOME NOTES ON THE DUTIES OF THE ELDER SHEPHERDS

- A. General Example
 - 1. Assist the pastoral office in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation.
 - 2. Deal with complaints and grievances according to Matthew 18.
 - 3. Encourage those negligent in worship attendance, reception of Holy Communion, and in sharing of gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
 - 4. See to it that services are conducted in a worshipful manner without disturbance.
 - 5. Assist in arranging special services, providing for guest speakers, and pulpit assistance.
 - 6. Supervise the ushering staff, acolytes.
- B. From the by-laws of a specific congregation:
 - 1. To subdivide into appropriate committees at the first meeting of the year for effective implementation of all duties.
 - 2. To be responsible for the preaching and teaching of true Christian doctrine within the congregation.
 - 3. To assist the pastor (or pastors) in their spiritual duties, and together with the pastoral office, assume charge of all cases requiring the administration of church discipline, such as negligent use of the means of grace, deficient Christian stewardship (time, talents, and treasure), or nonconformance stipulations set forth in the constitution.
 - 4. To enlist the assistance of the Board of Evangelism in its soul conservation program.
 - 5. To integrate new members into the life and work of the church.
 - 6. To make every effort to effect a reconciliation in cases of strife or dissension.
 - 7. To authorize and provide for sufficient worship services and to maintain proper order and a worshipful atmosphere.
 - 8. To schedule and supervise ushers and greeters.
 - 9. To be responsible for the ministry of music in all worship services, keeping them in compliance with practices of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

10. To serve as the nucleus in providing assistance to the Parish Program Committees for every member visits and all other spiritual projects.
11. To designate one of its members to represent this Board on the Benevolent Committee.
12. To be responsible for the preparation and practice of the Rite of Confirmation. At least two members of the Board of Elders will witness the acceptance of adults into membership.
13. To perform any other duties as the congregation may reasonably require.

C. ANOTHER EXAMPLE (Manual for Church Officers - Concordia Publishing House)

1. The Board of Elders and the Pastor
 - a. With the pastor be concerned with all matters pertaining to the spiritual life of the congregation.
 - b. Individually, and as a board, by word and action, encourage the pastor in his work.
 - c. Regularly pray for the pastor and other spiritual leaders.
 - d. Ready at all times to work with the pastor when difficulties arise.
 - e. Be concerned about the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of the pastor and his family.
2. The Board of Elders and the Congregation
 - a. Be concerned about attendance at worship by all members. (Some method of checking attendance, regular review, regular personal calling.)
 - b. Regularly review the membership's use of the Sacraments. (Are all new babies baptized? Are members communing regularly? Establish a procedure.)
 - c. Watch for opportunities to give commendation to members who give evidence of Christian faithfulness, consecration and growth.
 - d. Watch for opportunities to share joy and sorrow with members. (Birth of a child, anniversary, birthday, hospitalization, death, accident, lingering illness, confirmation, graduation, business problems)
 - e. Be aware of the needs of senior citizens.
 - f. Have a heart for the congregation's youth ministry.
 - g. Be aware of the program of instruction of junior confirmands and adults being prepared for membership.
 - h. Be involved in the assimilation of new members.
 - i. Give new members an orientation packet. (The kits might contain 100th anniversary book of the church, picture directory, annual report, constitution and by-laws, public relation folder, membership record sheet, pastoral letter, calendar, church paper, fall stewardship pledge material, *Portals of Prayer*, Communion registration cards, Dial-a-Devotion card, contribution envelopes.)
3. The Board of Elders and Worship Services
 - a. Review the nature, purpose and conduct of God-pleasing worship.
 - b. Analyze the regular and special worship services of the congregation (worship committee, usher staff, acolytes, altar guild, greeters).
 - c. Encourage family devotions.

d. Lead the way in praising God through special anniversary observances.

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4. The Elder and Church Discipline

- a. Understanding that discipline is needed, it's purpose and it's importance.
- b. Knowing the meaning of Matthew 18:15-16.

V. FIVE SIGNS OF APPROACHING SPIRITUAL DELINQUENCY OR NEEDING SPECIAL CARE.

- A. The individual does not worship every Sunday by deliberate choice.
- B. The individual does not commune every time Holy Communion is offered (at least once a month). The more frequently a person communes, the less apt that person is to become delinquent.
- C. The individual is not involved in any kind of Christian Bible study. God's Word is the means for growth and health in faith.
- D. The individual is not involved in any kind of Christian fellowship or service.
Illustration: Have you noticed how the cult groups prey on the loners by assuring them that somebody cares?.
- E. The individual comes from a divided home.

VI. THE ELDERS' DEVOTIONAL LIFE – "The Elder is a man out in front."

- A. The Word of God
- B. Prayer
- C. Faithful worship
- D. Reception of Holy Communion
- E. Witnessing
- F. Giving of time, talent and treasure

VII. FOUR STEPS IN HANDLING OBJECTIONS

- A. Determine what the real objection is.
- B. Accept the objection. Please note that accept does not mean to agree. Just see the objection as being real to the person who makes it. The objection is not a point to be argued. Accept means to indicate that you are keeping the lines of communication open.
- C. Reassert the subject. That means steer the conversation back to the central point - the individual's relationship with God.
- D. Reaffirm the Gospel. THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY POWER THAT CAN AFFECT THE CHANGE OF HEART AND LIFE OF A PERSON.
(Example: "I'll straighten my life out first, then I will come to church,"
Response: "You know there are a lot of people who think that, but that is like saying that I'm sick, so I will wait until I get well and then I'll go see the doctor.")

That's our problem, you see. Only God can straighten out our lives so that they are really good for us and pleasing to Him. That's why God sent His Son Jesus Christ for us, to make all the bent things in our lives straight. I'd like to tell you how He did that."

--E. Gerike

THE IMPERATIVE OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

I. Our Savior JESUS asks it. (This is more than enough reason!)

Luke 10:16: "He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me."

Luke 11:28: "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."

Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some ..."

John 8:47: "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

1 Corinthians 1:1, 2; Galatians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1

The Lord authorized the apostles to establish congregations which held public worship services.

II. The Nature of Christianity demands it.

A man can be respectable without going to church; he cannot be Christian.

A Christian is a believer in Jesus Christ.

Such faith begins upon the hearing of God's Word.

(Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing.")

Such faith is maintained only as the Word is heard.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13: "The Word of God effectively works in you who believe.") (1 Peter 1:5; Romans 1:16)

III. Communing is commanded...

Luke 22:19b "Do this!"

Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

IV. We are to influence others Christ-ward.

Romans 14:7-8: "For none of us lives to himself ..."

Matthew 5:13, 14, 16: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world. ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

(especially parents...adults...)

+++++

"I don't need that building!"

But you do need Christ! And where else do you get Christ?

Do those who won't spoon feed...prepare for themselves???

Excuses are marks of impenitence,

(Weather, sickness, faults of church, pastor, etc. ... hurt feelings)

There are OTHER churches!

We get to many other things.

The joy in attending: Reassurance of forgiveness!!

--G. Beiderwieden

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF BACKSLIDING?

If people will not listen to God's Word, they certainly will not obey His commandments. Again, this thought must be brought out. Once a Christian's faith is gone, that is completely gone, he cannot repent again and be saved.

“For how can those who fall away be brought back to repent again? They were once in God's light. They tasted heaven's gift and received their share of the Holy Spirit. They knew from experience that God's Word is good, and they had felt the powers of the coming age. And then they fell away! It is impossible to bring them back to repent again, because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross once more and exposing Him to public shame.” (Hebrews 6:4-6, Today's English Version)

“For there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us.” (Hebrews 10:26, TEV)

Furthermore, our Lord promises all men that punishment of sin is certain to follow. “If we had forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange god, would not God discover this? For He knows the secrets of the heart.” (Psalm 44:20-21, RSV)

We, as elders of this congregation, must always accept our responsibilities, and may God not think of our congregation as being lukewarm. A congregation that is pleased with its beautiful facilities, large budget, but ignorant of its real need—the work of God—is in trouble. May we see our needs clearly and recognize that God chastens those He loves. We must repent and be quick to open the door when Christ knocks. As elders, it is our responsibility to encourage an open-door policy in the hearts of our people.

--H. Kaeding

HOW TO MINISTER TO INACTIVE MEMBERS

How can we minister to inactive church members? By devising new plans, programs, procedures, methods, and devices? The problem may lie in our attitudes.

Why do we want the inactive to become active again? To build up our sagging church attendance? To help pay our mounting debts? To lighten the load of our church work? To save face?

How bad off is the inactive one? Away from God's Word and the Sacrament, he has cut himself off from the Holy Spirit's influence. Without God's resources the spiritual delinquent is powerless like a turned off television set. No sound or picture, only a box with a black glass front! He's a sitting duck for the devil's pot shots. He's losing his hold on Christ. He's growing spiritually cold. Do we see him as an emergency case, needing help badly, and needing it right now?

Non-involvement has hit the church too. We excuse our lack of personal concern with “he's only hurting himself.” Is he? His inactivity affects his children who reason that if Dad doesn't need the church, neither do they. He infects the next generation...the generation in which your children live. He spreads paralysis through the congregation. Members become depressed and lose heart. People in the community draw the inevitable conclusion, “If that's all church members think of their church, why should I become interested?”

We must recognize the inactive person as a menace, not only to himself, but to his children, to the rest of the congregation and community.

WHY MEMBERS “FALL AWAY”

Rank the following in the order of importance as influences that lead members to become inactive or delinquent. (1 for most important, 12 for least)

- _____ A. Failure on the part of parents to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
- _____ B. Non-Christian friends draw them away.
- _____ C. Influence of secular teachings like evolution.
- _____ D. Failure on the part of the church to care enough about them to bring them to the point where they feel they really belong.
- _____ E. Inadequate training in Christian doctrine.
- _____ F. Refusal of the church to let young and new members really participate in the church.
- _____ G. Move away where there is no pressure from parents or family to be active in church.
- _____ H. Quarrels or misunderstandings with members.
- _____ I. The feeling that God has let them down at some point in their lives.
- _____ J. Too much pressure from the church to conform to traditions or customs.
- _____ K. Failure on the part of the church to show interest except when it needs more money.
- _____ L. Disagreement or disappointment with the Pastor.

--G. Beiderwieden

WHAT CAUSES GOD’S PEOPLE TO FALL AWAY FROM HIS CHURCH?

The basic answer to this question is sin, but what is sin? Is it lust, covetousness, or false witness? The answer is no. We are sin. God tells us the very apparatus we use to reason with is faulty. Our mental processes are polluted, so that anything that comes out of us as natural men is opposed to God and harms our neighbor. This is sin. There is no good thing in natural man. “For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” (Gen. 8:21)

We have delinquent members because these people have allowed people and things to steal away their crown of righteousness. Our faltering brethren have exchanged - or are in the process of exchanging - their precious eternal life for worthless earthly things.

As you walk into the homes of your delinquent members. Look around and you will very often find a clue as to why they have dropped away.

1. Have they made their belly their god? “They are going to end up in hell, for their god is their bodily desires, they are proud of what they should be ashamed of, and they think only of things that belong to this world.” (Philippians 3:19, TEV) We have been in homes that have had candy boxes and empty wrappers all over; in other homes there are beer cans, soda bottles, and potato chip wrappers located everywhere. Does the man act and talk tough, yet his physical appearance indicates that there is an excessive consumption of food and alcohol.

Chances are that their appetites rule their lives and they have forgotten that gluttony always destroys faith.

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2. Have they set their affection on things of this earth? This condition is often exposed by the fact that their home is furnished beautifully; their clothing is exquisite, and the man has two jobs. The wife is very concerned about their money problems. Both people confess that they should worship, but they are too busy paying off their debts.
3. Do they love the praises of men more than the praises of God? For example, they are so proud of their children that they spend all of their energy on externals such as dancing schools, charm school, sports, civic activities, cheerleading. People have been known to say, "I can't come to church; I have to canvas for the Heart Fund, or I must attend a Boy Scout meeting" etc.
4. Are they people who stubbornly cling to their pet complaints and prejudices so that they cannot or will not listen to another person? These backsliders in their hearts are filled with their own ways. God's ways have absolutely no influence upon them.
5. Are they people who have forgotten the Lord? These will say, as they try to excuse themselves, that they are doing the best that they can; that they are in reality pretty good people. They are trusting in their own righteousness—a fatal error. This is an indication of how far they have fallen away from God. They have been taught: "We are justified by faith alone."
6. Have they committed a serious crime or sin? Many times a guilty conscience can cause the love for God to die out.
7. In some cases the art of living has snuffed out their faith. The cares of this world, the lust for other things, and the deception of riches have overwhelmed them. Marital, financial problems, as well as run-ins with the authorities, cause people to slip away from their God.
8. Then there is bitterness. Bitterness can cause much trouble. One of the signs of bitterness is the compulsion to compare themselves with others.

These are just 8 illustrations. There are many more causes for backsliding and therefore many more indications. Often we will sense that there are combinations of these very 8 symptoms. In any event, don't be afraid to use what you sense, but very carefully and in an evangelical manner. In like manner, be ready to drop this approach instantly if it turns out that your assessment was wrong. We are to be and talk in a gentle manner, because someday we may be guilty of the same fault. "My brothers, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gentle way. And keep an eye on yourself, so that you will not be tempted, too." (Galatians 6:1, TEV)

In essence, those Christians who are slipping away are envious of the ungodly. The ungodly seem to prosper. There doesn't seem to be any pain or suffering in their lives. These unbelievers are physically healthy and attractive. It seems that they escape the troubles and torments ordinary men have to endure. The ungodly are proud and rich. This does not appear to be fair to the weakened, faithful followers of God. Our people who are in the process of slipping away begin to feel that either God does not know or care about His people. As a result, they are convinced that obeying Christ is all for nothing. It is our job to point out to our weakened people clearly what the end of the ungodly would really be; that unbelievers will not escape God's wrath. Our Lord knows people, and He knew the only medicine that will cure these sick people is His death and resurrection. Therefore, we must be prepared to point out

their faults and comfort them with the forgiveness Christ offers. This is the only way to win them back.

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What should be our attitude in trying to restore him? We tell him, “You ought to come back to church.” He agrees and promises to come, but never does. We have overstressed church attendance as if the physical act of propelling the body in and out of the sanctuary will magically expand spiritual perception and powers.

Tell him rather that he has missed a joyful encounter with God; a visit with a dear friend, Jesus. Tell him you left the church happy with God’s blessings. Share how you enjoyed the stimulation of Christian fellowship. If coming together in worship were not important, we could broadcast our services or send our mimeographed sermons.

Often worship is too formal and rigid. We lock into familiar liturgies and block our love. We worship for years in the same church with people we never get to know. No wonder we are not disturbed when such “strangers” drop out of church. There has never been a bond of love and concern between us.

Some parishes use the “we missed you at church” approach. That is about as warm as an office memo requesting additional paper clips. A congregation should be a close-knit fellowship, a family in which we share tears and laughter and are genuinely interested in each other; bearing, caring, and sharing burdens. Shepherd sheep before they lose their way.

It’s easy to maintain fellowship with friends, relatives, and cronies. But it’s equally easy to ignore the odd person, the reticent one, the “stranger” whom we don’t know. Before long, such may feel unwanted and drop away because we’ve excluded them from the circle of our friendship and activity. Include everyone in your activities because Christ invites everyone to His banquet table. Check how many inactive members had isolated themselves or had been excluded from the warm personal fellowship of the other members before they became inactive.

I suggest that we need to get away from the cold, legalistic approach of trying to “get people back into the church” and instead by our love and concern try to “get them back to their Savior.”

Rev. O. J. Kinkerman

BAPTISM

Expectant mother sent motherhood prayers.

Dare Baptism be refused?

Deny blessings to child? (1 Peter 3:21)

Will parents follow up with teaching? (Matthew 28:19, 20)

Sponsors... God-parents

Church custom—It is not commanded in Scripture.

Choose Lutherans if possible.

Christian

1. Witness

2. Promise to assist in Christian training. Do not just choose your next of kin.

3. Promise to pray for the child.

Custom: 2 or 3 sponsors chosen (Matthew 18:16)

May omit... Needed until child is old enough to answer for self

Answers: play-by-play of what the Spirit is doing!

Proxy sponsors...

Selection of name...

Bible name

Sensible

Pastor seeks to arrange Baptism, in hospital... Lord's Command (Matthew 28:19) 2 or 3 weeks after delivery (on non-communion Sunday if possible)

Sunday of Baptism

Arrive ten minutes before service begins

Introduce to usher at arrival: parents & sponsors

Place of seating

Unusual number of relations—call church office ahead

Amplification for promises needed

Who holds the baby?

Pastor holds for baptizing

Baptismal napkin

Baby should be taken to nursery afterwards if he/she disturbs.

Baptism in the worship service (1 Peter 3:21)

A miracle! (Acts 2:38-39)

Emphasize importance (early Christians: "birth" date!)

May be Wednesday evening but also can be done privately.

Emergency

Any fear that the child may not live

Christian nurse baptizing the infant is valid

Any Christian... how? [See the *Small Catechism* or the back of a hymnal.]

Any Christian baptism is valid... need not be repeated, if sure. (Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit... with water in any amount... also immersion.)

Parental authority

One parent's permission is sufficient.

Non-member's child baptized? (Yes, if parent's permission... follow-up is needed)

Any special clothing?

Adult baptism? In emergency... ordinarily after instruction (Acts 8:36-38) -G. Beiderwieden

THE CHRISTIAN WEDDING
WHOM SHALL A CHRISTIAN PASTOR MARRY?

I. Christians

The church is a beautiful site for a wedding!!! It is an American custom to be wed in the Church.

- A. The ceremony implies God's blessings on the couple.
- B. The church and the pastor are not to be a party to any thing that is not God-pleasing!
- C. Counseling before the wedding
 - 1. Member marrying a non-Christian—counsel before wedding by asking them to sit in on a Bible inventory. If they agree, marry them.
 - 2. Both non-Christians—counsel before marrying by asking them to sit in on a Bible inventory—if they are not interested in Jesus—don't marry.

II. Divorced

Marriage is to be a life-long commitment.

- A. Only divorce for infidelity (Matt. 19:9; Matt. 5:32) (Innocent, sinned-against may remarry; guilty may not as long as reconciliation is possible.)
- B. Only divorce for desertion (1 Cor. 7:15)

III. Church Wedding

A church wedding is different from one in the home, office of a Justice of the Peace, or Holiday Inn.

Guidelines for a church wedding:

- A. Rehearsal (that prayers be undistracted)
- B. All music should be Christian oriented on Jesus (Not allowed: wedding march, "We've only just begun," etc.)
- C. Photographer restricted during ceremony.
- D. Dress modestly for bridal party and guests.
- E. Meditation (Jesus is in this set-up!)

IV. Marriage Plans

- A. Reception in the all-purpose room (The party will save the cost of renting a public place; ladies of the congregation will be able and willing to plan and execute. The fringe benefits will be a Christ-like reception without a drunken brawl.)
- B. Choice of Pastor
- C. Fees

-G. Beiderwieden

THE PASTOR'S FAMILY

The purpose of this study is to better understand the Pastor's family and not to be critical. Its purpose is to help the Pastor and elders to have honest dialog in this area.

- I. What does Romans 12:5 teach us about every believer?
- II. What does Romans 12:9-10 say about our relationship with members?
With the Pastor and his family?
- III. Is the pastor and his family part of the Body? Or are they accepted but set apart?
 - A. Though the Pastor is Called of God (Acts 20:28) does this mean that he and his family should be set apart or singled out from other members?
 - B. How do members possibly give the Pastor's family the feeling that they are not one with the local fellowship?
- IV. Is it possible for one to be outwardly accepted and liked in the church and yet not accepted in the community as the life-long residents are?
 - A. Can any new person in the community experience this problem?
 - B. One newcomer said after going to a church for a number of months that the people were friendly and he felt welcome in the church but not in their homes and social lives. What did he mean by this comment?
 - C. Could this also be a reason that the Pastor's family may not feel like they are really accepted?
- V. With divorce on the rise among the clergy, it seems that the Pastor's family needs to be ministered to and accepted by the rest of the body. Following are feelings expressed by various members of a pastor's family. These feelings may not be true of your pastor's family. You may not even agree with them, but nevertheless, they are legitimate feelings of individuals and must be considered if we are going to minister to them in order to make them feel accepted and emotionally healthy. Caring will better enable the pastor to work more efficiently. It will also show the community that "we love one another."

FEELINGS: (Discuss)

1. Sometimes I feel that I must have the plague because when we go to a potluck dinner and are seated first, others do not come and join us unless there are no other places left to sit. Also when we attend certain functions and are looking for a place to sit, members tend not to invite us to sit with them.
2. Sometimes I would like to be invited to play cards, games, but I feel members are hesitant about inviting us to their home to do this.

3. If I invite a member's family to my home for a social evening, I feel other members will get upset; therefore, I feel I cannot enjoy a social life like other members.
4. I enjoy going square dancing, but I feel the members would condemn my husband and me if we did, even though it is not wrong. I feel that members are controlling my life and not the Word of God.
5. My husband puts so much time in at church, I feel like he doesn't have time for his family. I think many members take so much of his time that he doesn't have time to spend with me. I feel that the pastor should be urged by the elders and the church to take time away from the job each week to spend with his family. I feel that the church should not let the pastor neglect his family.
6. I feel the church does not take time to study the Pastor's financial needs. I feel they assume he lives on faith and provides for his family that way when everyone else needs an adequate salary to live on.
7. I feel many congregations place the pastor's family into an unrealistic mold. They expect the wife to be involved in various organizations and the children to be involved instead of giving them a choice like the rest of the members have. Sometimes I feel like I am being watched by the KGB or the FBI.
8. Feelings of your pastor and family—not accusations; share if you want.

These are only a few of the feelings expressed by various people. After discussing them, take time to make a list of things you could do to help remove these negative feelings.

Some suggestions:

- I. Pray—put the Pastor and his family on your prayer list.
- II. Take time to know them, for they are people who have dreams, hurts, joys. Let them share these things with you.
- III. Squelch negative comments about your Shepherd and family. If someone has a grievance, urge them to go and talk it out.

Other:

-Gary D. Fortkamp

PRAYER

The fruit of Christ's death...

Why we should pray...

The Lord asks it of us. Psalm 50:15

He promises to answer us. Matthew 7:7-8

We have needs:

Spiritual Physical Social Economic

To whom we should pray...

Only to the true God Matthew 4:10

Not to the saints Isaiah 63:16

How we are to pray...

In Jesus' name John 16:23b

Only Christians can... [Hebrews 11:6]

For whom we should pray...

Ourselves, the lost, loved ones, enemies [1 Timothy 2:1]

Not for the dead Hebrews 9:27

When we should pray...

Constantly 1 Thessalonians 5:17

In the day of trouble Psalm 50:15

Morning, evening, mealtime

The Best Prayer...

The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:9ff

Does God answer all proper prayers?

Matthew 7:7-8 John 15:7

Why then some of our prayers seem unanswered...

God answers in His time... John 2:4

God answers in His way... 2 Corinthians 12:9

An aid to concentration:

(Parts of a Proper Prayer)
A-doration
C-onfession
T-hanksgiving
S-upplication

WHAT'S WITH COMMUNION?

In much of Protestantism: unimportant
Seldom celebrated.

The Lord's estimate: Luke 22:19b "This DO"
The Apostle's estimate: 1 Corinthians 11:24b-26
The Early Church practice: Acts 2:42
The sacred elements: I Corinthians 10:16

Why commune???

A Christian is indebted...God's Son gave His LIFE!
What He asks...Christians do...out of gratitude
He says...of Holy Communion: "This do!"

Christians are hereby reassured that Christ paid their Sin Bill.
They receive the very elements He used to pay.
"Paid" is underlined!

If then...they do not commune...they say
"I do not believe Him." (what He says He gives)
or
"I do not recognize my sin." (no need of forgiveness assurance)
or
"His wish is of no concern to me."

How to commune...

Self examination is necessary (1 Corinthians 11:27-29)
(note the danger in verse 29)

1. Am I hungry for what this Meal offers: the forgiveness?
(Am I sorry for my sin?)
2. Do I trust the Cook: the Lord Jesus who says He gives His Body and Blood?
(Do I believe the Real Presence of Body & Blood?)
3. Am I anxious...with God's help...to improve my conduct?

What's Communing?

He adds Body to bread...when we eat; Blood to wine...when we drink.
The bread is not changed into His body...nor the wine into His blood...
as Roman Catholicism teaches. Matthew 26:26-29

What is the Fruit of Communing?

Not a completing of the sin-payment Hebrews 10:14-18
(Roman Catholicism)
Not just a reminder, picture Luke 22:19
(Is a reminder, but more!)
Re-assurance of forgiveness
Not the only time we are forgiven!

New strength for holy living 2 Corinthians 5:15, 17

How frequently to commune?

The Lord's command is "This DO!" (Luke 22:19)

The Early Church "continued steadfastly in the ... "breaking of bread"
Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7

Questions....

May those instructed in Holy Communion commune before joining?
(Confirmation = public confession: I believe what I've been taught.)

Why are some members forbidden Holy Communion?
(They are living in unrepented sin. Cf. #3 of Self-examination)

Shall I commune when visiting the Methodist Church with family?
(Only bread and grape juice are offered!)

-G. Beiderwieden

HOW IS THE KINGDOM TO BE SUPPORTED??

I. The Lord might have done all the Supporting Himself.

Chapels

Pastors

cf. State churches

He felt it would be better if we were involved.

“My church” instead of “why don’t they?”

Barometer of faith (Matthew 6:21)

II. Why?

Not to buy heaven

(Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9)

In response to Jesus ... gratitude

(2 Cor. 8:8-9; Old Testament: Exodus 23:15-16; Exodus 34:20;

Deut.16: 16-17)

To get the Good News to others ...

(Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)

III. How?

Proportionately (Deuteronomy 16:17; Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:12)

Regularly (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Unostentatiously (Matthew 6:3-4)

Cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7; Exodus 25:2; 1 Chronicles 29:9)

IV. Principles a church should seek to meet:

A. The Christians support out of gratitude to Jesus and to share Jesus with the world.

B. We give to the Lord Jesus. (We can quarrel with “the church” but not with Him.)

C. We do not wish to disappoint God (fear of the Lord).

1. Therefore no money-making schemes such as bazaars, ticket sales, dues.

2. Therefore no plate passed (reduces pressure and saves face)

No pledge of \$ amount

Just offering box

Quarterly statement to contributor

3. Aim at tithe plus (Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:22; Leviticus 27:30-32; Matthew 23:23; Luke 12:48)

V. Blessing Promised

(Malachi 3:8-12; Proverbs 11:25; Proverbs 3:9-10; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6)

VI. Why some don’t tithe

Won’t trust God ... believe ten tenths go farther than nine tenths...

Have never tasted the joy!

Give to “church” instead of to Jesus.

Pastor – Elder Handbook

YEAR TWO

AN ELDER PROGRAM

I. THE CALLING ELDER

- A. Divide elders and ushers into calling elders and ushers.
 - 1. All elders are expected to visit.
 - 2. More men given an assignment.
- B. Consecrate elders (calling) in the first worship service of the new year.
- C. Ask calling elder at close of one-year term if he would be willing to serve another year.

II. ORIENTATION

- A. January meeting
- B. Elders assigned geographical area
- C. Informational materials

III. MEETINGS

- A. Meet first Monday each month at 6:30 p.m.
- B. Conduct a 45 minute to one hour business meeting
 - 1. Study
 - 2. Improve the worship
 - 3. Members transferred
 - 4. Discipline decisions
 - 5. Bible study expansion
 - 6. Assignment of visits
- C. Time left to make calls.

IV. CALLING

- A. Elder is under the Shepherd.
- B. Get acquainted with members in his district.
- C. Pray for them by name each week.
- D. Church office should notify the elder when a member is hospitalized. Then visit, pray with, etc.
- E. Elder is encouraged to phone, write notes, and visit worship absentees.
- F. Elders complete a report on each visit made.
- G. Visit reports should be given to the pastor by the morning of the meeting.
- H. Record the number of calls made by each elder on blackboard before each meeting.

V. DISCIPLINE

- A. Keep Sunday by Sunday record of worship attendance.
- B. Mail the bulletin to absentees.
- C. Elders contact when three or four Sundays are missed.
- D. If there is no response to the elder's contact, then the elder should visit.
- E. If there is no response to the elder's visit, then he should take another elder along.
- F. If there is no response to two elders, take the Pastor.
- G. If there is still no improvement, mail a two-month absentee letter.
- H. If there is no definite improvement after two months, invite them to an elder's meeting.
- I. If no response is shown, then remove from membership and place on the prospect list and mailing. Notify them of removal.

WHO SHOULD RECEIVE CHRISTIAN BURIAL?

Am I entitled to a military funeral, not having been in the service?
Will the Masonic Lodge grant me their burial ritual?

The burial service is Christian...

Presumes evidence of dependence upon Christ (John 3:16, 36; Acts 4:12)

In the sermon for one known to have been Christ-indifferent, or one the preacher did not know...

Shall the preacher:

Ignore death? Like a patriotic message on December 25th?

Shall he say the departed went to hell??

Shall the preacher give lying comfort??

The prayers...imply a Christian has died.

The Internment readings...imply a Christian is being buried.

A Pastor is not a funeral director...

He conducts Christian rites (baptism, marriage, burial) as representative of the family of Christians.

Any who asks him to bury their unbelieving loved one,
or one he has never met,

or one of whom he has no knowledge of their Jesus-relation...

asks the Pastor to compromise his Jesus-loyalty, lie, play the hypocrite, and contradict his preaching that Jesus is the only way.

The practical application...

A. Members of the congregation claim dependence upon Jesus...are therefore given Christian burial. (Note the importance of church discipline!)

B. Anyone who is visited, and professes Jesus as sin-payment, is given Christian burial.

Customs and Questions

Are better Christians buried in church, lesser ones in the funeral home?

Music for church funerals should be church music.

Purpose of a Christian funeral: God-glorifying, comfort, not much weeping! (Pray with the family before the service; then close the casket before the service.)

How about donating your body to science? Cremation?

Would a suicide be given a Christian burial?

Elders might serve as pall bearers.

What's a Memorial Wreath... Funeral Pall?

Ladies serving a funeral dinner for the family demonstrates Christian love.

HEAVEN ONLY BY JESUS: proclaimed by word and practice!!!

-G. Beiderwieden / M.E.

MINISTERING TO THE SHUT-INS

Why do we have an ever increasing number of shut-ins in our day?

Elderly: 1900: 1 out of 25 were over 65
1980: 1 out of 9 was over 65
2010: 1 out of 8 was over 65

When the baby boom is retired: 1 out of 6 may be over 65

The 2010 census found 40.3 million U.S. residents over the age of 65, about the same as the number of children under 10 years old (40.5 million). Despite great medical advances, some young and old are not well enough to attend regular church services.

Who are they? Where are they?

Carefully check the list of those not attending communion services.

Faithfully follow up on the condition of those released from the hospital.

Screen the mailing list for those residing in nursing homes.

Do not forget severely handicapped or retarded young people.

Train the elders and others to report shut-ins in their area.

Our challenge is to provide an ongoing regular ministry of Word and Sacrament to the shut-ins.

Suggestion as to how to go about ministering to the shut-ins.

Schedule a special short service once a month for those still mobile enough to come to church or the parish hall for communion.

Arrange for regular distribution of recordings of divine services and devotional materials.

Regular, monthly, scheduled pastoral visits with communion to the shut-ins confined in private homes or nursing homes.

Our goal: being real helpers of joy to them

(2 Corinthians 1:14, 24)

The joy of salvation in Christ

(Psalm 51:12; Luke 2:29f;

1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 5:1-2)

Even joy in the divine comfort midst suffering afflictions

(Romans 5:3; Romans 8:28, 28;

2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Peter 1:5-6;

Philippians 3:20)

The joy of the blessed hope of heaven

(1 Peter 1:3-4, John 11:25-26;

John 14:1-2)

The afflicted experiencing the joy of witnessing

JOB, STEPHEN, PAUL, PETER

Their wheelchair or bed of affliction becoming an effective pulpit and missionary arm in the community.

Their ongoing appreciation and witnessing will bring real joy to the Pastor and the congregation.

A few suggestions of vital topics for monthly devotions with shut-ins.

Genuine Christmas faith—peace, joy, and hope
New Year: What amazing grace—another new start
The seven blessed words of Jesus on the cross
Easter joy: perfect pardon, sufficient comfort, enduring hope and ample power for
Christian living

On Christ's ascension we base our ascension
Our ascended Lord's ongoing activity for us as Priest, King, and Prophet
You, an ongoing Pentecost miracle
The blessed ministration of the holy angels

Joyfully looking for Christ's return
Thanksgiving for God's faithfulness in the past, present, and future
Heaven is my home—the best is yet to come
Why me? Affliction to exercise our faith (Hebrews 12:11ff; James 1:2ff; 1 Peter 1:3ff;
Acts 14:22)

The best thing going: The Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints—what
comfort and inspiration!

Glorifying God even in tribulations like Paul (Romans 5:3ff; Romans 8:18, 28ff;
2 Corinthians 12:8ff; Philippians 1:12)

Facing sickness and death: In John 11 – Mary, Martha, Lazarus
In Luke 2 – Simeon
In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 – Paul

God's wise and loving providential care:
Joseph (Genesis 37; 39-41; 50:20)
David (1 Samuel 17-24)
Ruth
Esther
Job (Job 1-2; 42)

Many hymns make for comforting devotions such as:

Rock of Ages
What A Friend We Have In Jesus
What God Ordains Is Always Good
Amazing Grace
I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Come Ye Disconsolate
I'm But A Stranger Here

-Martin H. Rothe / M.E.

WHAT ABOUT FELLOWSHIP IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Fellowship in the Lord's Supper is the basis for the practice of "close" or "closed communion." (The phrases "close communion" and "closed communion" refer to one and the same practice). This pamphlet will help you appreciate, understand and explain to others the practice of close communion.

What does God teach in His Word?

"Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (cf. Matt. 26:26-28; see also Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-29).

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayer" (Acts 2:42).

"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:26-29).

What does the Lutheran church believe about the Lord's Supper?

The Lutheran church believes, teaches and confesses that the Lord's Supper is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink. We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received into the mouths of all who commune. Those who believe the promise "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. This promise, along with the bodily eating and drinking, is the main thing in the Sacrament.

The Lutheran church rejects and condemns incorrect understandings of the Lord's Supper, such as the view that the sacrifice of the Mass delivers man from his sins, or that the substance of the consecrated bread and wine is actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. We also reject and condemn the view that in the Lord's Supper the true body and blood of Christ is not received by the mouth of the communicants, under the bread and wine, but is received only spiritually in the heart by faith, or that the bread and wine are only symbols of the far-distant body and blood of our Lord.

How is the Lord's Supper an expression of church fellowship?

While the Lord's Supper is always a personal matter, it is never a private matter. That is an important truth that is often overlooked. Those who commune at the same altar are thereby declaring publically that they are united in the doctrine of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). Therefore fellowship in the Supper is church fellowship. This is what is taught by Holy Scripture in 1 Cor. 10 and 11. Here is how one of our church's teachers explained this truth.

"As there is but one bread, one loaf, from which we eat, so we who are eating of this loaf are one body. The eating of one and the same loaf of bread unifies us to one body.

Our participation in the Lord's Supper is a public profession on our part that we are not only in fellowship with Christ, but that we also are in fellowship with those with whom we commune at the Lord's Table. We all eat the same bread, the body of Christ. Through that act we indicate that we belong together. All of us Christians who in the Lord's Supper eat the body of Christ and drink His blood present ourselves as one spiritual family. What we eat and drink together, Christ's body and blood, ties us together more closely than the bonds of blood. We declare ourselves to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Upon this Bible passage do we base the saying, 'Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship.'

"This passage in Corinthians strikes a crushing blow at unionism. To admit those who believe differently to our Communion, and so to our church fellowship, is a contradiction in itself. For those who approach the same altar together profess to be one—one in all points of Christian doctrine and practice—while in reality they disagree. It would be shameful hypocrisy on our part if we would have those who actually profess a different faith than we do join us at the Lord's Altar" (Stoeckhardt, *1 Corinthians*, p. 60-61).

Another teacher of our church had this to say about why the Lord's Supper is an expression of church fellowship:

"The Holy Supper is one of the marks, one of the banners of the church, one of the seals of the church's doctrine and faith (Rom. 4:11; see 1 Cor. 10:21; Ex. 12:48). In whichever church one receives the Holy Supper, one is confessing that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more inward, brotherly fellowship than that into which one enters with those in whose fellowship he receives the holy Supper. ... Even one who confesses the Real Presence cannot ordinarily, except in the case of death, be admitted if he is and wants to remain, not a member of our orthodox church, but rather a Roman Catholic, Reformed, so-called Evangelical or Unionist, Methodist, Baptist, in short, a member of an erring fellowship. For the Sacrament, as it is a seal of faith, is also the banner of the fellowship in which it is administered" (Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, p. 110-111, 149).

What is the Lutheran church's motive for practicing close communion?

Our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations offers the following helpful explanation of why we practice close communion:

"Close communion seeks to prevent a profession of confessional unity in faith where there is, in fact, disunity and disagreement. It would be neither faithful to the Scriptural requirements for admission to Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:27ff; cf. 10:16-17) nor helpful to fallen humanity if the Christian Church welcomes to its altars those who deny or question clear Scriptural teachings.

"The reasons for the practice of close Communion are often misunderstood by Christians who have been accustomed to an 'open Communion' policy. In a tract titled, *Why Close Communion?* the rationale for the practice of close communion is explained in this way:

"So it is not that a Lutheran congregation wants to bar fellow-saints from the blessings of the Eucharist when they practice Close Communion. It is not that they want to be separatistic, or set themselves up as judges of other men. The practice of Close Communion is prompted by love and is born of the heartfelt conviction, on the basis of Scripture alone, that we must follow Christ's command. This means refusing the Lord's Supper to those whose belief is not known to us. It is not showing love to allow a person to do something harmful, even though he may think it is for his own good. It also means if they are members of a Christian body which departs from the full truth of the Scripture in some of its doctrines, that we must not minimize the evil of this false teaching by opening our fellowship to any and all Christians who err in the faith' [Deffner, *Why Close Communion?*, p. 14].

“In keeping with the principle that the celebration and reception of the Lord’s Supper is a confession of the unity of faith, while at the same time recognizing that there will be instances when sensitive pastoral care needs to be exercised, the Synod has established an official practice requiring, ‘that pastors and congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those synods that are now in fellowship with us. By following this practice whereby only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a church body with which the Synod is in altar and pulpit fellowship are ordinarily communed, pastors and congregations preserve the integrity of their witness to the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in the Scriptures and confessed in the Lutheran confessional writings.’”

“The Office of the Keys is less than faithfully exercised when admission to the sacrament is granted to all who come to the altar regardless of their faith and congregational and/or denominational affiliation. The practice of open Communion renders it difficult, if not impossible, for church discipline to be exercised in a way that honors the ministrations being carried out by those to whom the responsibility of spiritual care for a member of God’s flock has been entrusted” (Heb. 13:17; cf. John 20:22-23; Acts 20:27-28; 1 Cor. 4:1-2. *Theology and Practice of the Lord’s Supper*, pp. 21-23).

Conclusion

On the basis of God’s Holy Word, our Lutheran church continues to practice the ancient, Biblical and confessional practice of close communion as an opportunity to give joyful witness to our unity in the true faith. We practice close communion with the belief that this is what the Lord would have us do as we faithfully administer His body and blood in His holy Sacrament.

Close communion is not a practice unique to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is also practiced by the majority of Christians in the world who are members of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions.

Hopefully, this brief explanation will help you, or someone else, understand that our love for our Lord and His Sacrament, and our love for the individual, is the reason why we practice close communion.

A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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HANDLING OBJECTIONS

WHAT ARGUMENTS SHOULD YOU EXPECT?

A. I HAVE TO WORK

Answer:

1. Find out where. Most places of employment open up at 10 a.m. or later on Sunday
2. Point out we have 134 services a year. Of those 104 are on Sunday morning, 30 are on other days or times. Sunday evenings at 6:30 are once a month. Advent, Lenten services are on Wednesday evening. Thursday evening services are held during June, July and August as well as the first Thursday in September.
3. Tell them nobody works that much.

Now quote Scriptures:

1. 3rd commandment
1st commandment
explain idolatry.
2. "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37)
A man must not put his family before God.
3. Learn Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:25-26; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20

They apply to all situations.

B. I CAN BE A CHRISTIAN WITHOUT GOING TO CHURCH. It is true that going to church does not guarantee that one is a Christian.

Answer: The best way to reject someone is to ignore him.

There are two commandments.

The 1st and 3rd and the one that Christ gave regarding the Lord's Supper.

"Do this in remembrance of me." How can a Christian be too busy to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to remember Christ and still be a Christian?

C. YOU HAVE NO RIGHT BUTTING INTO MY BUSINESS.

Answer: Refer to Matthew 18:15-17

James 5:19-20

Galatians 6:1-2

Hebrews 6:4-6

Hebrews 10:26

Have them read these passages out of their Bibles.

-Hugo Kaeding

WHY BAPTIZE INFANTS?

That question divides Christendom today, perhaps more than any other. To understand better why Baptism is also for infants we need to look first at how God deals with man.

The initiative for such action is always God's. His love for sinful human beings who are dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-3) and who do not deserve His love, brings about their salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9) and also produces fruitbearing lives which reflect His glory (Ephesians 2:10). Such has always been God's pattern of action throughout history.

For example, God chose Abraham when his father was an idol worshiper (Joshua 24:2, 15) and gave him the covenant promise which included our Savior, Jesus (Genesis 12:1-3). God acted to deliver His people from Egyptian slavery when they were helpless to do anything about it (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-8). Jesus chose the disciples, some of them from outwardly sinful lives (Luke 5:27-28; Acts 9:1-6). And God continues to show that kind of undeserved love for sinners, like you and me, in His Son, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:8)

One of the basic reasons for the differences in Christendom concerning infant baptism has sprung from a misunderstanding of how God works in the life of a sinful human being. Does man have a part in God's saving work? The basic question one must answer in relation to infant baptism is this: "Is baptism God's action toward man (Gospel) or man's response to God (Law)?" One's answer to that question will determine one's understanding and practice of infant baptism. Let's look at the Biblical picture!

Baptism is the New Testament counterpart of the Old Testament circumcision (Gen. 17:9-12; Col. 2:11-12). By circumcision the eight-day-old infant became a full participant in the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:13-14). Even as an infant he possessed fully the covenant blessings because of God's action toward him the circumcision.

In the New Testament baptism is God's action in the life of individuals of all ages—including infants (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor. 1:16). The promises and blessings God gives in Baptism are given for both adults and children (Acts 2:38-39). And God's command to His followers to "make disciples" of "all nations" is without bounds of race, sex, or age and certainly includes infants. (Matthew 28:18-20). "Baptizing" is one of the methods given for accomplishing the primary task of the church, to "make disciples," along with "going" and "teaching".

Infants are in need of the saving action of God in Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) because they are born in sin and thereby are lost and separated from God (Psalm 51:5; John 3:5-6). Death, physically and eternally, is the plight of all thus born as descendants of Adam (Romans 5:12). God's action is required! And Baptism is the only Biblical alternative for infants!

Baptism is the beginning of God's action in a man's life—not the end! What follows Baptism is just as important as the Baptism itself. God's saving action is always to be followed by growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18). As the clipping from a house plant is placed in a rooter to get roots, so Baptism gives an infant roots in the family of God. However, the plant clipping, once rooted, must be put in soil for growth and nurture to bring forth its fruit. So also the Baptism rooting of an infant must be followed by

Christian growth and nurture in the soil of God's love in Christ (Col. 2:6-7). Which is more important—the rooting or the growing? Obviously, both are important!

God has provided for such nurture of infants primarily through parents, and especially under the leadership of fathers (Ephesians 6:4). And beyond the family God has given nurture responsibility to the Christian congregation in which the infant is baptized (1 Corinthians 12:13). The God-given concern of the Body of Christ for its individual members also applies to these baptized infants (1 Corinthians 12:26).

However, this responsibility for nurture and growth is not always faithfully carried out. Infant Baptism has often been practiced as an end in itself. "I just want to get my baby baptized!" And churches who practice infant baptism have perpetuated this false understanding by baptizing infants without a personal and faithful follow-up ministry of Christian growth with them and their families. Churches who are opposed to infant baptism have observed this malpractice and have reacted by denying the power of Baptism as God's action toward man (Gospel). Instead, they have made baptism part of man's response to God (Law). Renewal of our confidence in God's power in infant baptism and correction of our follow-up nurture ministries is needed, not the denial of Baptism's saving power.

Look for yourself! With the tremendous blessings God's Word attaches to Baptism—forgiveness of sin (Acts 22:16); the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39); faith (Col. 2:12); union with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-4); Christ-like living now (Gal. 3:27); and salvation (Titus 3:5) is baptism God's action toward man or man's response to God?

Infant baptism is pure Gospel—God's action toward undeserving sinful man.

--by Darwin L. Karsten—Reprinted with permission—a Faith to Live By—The Lutheran Witness, December, 1982

WHY BAPTIZE INFANTS

1. Christ commanded us to baptize all people. (Matthew 28:19)
2. Baptism takes the place of circumcision in the New Testament. (Col. 2:11-12)
3. The apostles baptized whole families. (Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33; 1 Corinthians 1:16)
4. Children need baptism. (Romans 3:23; Psalm 51:5; Genesis 5:3; Job 14:4; John 3:5-6)
5. Jesus wants children brought to Him. (Mark 10:13-16)
6. The early church fathers give testimony of baptism.
Clement of Rome (d. 101 A.D.)
Justin Martyr (d. 165 A.D.)
Irenaeus (d. 202 A.D.)
Origen (d. 254 A.D.)
7. Children can believe. (Matthew 18:6; Acts 2:38-39)
8. Archeology.
9. Arguments of silence: “The writers of the New Testament saw no reason for making a special point of telling their readers to bring infants for baptism. To them it would have been like going out of their way to tell us, “Baptize all redheaded people as well as the blondes and brunettes,” or “baptize all people over ninety as well as those of other ages.” If some individual or religious group should begin demanding that we produce Bible passages to prove God wants us to baptize people in those groups, we’d be just plain stuck! All we could say is that we can see no good reason for eliminating them from baptism on account of their old age or their red hair. And that’s all we can say about babies. There is no good reason for depriving them of baptism on account of their being babies.”
10. What if a child dies without baptism?
11. How soon after birth should a child be baptized?

-L. Clemetsen

INFANT BAPTISM

There is one question which has seriously bothered many sincere Christians for many years. That is the question of whether God wants us to baptize infants. Perhaps the reason that this question has come about is that God nowhere says in the Bible “Thou shalt baptize infants,” or “Thou shalt not baptize infants.” I’m sure that many times we have wished that He had said it in those words. But as it is, we must take all of the passages of Scripture which apply to the question, and make a conclusion on the basis of them as to what God wants us to do. After studying the passages which apply, the conclusion will be apparent.

I. Children are sinful.

One of the basic arguments of those who oppose infant baptism is that they claim that children have no need for baptism. They claim that children are innocent of all sin. Many of them, in effect, contradict themselves by saying in one sentence that children are sinners, but then say that they aren’t guilty until they reach a certain age called the age of accountability. They claim children aren’t guilty of sin until they are old enough to understand right from wrong.

But the Bible knows of no such thing. It is impossible to separate sin from guilt for sin. If one is a sinner he’s also guilty of sin. He may not be aware that he’s guilty, but he’s still guilty. Nowhere does the Bible make an exception for children or for anyone else, just because they might be ignorant of what God has commanded or forbidden. (See Romans 1:18-20)

In fact, the Bible says just the opposite. The Bible tells us that we inherit a sinful nature from our parents from birth. God tells us that, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” (John 3:6). In other words, whoever is born of sinful parents is also going to be a sinner. Just as we inherit other features from our parents such as a nose, eyes, ears, etc., so also do we inherit this sinful nature from our parents. In fact, when we look elsewhere in the Bible, we see that this sinful nature which is inherited is present even before we are born. It is present in us from the moment of our conception. We’re told that in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” That clearly tells us that we’re guilty of sin from the moment of our conception. (It does not mean that the act of sex is sinful, because sex within marriage is honorable in God’s sight—Hebrews 12:4, Genesis 2:25). That Psalm tells us beyond all doubt that we inherit sin from our parents.

The Bible, therefore, tells us that this inherited sin traces all the way back to the sin of Adam and Eve. Every person ever born on the face of this earth has, therefore, been born with this inherited sin. That can be seen shortly after Adam and Eve’s sin when they gave birth to Seth. We see that Seth was not created holy (in the image of God) as Adam and Eve had been, but that he was born in the image of Adam, which was already at that time sinful. “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.” (Genesis 5:3) That immediately tells us that Seth was born in sin. Later in the book of Genesis, we are told several times that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” (Genesis 8:21) Youth in Bible terminology does not mean teenager, but infancy. The Hebrew word for youth means from infancy, from birth. Clearly, the Old Testament tells us that man is born sinful.

But there are also a number of passages in the New Testament which tell us that man's sinful nature is inherited from his ancestors all the way back to Adam. We read in Romans 5:18 —“Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” That passage points out that by one man's offense (Adam's sin) everyone is condemned. Notice that it says everyone. It doesn't exclude children. It doesn't say that they're exempt until they reach an age of accountability. Everyone stands condemned. Everyone is in need of salvation, even children.

We will make just one other point proving that infants are guilty of sin. Namely, this: they die. The very fact that an infant can die proves that it is guilty of sin, because death is the result of sin. If it were holy, it wouldn't die. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12) That passage clearly tells us that whenever someone dies, it is evidence of the fact that he inherited sin from that one man, namely Adam. Another passage expresses that same thought. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) All of us have inherited sin from Adam. And that includes infants. The very fact that they can die proves this. (Romans 6:23; Romans 3:10-23)

So these different passages all tell us that children are guilty of sin. They, therefore, do have a need for baptism. They are not innocent, as so many people claim. The Bible always speaks of man as sinner and totally corrupt until he is reborn. We baptize infants because they need to have their sins washed away just as much as anyone else does.

For a definition of what original sin means, see Augsburg Confession, Article 2. “All men are full of evil lust and inclination from their mother's womb and are unable by nature to have fear of God and true faith in God.”

II. Children can believe.

Another reason why we baptize children is that they can believe in Jesus. Many people would disagree with that statement. Many don't think that children can believe, and say that children should not, therefore, be baptized. They say that children are too little to believe ... that children are not intelligent enough to believe. They say that one must reach an age of understanding or reason before he can believe. But the Bible points out to us in many different places that children can believe.

The first thing that we must understand is that faith isn't synonymous with intelligence. They aren't at all the same thing. One can have intelligence without faith. I'm sure we all know of people who know their Bible, but don't believe it. Faith and intelligence are not synonymous. They are independent from one another. In fact, man's natural intelligence can actually, and often does, oppose faith. The conflict is that man's tendency is to make his own intelligence greater than God and His Word. God gives us intelligence to be used in knowing Him and understanding His Word, not to question it. Man's reason tells him that Christianity is foolishness. “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” (1 Corinthians 1:22-23) Man's intelligence says that he's not very smart if he believes in a Trinity or a God-man, or the existence of a heaven, etc. Those things are matters purely of faith. They have nothing to do with man's intelligence.

What faith is can perhaps best be described as complete trust. When we think of it that way, we know that a child trusts its parents, even when it is very small. It is not difficult for us to see then how God could move that child to have that kind of complete trust, or faith in Him, even without what we commonly think of as intelligence.

Understanding that, we realize that God's grace is really far beyond our intelligence. It takes a special revelation from the Holy Ghost to enable us to even begin to realize His grace. Mere intelligence is not enough. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10, v. 14) God's grace goes far beyond our small intelligence. It takes far more than intelligence to have faith. It takes a miracle of God working in our hearts, and God is just as able to work that miracle in the heart of an infant as He is in the heart of an adult, or of a retarded person. The reason is that intelligence is not a necessary ingredient in faith.

We could illustrate the fact that faith and intelligence aren't synonymous in another way. Adults have faith while they are sleeping. They may not be conscious and may not be using their intelligence at all, yet they can have faith while they are asleep. Faith can be and is present even when we are not using our powers of reason. So it is also with infants.

Another thing we must remember when talking about whether or not children can believe is that the Bible states that anyone who does not believe is going to be eternally lost. If people say that children can't believe in Christ, aren't they, therefore, saying also that children are lost if they should die? The Bible knows of only two positions. Either one believes or he does not believe. If one believes in Christ, he's going to be saved. If he doesn't, he's going to be lost. This we're told most clearly in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The Bible knows of no neutral position. Anyone who does not believe is an unbeliever. The absence of faith is unbelief. Think of that before saying too strongly that children can't believe! If we say they can't and don't have faith, we are saying they cannot enter heaven.

There are other places where the Bible tells us that faith is the only means of salvation. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18, 14-16, 36; John 8:24; 1 John 5:1) These passages tell us over and over again that the only way to receive the eternal gifts which God has promised to us is through faith in Christ. And it doesn't speak of a different way for them to be saved. They are saved through faith in Christ just as anyone else is. Children can believe.

That thought is implied in many other ways throughout the Bible. We know definitely that God's kingdom includes little children. Jesus expressed that thought on several different occasions, particularly when the disciples began to object to those who brought little children to Jesus. Then He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid it not: for of such is the Kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14) God's Kingdom definitely includes little children. And if we look into one of the parallel accounts of that incident, we see that St. Luke specifically calls these children infants, "And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them." (Luke 18:15) That tells us that the children were very young. And yet, Jesus felt that it was important that He see them and bless them.

He even commends the faith of those little children as being the kind of faith that receives the Kingdom. Adults need this complete trusting faith of children also to enter the Kingdom.

“Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.” (Luke 18:17) Jesus certainly didn’t feel that it was impossible for a little child to believe. In fact, He says they can believe in Matthew 18:6—“Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Can little children believe? Certainly! Jesus said so in His Word!

One other passage in Scripture states rather plainly that it’s possible for infants to believe. That is in 1 John 2:13. “I write unto ye, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” Even though little children aren’t intelligent....even though they haven’t studied God’s Word, yet they can know and believe in God.

And the reason that this is possible is that faith is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit. It is something worked by God in our hearts. And who is to limit God and say that He can’t work faith in the heart of an infant? Especially when He says that He does so? In fact, when we stop to think about it, it’s probably easier for Him to work faith in the heart of an infant than it is to do so in the heart of an adult with all of our understanding and intelligence saying that Christianity is foolishness. One last evidence that the Holy Spirit is able to work in the heart of an infant is the case of John the Baptist before his birth. “And it came to pass that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost ... ‘For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.’” (Luke 1:41, 44) That passage isn’t necessarily saying that John the Baptist was brought to faith then, but it does illustrate to us that the Holy Spirit is able to work in the heart of an infant, even before it is born. So when God says that He can work faith in the heart of infants, why not simply take Him at His Word that infants can believe?

Some will perhaps object that none of the above passages speak specifically of baptism. And they don’t. Yet, they are very important to a discussion of infant baptism, because they shatter the arguments of those who say that infants can’t believe and therefore shouldn’t be baptized.

III. Baptism is a saving act of God...not an act of obedience of man.

Another point that we must constantly remember in regard to baptism is that it is a saving act of God, not an act of obedience of man. Simply put, baptism is something which God does for us, not something we do for God. And that is an especially important point for us to remember regarding infant baptism, because if baptism is something which we do for God, then it would be a willful act of obedience which a child would have to desire to do, and therefore would have to be old enough to request baptism. But in baptism as well as in regard to the saving Gospel in general, man is merely the recipient. We aren’t giving, but are receiving in baptism. And the reason that we are receiving in baptism is that in our natural state, we are dead in sin. Someone who’s dead physically has to be brought to life from the outside. Take a dead animal along the road, for example. That animal doesn’t even desire to be alive. That’s what we were like, by nature. We were spiritually dead. (Ephesians 2:1) We didn’t even desire to be alive. But then God came from the outside and through the Gospel and through Baptism brings us to

life. That's why baptism is often spoken of as being a new birth ... that we're reborn. We were once born physically and were alive physically. But we were dead spiritually, unable to "make a decision" to accept Christ, until we were born the second time.

That's what Jesus was telling Nicodemus in John 3:3-5, "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'" We are reborn through baptism. God brings us from the spiritual death to spiritual life. It's something which God does for us, not an act of obedience on our part in which we do something for Him.

Another passage which very clearly shows us that baptism is something that God works in us is the one which was quoted by Luther in his explanation of baptism, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:5-6) Baptism isn't a good work which we do. It's an act whereby we receive something from God. This Titus reference tells us baptism is not our good work but God's. We are purely the recipients. And since we merely receive in baptism, infants can also take part in it. They can also be recipients of the blessings of baptism, through faith.

And the blessings which are received are the blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. They are the blessings which infants need as much as anyone else does. These blessings are outlined in many different places in the Bible, where the Bible is speaking about baptism. On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the new converts, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin." (Acts 2:38) Or when Paul was telling about his conversion, he said that Ananias had told him, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sin." (Acts 22:16) Through baptism we are able to have our sins washed away. Another passage which beautifully expresses the saving power of baptism, is 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism doth also now save us." (Ephesians 5:26; Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12:13) All of these passages show the blessings which are received through baptism, blessings which everyone needs, young and old. None of these passages speak of baptism as an act of obedience or as something which we are doing for God. We do not make a decision by a willful act or initiation of our own to believe in Jesus. They all speak of God as doing this for us. We are nothing more than the recipients. "Believe" isn't something you do. It is a gift of God initiated by His will alone. See Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 1:12-13; John 15:16. The gift of faith is given us through baptism, the benefits being forgiveness and eternal life.

Even though we may convince a person that many verses speak of baptism for the forgiveness of sins, they still explain it away. If one has a preconceived idea that baptism has nothing to do with forgiveness or being saved, many, many verses have to be "explained away" to support the pre-conceived notion. Their method is to spiritualize, that is, interpret as symbolic the part of the verse that speaks of baptism for the forgiveness of sins. A perfect example is Acts 2:38-39. To them "repent" is taken literally; "be baptized for the remission of sins" taken as symbolic. This way of interpreting Scripture is totally against accepted sound principles of Bible interpretation. The finest Greek scholars of all denominations agree that you do not in the same verse take part literally and part symbolically. Even A. T. Robertson, an outstanding

Southern Baptist Greek scholar agrees that this is not done. Therefore being true to his own principles of interpretation can't explain away the truth of Acts 2:38-39. To further explain these verses in the Greek the word "for" means "for a purpose." In other words, baptism for the purpose of having your sins remitted. With this comes the gift of the Holy Spirit. And verse 39, this is for you and your children. Another argument is that babies can't repent. See John 15:16; Ephesians 2; John 1:12-32; John 6:44; Hebrews 12:2; Acts 5:31; Jeremiah 18:30, 31 (King James Version). Repentance is not something we do, but something God works in us by His grace. Repentance means a complete turning away from sin and trusting Jesus alone. This faith is a gift of God, not a decision on our part.

Other skeptics ask, "How can water do such great things?" The power of baptism to offer grace and to work faith lies not in the water. It is the Word of God, connected with the water, and the Holy Ghost, operating through this Word that does these things. With the Word of God, the water of baptism is a "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5) The Holy Ghost is the active agent, and the Word, which in baptism is connected with the water, is His instrument.

The water of the Jordan River did not in itself possess the power to cleanse Naaman from leprosy. Yet, since God had promised to heal him if he would wash in the Jordan seven times, the healing power was by this Word of God connected and joined with the water of this river. And Naaman could not have been healed, had he not used this water. But he did, and the Word of God in and with the water cleansed him from his leprosy. (2 Kings 5:6-14) In baptism the Word of God cleanses us from the spiritual leprosy of sin.

Thus far, we have mostly answered the objections of those who say that we shouldn't baptize infants. We have been spending most of our time showing why their reasons for not baptizing infants aren't reasons which are validly based upon Scripture. We've spent most of our time showing that they're unscriptural. Now let's spend some time showing that we're Scriptural.

IV. Whole families were baptized in the Bible.

The first of these reasons is that we're told in several different situations in Scripture that whole families were baptized at one time. For example, when Lydia was converted to Christianity, we're told, "she was baptized and her household..." (Acts 16:15) True, we're not told how many children there were in the household, and what ages they were, but that statement seems to at least say that there were children present. We read the same thing of the jailor of Philippi in Acts 16:33, "And he took them in the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and his, straightway." We are told the same thing of the family of Stephanas, (1 Cor. 1:16) "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas." Also see Acts 18:8. In none of these households are we told the age of the families. Yet it seems very unlikely that out of these three households there would not be some small children present. That's especially true when we consider the fact that often more than one family lived in a household, plus the fact that the households often also included a number of servants and their families. We, of course, wouldn't want to attempt to prove infant baptism on the basis of these passages alone, but they provide strong supporting evidence when they are added to the other evidence.

V. Baptism replaced circumcision.

Perhaps the strongest support of infant baptism, in my estimation, is the fact that baptism replaced Old Testament circumcision. When we look into Old Testament, when God first commanded circumcision to His people, we see that He told them how old the child was to be when he was circumcised. “And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you.” (Gen. 17:12) And we see that ceremony was followed right up to the time of Christ, because Christ himself was circumcised on the eighth day. “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called Jesus.” (Luke 2:21) Circumcision was performed when the child was only 8 days old.

But we see that when Christ came, He later did away with circumcision. His doing away with that ceremony was to indicate that He was here and had fulfilled everything circumcision pointed forward to. And we see that baptism was the ceremony which Jesus instituted in place of circumcision. This we’re told in Col. 2:11-12. “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (baptism), in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (the “circumcision” which Christ commanded, namely baptism); buried with Him in baptism.”

That passage is speaking about a new type of “circumcision” which Christ commanded. It wasn’t the old physical circumcision. In fact, if we look elsewhere in the New Testament we’re told emphatically that the Old Testament circumcision was abolished completely. (Gal. 2:3; 5:6, 1 Cor. 7:18, 19) And in place of the circumcision which Jesus did away with, He commanded baptism, according to the above passage. In simple words, Jesus replaced circumcision with baptism.

Now if baptism has replaced circumcision, and circumcision was performed when the child was only 8 days old, wouldn’t any argument against infant baptism also have to be applied against infant circumcision? For example, the argument that we should wait until children are old enough to request baptism. Or that children can’t believe and therefore shouldn’t be baptized. Or that children are innocent and don’t need baptism. All of these arguments seem to fall by the wayside when we see that God commanded infants to be circumcised. Shouldn’t infant circumcision tell us something about infant baptism?

VI. Children are a part of “all nations”.

Another important reason why we baptize infants is that Jesus has commanded us to baptize “all nations.” “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:20) Children are certainly a part of all nations. And when Jesus commanded us to teach and baptize all nations, He didn’t make any exceptions. He didn’t exclude the children. Nor are we told of any exceptions that He made in the account recorded by St. Mark, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16) Notice from that, and many other New Testament passages, how important Jesus and other writers felt baptism to be. And notice also that He didn’t exclude children from baptism. In fact, nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to exclude children from baptism. Those who say we dare not baptize children can’t point to even one passage in the Bible that forbids it. Let’s place the burden of proof on their shoulders. It seems to me that with all of the evidence that we have in favor of infant baptism, that’s where the burden of proof should lie.

VII. Church history shows that infant baptism was common in the early Christian Church.

One additional proof in favor of infant baptism really goes beyond the scope of this paper. But we will study it anyhow. That is the evidence which we have from church history that infant baptism was common in the early Christian church. We certainly do not base our doctrine merely on what the church fathers taught. We base our teachings only on Scripture. Yet, it is worthwhile to study how the early church fathers interpreted what the Bible taught regarding baptism of infants. It is a firmly documented fact, questioned by almost no one, that infant baptism has been widely practiced since at least 250 A.D. And there are several historical sources which are prior to that date which establish quite clearly that infant baptism was common throughout the first and second centuries also.

One of these was the church father, Irenaeus. He said this in a reference made to baptism; “For He (the Lord) came to save all of them through himself; all of them, I say, who through him are born again in God, the infants, and the small children, and the boys, and the mature, and the older people.” Irenaeus wrote that statement sometime before his death, which was about 200 A.D. From his statement, it seems quite apparent that infant baptism was commonly practiced then. Worthy of note is the fact that Irenaeus was a student and close friend of Polycarp, who was a student of the Apostle John. There were less than 100 years between the time of John and the time of Irenaeus. Furthermore, Irenaeus was highly regarded as a theologian and was one of the more doctrinally correct of his day.

Origen, who died about 250 A.D., wrote this, “The church received from the apostles the tradition to give even little children to baptism.” Notice from this that Origen simply assumes that infant baptism is a common thing. He doesn’t go to any long discussion of the subject to defend it. He simply declares that it was a common practice which went back to the time of the Apostles.

Tertullian, who died about 225 A.D. wrote a full length paper on the subject of baptism. In that paper, he didn’t reject infant baptism as being invalid, but stated that he preferred to see baptism delayed, lest the baptized and the sponsors fail to fulfill their promise. “Let them (children) “come” therefore when they grow older; let them “come” when they are able to learn, when they can be instructed whether they should “come”; let them become Christians when they can know Christ.” It is also interesting to note that Tertullian preferred to see virgins and widows postpone baptism until a time when they would be less likely to be tempted. Tertullian’s reasons for delaying baptism were faulty. He viewed baptism as somewhat of a burden, rather than something which offered strength to withstand temptations. Little wonder that he wanted baptism delayed. Another of his reasons for delaying baptism was his faulty presupposition that the children born of Christian parents were holy. “Why does the age of innocence hasten to the remission of sins?” We have already seen that that reason for delay of baptism is not biblical.

And yet, the very treatment that Tertullian gives to infant baptism indicates that it was commonly practiced in his day. It is apparent from what he wrote that infant baptism was not something new, or he would have definitely argued against it on that basis. But he didn’t even only imply that it hadn’t been previously practiced. It had to be an old, established practice or one of his best arguments would have been that the church and the Apostles hadn’t previously practiced infant baptism. So even though Tertullian preferred to see baptism postponed, what he wrote about baptism tells us clearly that infant baptism was common in his day.

Another church father, Hippolytus, who made several statements about baptism, made this statement about 215 A.D., “First you should baptize the little ones. All who can speak for themselves, should speak. But for those who cannot speak, their parents should speak, or another who belongs to their family. Then baptize the grown men, lastly the women.” (Apostolic Traditions, 21, 4f) That statement makes it rather obvious that infant baptism was something which was commonly practiced at that time. Only by a long drawn-out process of rather incredible arguments can one say otherwise.

One final historical source will be referred to. About 250 A.D. Bishop Fidus asked the question of the Council of Carthage whether baptism ought to wait until the 8th day. The council agreed that it should not arbitrarily be delayed until then. (Epistle 64:2-6) That tells us beyond all doubt that infant baptism was widely practiced at that time. There was no heated debate whether infants should be baptized. It was universally accepted. It was merely a question of whether they should wait until the eighth day as God had prescribed for Old Testament circumcision. After that council meeting, there is much more documented evidence that infants were commonly being baptized ... so much evidence that even those opposed to infant baptism don't dispute that it was widely practiced after 250 A.D.

One question we might raise to those who claim that infant baptism wasn't practiced by the Apostles and the early church is: If they didn't practice infant baptism, when did it begin? We can hardly imagine something like that just creeping in unnoticed. And yet, none of the church fathers raised any objections to infant baptism except Tertullian, and he did only in a limited way, not once claiming it to be something new. Certainly those men wouldn't have allowed something like that to creep in unchallenged, if it hadn't been practiced by the Apostles. None of them objected that infant baptism was something new. Infant baptism must have been so taken for granted that nobody even considered questioning it. In fact, infant baptism was never really widely questioned until about the time of the Reformation (1500s).

Perhaps this would also tell us why the Bible never specifically mentions the baptism of infants. It was simply assumed to be the case. When households were baptized, it was simply assumed that everyone was baptized. No specific cases of infants being alone were mentioned because they were included with the remainder of the family, just as the Bible doesn't in those cases single out the teenagers in the families. So we have considered the seven basic reasons why we baptize infants. See if you can name them without looking back. Now let's consider some miscellaneous items about infant baptism.

The subject of how the water is applied is a topic beyond the scope of the assigned paper, and one which could well be as lengthy as this whole paper. Yet, the question does apply here, because some say that infants were not baptized because immersion was the only type of baptism used, and they would hardly immerse an infant. First of all, even if it had been, why couldn't infants be immersed briefly? To this day the Greek and Russian Orthodox immerse their infants three times during baptism. The priest holds his hand over the mouth, holds the nose closed with fingers and immerses three times in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In regard to the first point, the word “Baptize” simply means to “wash”. It doesn't say how. In Mark 7:4 (KJV) we read that pots, pans and even tables were washed — and the Greek word used there is “baptized.” One would hardly immerse a table to wash it. Furthermore, we are not told that there was always enough water present to immerse while baptizing, as on Pentecost, the baptizing of Lydia and her family and baptizing of the jailor of Philippi, etc.

Besides, even if immersion had been the more common type of baptism, infants could still be immersed. The question of immersion has little to do with infant baptism.

Another miscellaneous item asked about in baptism is the question, “Is baptism necessary for salvation?” To that question we answer “yes” and “no”. Jesus says, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) Clearly, according to that, anyone who rejects baptism will be lost. That’s what the Pharisees, about whom he was speaking, were doing. And yet we see Jesus saying to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42) It is highly unlikely that the thief was baptized. So we conclude that it is the rejection of baptism, not necessarily the lack of baptism which condemns.

This would help us to answer the question of whether infants are lost if they should die before they are able to be baptized. We can give believing parents every comfort that their child is in heaven, because they have been praying for the salvation of that child since it’s conception, and God promises to answer the prayers of believers. They don’t believe in place of the child, but they do pray that God would give the child faith, and God will grant such a prayer, because salvation of all people certainly is God’s will and desire. That comfort, we can’t give of course, to the unbelieving parents who lose a child, because they haven’t been praying for that child’s salvation. We might also point believing parents to the Old Testament circumcision. Certainly the children of believers were not condemned if these children happened to die during the first 8 days after they were born. Here we might think of David’s child which died at the age of 7 days, but whom David stated he would see again in heaven. (2 Samuel 12:15-23—especially verse 23) The nature of God is love and would much more rather bless than curse. See Exodus 20:5-6. To summarize this paragraph, it isn’t the lack of baptism, but the rejection of baptism which condemns.

Another miscellaneous item we might consider is the abuse of infant baptism which many people are guilty of. There are many people who seem to view baptism as some sort of a magic formula. They seem to feel that if a child is baptized, he’s automatically got a ticket to heaven. These people want their children baptized, and may go to great lengths to get their child baptized. But then they won’t pray with their children, study the Bible with their children, or take them to church. But baptism is of benefit to a person only through faith in the Gospel. Without the Gospel used in connection with baptism during the child’s life, he won’t benefit from the sacrament. Notice that Jesus says that he who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who believes not will be lost, regardless of whether he was baptized. Notice the emphasis is on belief. Parents ought to be reminded that their Christian responsibilities don’t end with baptism. Baptism is only the beginning.

One final question which many people ask in regard to infant baptism is, “How can sponsors believe in place of the child?” The answer is, “They don’t.” No one can believe for another person. Yet, they are able to answer the questions we ask in administering baptism, because we know that a child is able to believe. They merely state the answers to the questions in the way the child would if he were old enough to speak, because of the promise of God to work faith through baptism. This is a perfectly fine custom. Yet, some have a preference for the order of service which does not ask the sponsors to answer in the child’s name, simply because it avoids this misunderstanding among observers, particularly in an area of the country which has a strong concentration of Baptist people.

There are good purposes for sponsors. They later serve as witnesses to the child should he ever wonder whether he was baptized. And very importantly, they assist in raising the child in faith. This means that they are to remind the parents of their responsibility if the parents become lax, but especially are they responsible for the faith of the child if the parents die. Having sponsors isn't commanded in Scripture. It is only a man-made custom. Yet, it serves some excellent purposes.

So, back to the main thrust of this paper. What is The Biblical Substantiation for Infant Baptism? What are the 7 basic reasons why we baptize infants?

1. They are sinful.
2. They can believe.
3. Baptism is a saving act of God...not an act of obedience of men.
4. Whole families were baptized in the Bible.
5. Baptism replaced circumcision.
6. Children are a part of "all nations."
7. Church history shows that infant baptism was common in the early Christian church.

-William R. Riley

WHY LITURGY??

Not Scripture specified...

Some Scripture emphases...(we may choose):

HYMNS..... Psalm 81:1 The Psalms...

Little objection...

Some instrumental music (cf. Psalm 81:2-3; Col. 3:16; Psalm 150:3-6)

Some Presbyterian: only Psalms

SCRIPTURE... Acts 2:42 John 8:47 Ecclesiastes 5:1 (“draw near to hear”)

Introit: entrance sentences from Psalms

Old Testament Reading

Epistle

Gospel

Sermon

PRAYER... Acts 2:42 Psalm 50:15

Collect – collection of prayer thoughts

Prayer of the Church...

Appetize!! Personal and Family Praying

GOD-PRAISE Psalm 26:7-8 Psalm 9:1-2

Hymns

“This is the Feast!”

CONFESSION OF SIN 1 John 1:8-9 Psalm 51:3-5

CONFESSION OF FAITH Matthew 10:32
Variations (cf. Catechism)

LORD’S SUPPER Luke 22:19

Some cautions...

Concentrate!

Going through motions is not meritorious!!!

Let formality not obstruct the message (God says to me!)

Worship is different from Bible Class...

Worship: declare God’s worth

Make the effort: take the time

Thank and praise Him for blessings (especially Jesus)

Some explanations, rationales help

Robes (Isaiah 61:10)

Kneeling (Phil. 2:10)

Quiet (Respect for Him whom we thank, Hab. 2:20)

Sign of the cross (visual aid—God died in my place.)

Smooth

Minimum of announcements

-G. Beiderwieden / M.E.

NURTURE

Proper nutrition is vital in raising fowl and cattle. It is most essential in the physical development of children. But why in our modern day is so little interest shown in the spiritual development of young and old?

Evolution
Secularism
Materialism
Humanism
Universalism

THE NURTURING OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

I. Why is it so imperative to nurture spiritual life?

- a. God's explicit command is to nurture our spiritual life.
(Deut. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:4; 1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:17-18)
- b. It should be the first object of our prayers. 1st petition
(Phil 1:3-6, 9-11; Col. 1:9-13)
- c. The constant threats within the Christian—his own evil flesh which is inclined to evil and is under the direction of Satan.
(Romans 7:7-19 [15-19]; James 1:13-15; 2 Tim. 4:10)
- d. The persistent threats against the Christian merit nurturing.
(1 Peter 5:8-9 [devil]); 1 John 2:15-17 [world]).
There are many devices and mechanizations employed against the church.
(Gal. 2:1-4 [false brothers]; 2 Thess. 2:3ff)
- e. Motivation and direction for doing good is enhanced when we nurture ourselves spiritually
(Matt. 5:16; John 15:5-10)
- f. Our need to edify the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-16; and to extend the Kingdom of Christ is improved by nurturing.
(Matt. 28:18-20)

II. When and how does nurturing take place?

- a. By example and instruction in the home. Family devotions and exhibition of Christian attitudes in life.
- b. At the age of three, enroll the child in Sunday School and by all means, parents should attend Bible Class.
- c. Availing yourself of the opportunity of the thorough religious instruction of your children in the Lutheran School
- d. Conscientiously assist your child in their confirmation studies.
- e. By setting a good example in regular church attendance and partaking of the Lord's Supper frequently.
- f. By taking an active part in congregational meetings and at least one auxiliary society of the church.
- g. Showing a concern for the souls of others and being a Good Samaritan to neighbors.
- h. by being a light, a salt, a leaven in the welfare of the community.

- III. What are the blessed results for time and eternity?
- a. Through the Word and Sacraments we are renewed in the image of God.
(Eph 4:24; Col. 3:10)
 - b. We will have continual growth in Christian knowledge, faith, prayer, love, virtues, etc.
(Phil. 4:8; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph.5:1-2)
 - c. We will be motivated and empowered in joyous Christian service.
(Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13-16)
 - d. We will have the willingness and power to resist and overcome evil.
(1 Peter 5:8-10; 1 Tim. 3:16-17)
 - e. We will have unlimited power of the Holy Spirit to meet all problems of our space age.
(Romans 1:16ff; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; letter to Philemon)
 - f. We will lead others to Christ like Andrew.
(John 1:40-42; 6:8-9; 12:21-22)
 - g. We will follow the example of the early church (Acts 2:42ff) They filled Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28) therefore we will turn the world for Christ.
(Acts 17:6)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Without Christian training of the young, are we but one generation from paganism?
2. Are religious attitudes and actions more caught than taught?
3. Why need we constantly emphasize the distinction between church and the world?
4. Why is our own flesh so ready to invite the world in and wreck the spiritual life within?
5. Why dare we never give the impression in our church practice once in faith, always in faith?
6. How can church membership and church societies easily degenerate as an end to themselves, rather than a means to nurture the Body of Christ?
7. Likewise, how may observing rituals become an end instead of a means?
8. What is the most important building in the community? What are you doing to make it so?
9. Is the accusation justifiable? The church has not kept pace with the advance of scientific power?
10. It is better to stay home than failing to participate when present in church services, meetings, classes, etc.?

-Martin Rothe

SETTING GOALS FOR THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit indicated a desire for numerical growth.
(Acts 2:41; Acts 2:47; Acts 4:4)

But ... aren't we telling the Holy Spirit what He's to do?
Definitely not. (John 3:8)

We set GOALS for Pastor and people...

For what areas?

- Average Sunday morning worship attendance
- Average weekly Bible study attendance total
- Adults to be confirmed
- Outreach calls to be made
- Invitations/contacts to be made

How do we set these goals??

- Ambitious ... growth ... numerical gain,
- But ... REACHABLE
- On the basis of this year's performance.

Who shall set goals??

- Publicize - get groups in congregation to be thinking of figures.
- Make available this year's figures.
- Have voters set, or have opportunity at a Sunday worship hour.

Follow-up??

- Publicize the Goals we've set for ourselves.
- Report periodically - "How we're doing!"
- ("He who aims at nothing, generally hits it.")

-G. Beiderwieden / M.E.

Pastor-Elder Handbook

YEAR THREE

THE TASK OF THE CALLING ELDER

A Spiritual Christian... John 3:5; 1 Tim. 3:8-13

Faithful worship & Bible Class attendance

Communes frequently

Tithing or working toward 10%

Responsible Board of Calling Elders Member....

Call the chairman if you can not make it to a meeting.

Calling Energetic ...

Brief meeting merely

Four calls a month at least

Initiative...hospitalized, etc.

Calls on Pastor's desk Sunday before meeting

Pray for members in his District

Get acquainted

Up-to-date attendance records in usher's room

Pay...

Brings returns on Calvary...

Know that someone is in the "groove" again...headed for Glory!

Materials...

Report sheets

Discipline

Letters

Other helps.....

Imperative of church attendance

Calling suggestions:

New: see first ... transferred in or confirmed recently

Encourage: some ... but could improve

Commend: faithful

Prayer...

-G. Beiderwieden

WHY CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

I. It is commanded. (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 12, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6-11)
Sin: dishonesty, adultery, ignoring Word and Sacrament

II. Why:
Salvation of offender ... (1 Cor. 5:5)
Family protection fro infection ... (1 Cor. 5:6-7)

III. Widely Ignored ...
People pleasing, popularity, ease, rather than Lord-pleasing!
Roman Catholic & Protestant churches
In our churches ...
25% do not commune in a year
Total attendance (including children & guests)—40% of membership

IV. Procedure
All who join promise regular worship and frequent communing
Transfers
Confirmands

Keep attendance records
Attendance card, nursery attendance record, Pastors watch for ...

Transferred to Elders record

Elders encourage:
Two absences: elder phones
Four absences: elder visits
Five absences: Pastor phones
Six absences: Pastor writes
Seven absences: Pastor sees

Postals

Must be a "Bottom Line"
Two-month "either-or" letter

V. Is the Lord pleased???
a. Less are delinquent
b. re-instatements

EXPECT SOME FLAK!

-G. Beiderwieden

WHAT ABOUT DISCIPLINE? (Excommunication)

First of all the Church; you as an elder do not excommunicate. The unrepentant sinner causes the excommunication himself. It is safe to say that when a Christian refuses to repent of a sin that has been called to his attention, either by his conscience, the Scriptures, or a fellow Christian, this man has knocked himself out of the state of grace. It means he is temporarily rejecting Christ and the work Christ did for his benefit. Therefore the responsibility for excommunication is that of the person who will not change his ways. It is not your responsibility.

Your job is to win him back before his heart is hardened. Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the procedure we are to follow. We as a congregation can only accept the fact a person has excommunicated himself and make it official. Acceptance of excommunication is an act of love and concern. When you correct your children you do it because you love them; otherwise you would just ignore them and try to separate yourself from them by leaving their presence.

Excommunication is God's way of giving a spiritual spanking hoping that the child of God will wake up and return to Christ.

ELDERS DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

The purpose of this effort is to recall erring members back into God's family. Any member who refuses to acknowledge and repent of a sin has of his own accord separated himself from God's family. Impenitence automatically severs a soul from God's forgiveness. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all Christians and particularly the Elders of this congregation to bring this fact to the attention of the straying brother. Should the member rebuff our efforts to win him back, the church has no alternative but to recognize this condition. God demands that the impenitent member be treated as a publican and a heathen. This then means the member is to be excommunicated.

In summary, it is impenitence that produces excommunication. Therefore, the member excommunicates himself, and the Lutheran congregation acknowledges this fact.

In order to deal with delinquent members, it is felt the procedure must be both broad and flexible because no two cases are the same. The person in charge of the case will be the elder, layman, or pastor who makes the first visit or visits.

RULES (Suggested)

When a member has not worshipped for one month, a phone call is made by the responsible elder asking; "What is wrong? Can the church be of any assistance? Have they been offended?" If no response is forthcoming in the next four weeks, a two-month letter is sent. If there is still no response within the next 4 weeks, step 1 is invoked and the member is now considered delinquent.

STEP #1. The delinquent member is visited by a member of the church, elder of the church, or the pastor; after which a written report is made. A waiting period of 2 months is

allowed. If there is no response, the visitor - at his discretion - can make another visit or even two more visits. This action depends on his reception and the response of the delinquent member. If again there is no response, step 2 should be put into effect.

STEP #2. The visitor in Step 1 accompanied by another elder and the pastor will make a call. The purpose of this call is to expose the delinquent to the Word of God and to persuade him to worship God once more. The elders and pastor are to go in a spirit of gentleness. Again, a written report shall follow the visit. This report shall be signed by all three witnesses. If again, there is no response, the case shall be presented to all the elders. If need be, a special meeting will be called. If all elders are in agreement that step 2 has failed, step 3 will be put into effect.

STEP #3. A certified letter is mailed to the erring member. A copy of this letter is kept on file. The letter will point out how the member has erred and if he does not take advantage of the means of grace* he will have excommunicated himself. Again, there will be a waiting period which may vary due to the varying nature of every case. The pastor may call during this period to make sure the member has received the letter and ascertain his attitude. If after a period there has been no response, another certified letter will be sent. This letter will admonish the member—tell him of his rights and the time for him to appear before the voting assembly if he so desires to plead his case. If there is no response, his case will be presented to the voting assembly and if a unanimous vote results, the member will be declared as one who by his actions has excluded himself from God and the congregation now accepts his decision. This person has doomed himself to hell. Only repentance can change his fate.

It is suggested a file be provided with a locked drawer and kept in the pastor's study. All personal information dealing with members must be kept locked in this file. After a case is closed, all records pertaining to this case will be destroyed. In case of excommunication, the record shall be retained on a permanent basis.

HOW TO ADMONISH

The best policy is to get right to the point. First mention the sin that is of concern. We will assume it is poor worship attendance. Then state it. You had called earlier, made the appointment, they have been thinking about it and now have an idea, so set the stage. Then tell them what excommunication is all about. Tell them the same things you just read on the previous page.

Then immediately point out you are there not to condemn or scold, after all someday the roles may be reversed. Use the authority of Scripture here and quote Galatians 6:1. (“You who are spiritual should set him right, but you must do it in a gentle way.”)

Let them speak after this and pray the Holy Spirit will give you the right answers. Believe me, He will. You are doing God's work. You can't miss. Your purpose is to win him back.

After some discussion, a few tears, or confessions, ask for a commitment; “Will you come to church next Sunday?” If the answer is yes, rejoice, a Christian had been born again. If the answer is maybe, it usually means no. Tell them this is normally the case, “maybe” usually means no.

*Means of Grace: reading the Gospel; hearing the Word preached; taking the sacrament. (It is assumed the member is baptized.)

Ask them if you can close with a prayer. Again a “Maybe” of some form means they really don’t care one way or the other anyway, then pray anyway and leave.

You will also always be greeted with respect. You almost always leave feeling good. This feeling of good is there because you know you obeyed God and He is pleased. You will also find that many times the delinquent will have repented.

An excellent way to start out is to ask them:

- a. If they were to die, would they go to heaven?
- b. Why should God let them into His heaven?
- c. What does Christ mean to them? Who is Christ?

Let’s discuss this and you write in your own answers in the space provided below.

-Hugo Kaeding / M.E.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The problem of divorce and remarriage strikes at the roots of our social structure. With such root problems the temptation is always to teeter between the extremes of the ostrich and the jay; either we isolate our heads and hearts from the problem or we frantically announce our passing fancies as final solutions. Certainly the concerned Christian must bend every effort to understand the complexity of the problem as it works itself out in everyday living.

But for Christians who claim Biblical authority for life and thought, such analyses must be accompanied by equally honest and rigorous application of scriptural principles bearing on the problem. Indirectly, the teaching of Holy Scripture must become our starting point. Each of us individually and within the fellowship of the Body of Christ must perform the necessary tasks of first ascertaining and faithfully reaffirming exactly what the Bible in each part and as a whole teaches on this issue and, second, of shaping an honest and caring application of that teaching within the home and church.

As we approach these tasks, we frequently confuse two closely related but quite distinct questions:

1. Are divorce and remarriage permitted?
2. How are divorced persons who remarry to be treated in the church?

The answer of the church to the first question is abundantly clear and consistent in its broad outline. It is also solidly in accordance with Holy Scripture.

No Christian ought ever to seek to break up a marriage—his own or anyone else’s. Marriages may be made on earth but they are sealed in heaven. They are designed for life. That means “for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.”

Christ, the Lord of the church, provided unequivocal instruction for his disciples. In response to a question from certain Pharisees, he appealed to the original purpose of God in creation. God’s intent, he implied, was a union of one man and one woman. And what God joins, no human dares separate.

In his instruction to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul first appealed to an authoritative word from the Lord and then applied it vigorously to a problem in the church. Even if married to an unbeliever, the Christian wife or husband is bound to remain faithful (1 Cor. 7:10-14). When a Christian couple takes wedding vows, therefore, their commitment is irrevocable. All the spiritual energies of believers are to be concentrated upon the preservation and support of marriage. Even the mixed marriage of believer with unbeliever must be preserved by the Christian at all cost.

On biblical grounds and in the church, therefore, the irreversibility of marriage in principle is not seriously questioned: the only area of disagreement focuses on exceptions. In his dispute with the Pharisees our Lord responds, “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:[4-]9, NIV).

Although the exceptive clause is omitted in some Greek manuscripts, all the standard Greek texts rightly include it. The Greek word *porneia* (often translated “fornication”) stood broadly for “every kind of unlawful sexual activity (Arndt and Gingrich). Against the Pharisees who would permit many grounds for divorce, Jesus insists that to divorce and remarry another is to commit adultery—with the exception of divorce on the grounds of sexual unfaithfulness (*porneia*).

The force of our Lord's statement cannot be avoided by referring the warning to an engaged couple still unwed but bound by a "betrothal contract." In context, the passages have under consideration a wife in a valid marriage. Moreover, the exceptive phrase cannot be limited merely to "putting away" and unrelated to remarriage. Neither the syntax of the sentence structure nor the good sense of the passage will permit this. It is the remarriage alone that raises the question of adultery, and unless the exception applies to this, the entire statement is nonsense. Separation does not carry with it the idea of adultery; but separation and remarriage does—unless the separation was on the ground of marital unfaithfulness. This is the clear meaning of the passage.

In the deepest sense, this is not really an exception at all. The meaning is not that a Christian can break up a marriage on grounds of adultery or fornication. Rather, a Christian must never break up a marriage. But if his spouse breaks the marriage by sexual unfaithfulness, then the Christian may recognize this fact. The point is that the Christian does not enter into a marriage with the option that he may or may not stick with it for life. As far as he is concerned, there is no alternative to lifelong marriage.

Although the thrust of our Lord's discussion is slightly different in Matthew 5[:31-32]. Sexual unfaithfulness (*porneia*) is again mentioned as the only legitimate ground on which a Christian may secure a divorce.

The Christian husband who breaks up a marriage and divorces his wife is forcing her into a situation where she will become an adulteress if she forms a new alliance. But this would not be the case if the divorce were on grounds of adultery. In the case of a wife who had made herself into an adulteress, by her adultery she would have broken the marriage relationship. The believing husband would neither have broken up the marriage nor be responsible for having pushed his wife into adultery.

The Christian, of course, is not told that he or she must divorce an unfaithful marriage partner. Like Hosea in the Old Testament and like God himself with all of us, the Christian can forgive. The more clearly he recognizes his own lack of perfection, the more will forgiveness seem to be appropriate. But if a spouse has been sexually unfaithful and has thus broken the first marriage relationship by joining another, the believer who divorces an unchaste partner and marries again does not commit adultery and is not guilty of pushing that partner into adultery.

First Corinthians [7:15] takes up quite a different problem. Here the apostle reaffirms the inviolability of the wedding vow, even in marriages with an unbeliever. Paul then adds that a believing wife is not bound if her unbelieving husband willfully and permanently deserts her. In context, this must mean she is free to marry another because it is contrasted with the previous situation in which believers, though they ought never to do so, if they nonetheless actually do separate, are to remain single or be reconciled. By making a sharp contrast between two situations the apostle indicates that in the latter case, the believing wife is not bound to remain single but is free to remarry.

Pressure to lower the biblical standard is unbelievably strong in this antiauthoritarian, individualistic, and sensate culture of contemporary America. Some evangelicals argue that adultery and willful permanent desertion are merely two examples of exceptions to the permanence of marriage. Any breaking of the marriage relationship, even marital incompatibility or falling out of love, is sufficient ground for divorce, they say.

Such a lax interpretation destroys both the letter and the spirit of the biblical injunctions. The point of biblical teaching in the Gospels and in 1 Corinthians is precisely in the opposite direction.

In the final analysis, marriages are made in heaven and, therefore, to break asunder those whom God put together is always wrong under all circumstances. It is never permitted with divine approval. At most, a Christian may recognize that a marriage has been broken by the unchastity or willful permanent desertion of his or her spouse and is free to remarry.

The second issue facing the contemporary evangelical church is: how to treat the divorced and formerly married—particularly when they remarry. All too often the church will not fully accept those who have been divorced even on biblical grounds. Equally disconcerting is the unforgiving and unredemptive attitude of most evangelicals toward those who have been divorced and remarried either in ignorance or in defiance of biblical teaching. Murder and theft the evangelical freely forgives, but not divorce. In part, this different attitude is based on the conviction that other sins are completed and have been repented of, but divorce and remarriage involve a continuous living in adultery. The conclusion is not warranted by the biblical data. The guilty partner in a divorce on the grounds of adultery has already broken the original marriage. The marriage is dissolved and that is why the “innocent” party is free to remarry. But the fact that the original marriage is dissolved means also that the guilty party who remarries is not living in adultery, for his original marriage was dissolved. His sin was in the adultery that brought on the divorce. Since he is no longer married, his new alliance is not [necessarily] adulterous. Similarly in the case of divorce secured on trivial grounds, a move to marriage by either partner serves (as does adultery) to break the original marriage; and on biblical grounds the church is not justified in treating the remarried as though they were continuing to live in adultery.

The church, therefore, must clearly and unhesitatingly teach the biblical condemnation of easy divorce as the moral equivalent of adultery. But it must also learn to forgive and to minister to the fallen. It must not condemn those whom the Bible does not condemn. It must be prepared to bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted, to comfort the lonely and grieving, and to restore to spiritual wholeness those whose lives have fallen apart in the breakup of their marriages.

The evangelical church must not merely sharpen its theology of divorce and marriage, it must also practice the forgiving love of the gospel to bring a healing ministry to all who fall short of the biblical ideal.

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WHY NOT JOINT SERVICES?

- I. The Lord has warned against false doctrine and false teachers.
(Matt. 7:15-17; 16:6, 11, 12; Romans 16:17-18; Ephesians 4:14; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:1-7)
- II. Christians are bidden to abide strictly by His Word.
(John 8:31, 32; John 17:14, 17; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; 2 Tim. 4:1-5)
- III. Ecumenism—attempt to unite while still disagreeing on doctrine.
Ignore the difference, don't mention Baptism, Holy Communion
- IV. "Deed, not Creeds"
But the Lord places doctrine first
(2 Tim. 3:16; John 8:31, 32; Titus 2:1; Titus 1:9-11)
- V. Indifferentism—downgrading of Scripture
Not all errorless
Not any longer applicable
Reason today first
- VI. THIS-world emphasis
Education
Community improvement
Social Work
Legislature

(Make heaven here [the only life!?!] rather than save the soul.)
- VII. Practical Implications
 - A. No union Thanksgiving service, Reformation service, park services, exchange of pulpits
 - B. Such services are God-contradicting:
Impression: differences don't matter
Declaring: Bible can be accepted or rejected
Insisting: All you need is JESUS (But: Matt. 28:20)
 - C. All "Lutherans" cannot worship together (Missouri Synod-Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

Are Lutherans all agreed doctrinally?
Some claim that the Bible has errors: Jesus is not only Way, abortion and homosexuality are not wrong, the business of church is to improve society now.

Lutherans agreed in doctrine may participate in ...
Joint Ascension service, joint Reformation service

The cost to us is that we are often called "Separatists" - "Holier than thou."
(John 15:18; John 17:14, 15; Gal. 4:16; John 16:1-4a)

THE PASTORAL MINISTRY

The ministry of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted so that we may be justified by grace through faith, for the sake of Christ.

The church has the command to appoint ministers. Wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Therefore it is necessary for the church to retain the rights of calling, electing and ordaining ministers. (Titus 1:5-9)

- .. God has given the Word and Sacraments that people may come to faith.
- .. God has arranged that the Word and Sacraments should be taught and administered.
- .. Since such a ministry has been established by God, individuals are called to be ministers by the church.
- .. Those who are called to be ministers hold and exercise the Office of the ministry.
- .. The Power or Office of the Keys, given by Christ to the church, is exercised publicly on behalf of the church by called ministers.
- .. The power of ministers is the power to preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and forgive and retain sins.
- .. The power of the ministry is not a temporal power but a power in spiritual matters of the Word and Sacraments.
- .. Ministers cannot arrogate such authority to themselves, but it must be conferred by the Call of the Church.

THE MEANING OF “PASTOR”

1. “Pastor” means shepherd or care person—one giving spiritual care.
2. The pastor’s position is one of importance and esteem in the congregation. He is called by God through the church. (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Acts 20:28)
3. The Pastor’s work is to feed Christians with what keeps them in the Body of Christ—the Word of God. He does this in preaching, teaching, lecturing, and leading. (John 21:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:2)
4. The pastor’s work comprises the equipping of Christians to carry out their ministry toward one another. He is an enabler. (Ephesians 4:11-12)
5. The pastor’s guidance is to be exerted not by force but by terms of the Word which he speaks and the spiritual life which he fosters. He is a leader. (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7)

THE MULTIPLE MINISTRY

To do the work which every congregation is charged to do, the church must build up Christ’s Kingdom by means of preaching the Gospel. In larger congregations it is necessary for more than one pastor to be called in order to do the work effectively. Each has freedom of expression in his area of primary responsibility with commensurate authority. It is necessary to learn to disagree without being disagreeable. Do all in love.

The multiple ministry is an adventure to be lived. It is a blessing for pastors as well as for God’s people. The purpose of adding to the staff is not to relieve the members of the work they should be doing. Rather, an adequate staff should result in more work (not less) being done by the members of the congregation. It is recognized that certain types of work will continue to be done by the trained personnel.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

1. To administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord;
2. To administer the Holy Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution;
3. To perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring;
4. To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of the congregation, in particular to instruct the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word of God and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the Church;
5. To guide the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church agreeably to the Word of God;
6. To promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to District and Synodical endeavors, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism activities and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work generally;
7. To assist the congregation in adopting administrative policies and procedures which will help it carry out the mission of a Christian congregation;
8. To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct, to endeavor earnestly to live in brotherly unity with the members of the congregation and fellow workers and sister congregations in the District and Synod, and by the grace of God to do everything possible within the sphere of his calling toward the edification of the congregation and the upbuilding of the church in Christ, both locally and generally.

WE OBLIGATE OURSELVES

To receive our minister-elect as a servant of Jesus Christ, to give him the honor and love and obedience which the Word of God prescribes, to aid him by word and deed and to support him with our diligent, faithful assistance and prayers;

To make faithful and regular use of the means of grace that God's enabling power may have free course among us to the end that we may carry out our God-given ministry to the service and glory of God and the welfare of all;

To provide for his proper maintenance according to our ability and to review his salary, housing arrangements, and all allowances periodically.

-E. Gerike / M. E.

CAN A CHRISTIAN BE A MASON?

Clear the air! No one claims all Masons will be damned nor that Masons do no good.

Is everything about it secret? Any good library has Masonic books.

Masonry is a religion. (altar, chaplain, burial ritual)

The religion of Masonry is not the Christian religion with regard to

1. The Bible

Christianity regards it as the only reliable authority. (Isaiah 8:20)

Masonry: "Whatever to any people expresses that will (of God) may be used as a substitute for the Bible in a Masonic lodge." (Mackey's "Encyclopedia")

2. God

Christianity insists on one God of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. (Matt. 28:19)

Masonry: "God is equally present with the pious Hindu in the Temple (one person), the Jew in the Synagogue (two persons), the Mohammedan in the Mosque (one person), and the Christian in the Church (three)."

3. Jesus

Christianity regards Jesus as worthy of honor equal to God's. (John 5:23)

Masonry: "All allusion to the cross was left out because Masonry was not sectarian." (Mackey's "Encyclopedia")

4. Salvation

a. Christianity knows none without Christ. (John 3:18, 36; 1 John 5:12)

Masonry claims salvation for Christ-less by burying Jews, avowed non-Christians (L. Burbank), and says of them in its burial ritual: "This Mason is now in the Grand Lodge above."

b. Christianity says heaven comes alone to those who depend for it upon Jesus Christ. (Gal. 2:16)

Masonry says man earns his own heaven by a good life: "Masonry is a system of morality by the practice of which members may advance from the lodge on earth to the lodge in heaven." (Oliver, "Historical Landmarks of free Masonry")
"As a Master Mason he is taught that, having been faithful to all his trusts, he is at last to receive the reward of his fidelity." (Oliver)

5. The Ten Commandments

Christianity regards them as the standard for the God-pleasing life. (Deut. 6:6, 7)

Masonry counts them not binding upon Masons: "The one test which we can apply to any action is "Which is its effect on life?" (Haywood) (Not, "Thou shalt not kill.")

The Master Mason's oath includes: "I will not have illicit carnal intercourse with a brother Mason's wife, his mother, sister, and daughter, I knowing them to be such, nor suffer it to be done by others if in my power to prevent." (Not, "Thou shalt not commit adultery.")

THESES ON WORSHIP

[The following Theses on Worship are not an official LCMS doctrinal position but were developed by the Council of Presidents for the purpose of discussion on the topic. The Evangelism Commission of the Central Illinois District has found them suitable and beneficial for inclusion in this Handbook and suggest that they can become the foundation for discussion of worship issues at the congregational level, especially among Pastors and Elders.]

I. Worship is not an adiaphoron.

A. Worship is commanded by God.

...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." (Luke 4:8)

B. The highest form of worship is faith.

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:29)

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:9)

It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from him what he promises and offers. (AP IV, 49)

The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the highest way of worshiping Christ. (AP IV, 154)

God wants us to believe him and to accept blessings from him; this he declares to be true worship. (AP IV, 228)

In short, the worship of the New Testament is spiritual; it is the righteousness of faith in the heart and the fruits of faith. (AP XXIV, 27-28)

See also: AC XXVI, 4; AC XXI, 3-4, AP IV, 59.

C. Worship is Trinitarian, and centered on Jesus Christ.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them." (Numbers 6:22-27)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (II Corinthians 13:14)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith... (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:28-29)

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” “Spiritual worship” is a worship in which the spirit knows and takes hold of God, as it does when it fears and trusts him. Therefore the contrast is not only with Levitical worship, where cattle were slaughtered, but with any worship where men suppose they are offering God a work *ex opere operato*. (AP XXIV, 26)

D. The means by which faith is created and nurtured are essential to worship.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17) having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12) For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (I Corinthians 11:23-25)

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. (AC V, 1-2)

It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. (AC XIII, 1)

This use of the sacrament, when faith gives life to terrified hearts, is the worship of the New Testament, because what matters in the New Testament is the spiritual motivation, dying and being made alive. For such use Christ instituted it, as he commanded (1 Cor. 11:24), “Do this in remembrance of me.” (AP XXIV, 71)

II. The Scriptures and confessions give the people of God considerable freedom in choosing those forms, rites, and ceremonies that aid the worship of God.

A. Neither the Scriptures nor the Confessions prescribe forms, rites or ceremonies for worship.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (Ephesians 5:19)

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

We are talking about true spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God. For this unity, we say, a similarity of human rites, whether universal or particular, is not necessary. The righteousness of faith is not a righteousness tied to certain traditions, as the righteousness of the law was tied to the Mosaic ceremonies, because this righteousness of the heart is something that quickens the heart. To this quickening human traditions, whether universal or particular, contribute nothing . . . (AP VII/VII, 30-32)

We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church. (FC SD X, 9)

Therefore we reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word the following teachings:

1) That human precepts and institutions in the church are to be regarded as in themselves divine worship or a part of it. . . . 4) When such external ceremonies and indifferent things are abolished in a way which suggests that the community of God does not have the liberty to avail itself of one or more such ceremonies according to its circumstances and as it may be most beneficial to the church. (FC Ep X, 8, 912)

See also: FC SD 9, 30; Luther, *Latin Mass*, AE 53:37.

B. The liturgy, a true service, is that which aids both the proclamation and the hearing of the gospel for the sake of faith, that is, true worship.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. (AC IV)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (AP XXVI, 3)

See also: Luther, *German Mass*, AE 53:90.

III. The liturgy of the Church builds a framework for the worshiper to live the life of faith.

A. Liturgy of the Church teaches the full counsel of God.

for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (II Peter 1:3-4)

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity. This is the true Christian faith, that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God. (Athanasian Creed, 1-3)

And the Apology says: “The preaching of the law is not sufficient for genuine and salutary repentance; the Gospel must also be added to it.” Thus both doctrines are always together, and both of them have to be urged side by side, but in proper order and with the correct distinction. (SD, V, 15)

B. The elements of Liturgy, (*ordo*), tell the full story of salvation.

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Psalm 78:4-7)

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized? (Acts 8:35)

Nowhere do they teach that sins are forgiven freely for Christ’s sake and that by this faith we obtain the remission of sins. Thus they obscure the glory of Christ, deprive consciences of a firm consolation, and abolish true worship (that is, the exercise of faith struggling against despair). (Treatise, 44)

C. The liturgy of the Church moves worshipers into the world to live for and to proclaim the Good News to others.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:1-4)

Thus far we have learned the first three commandments, which are directed toward God.

First, we should trust, fear, and love him with our whole heart all the days of our lives.

Secondly, we should not misuse his holy name in support of lies or any evil purpose whatsoever, but use it for the praise of God and the benefit and salvation of our neighbor and ourselves.

Thirdly, on holy days or days of rest we should diligently devote ourselves to God’s Word so that all our conduct and life may be regulated by it. (LC, 103)

After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our afflictions. Then we also begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses. (AP IV, 125)

IV. Imposing a certain form, rite or ceremony on the Church burdens men's consciences, thereby militating against the Gospel.

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:9)

And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." (Luke 11:46)

The Gospel clearly testifies that traditions should not be imposed on the church to merit forgiveness of sins or to be acts of worship that please God as righteousness or to burden consciences so that their omission is judged to be a sin. (AP XXVIII, 11)

Therefore we reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word the following teachings:

... 2) When such ceremonies, precepts, and institutions are forcibly imposed upon the community of God as necessary things, in violation of the Christian liberty which it has in external matters. (FC Ep X, 8, 10)

See also: FC SD X, 15, 21, 27.

V. Great care is necessary in choosing forms, rites and ceremonies because they either support or hinder true worship. There are no "neutral" forms.

A. Forms of true worship are in accord with the Word of God.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

Your Word is truth. (John 17:17)

... take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way .

.. (Deuteronomy 12:30-31)

... because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25)

We should not consider as matters of indifference, and we should avoid as forbidden by God, ceremonies which are basically contrary to the Word of God, even though they go under the name and guise of external adiaphora and are given a different color from their true one. (FC SD X, 5)

See also: FC EP X, 5; AC XXVIII, 23, 30; Luther, AE 35:82.

B. Forms of true worship help to preserve order.

But all things should be done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

We on our part also retain many ceremonies and traditions (such as the liturgy of the Mass and various canticles, festivals, and the like) which serve to preserve order in the church. (AC XXVI, 40)

Neither are useless and foolish spectacles, which serve neither good order, Christian discipline, nor evangelical decorum in the church, true adiaphora or things indifferent. (FC SD X, 7, 13-14)

See also: AP XV, 20.

C. forms of true worship do not burden the consciences of the people of God.

At the same time, however, the people are instructed that such outward forms of service do not make us righteous before God and that they are to be observed without burdening consciences, which is to say that it is not a sin to omit them if this is done without causing scandal. (AC XXVI, 41)

This subject of traditions involves many difficult and controversial questions, and we know from actual experience that traditions are real snares for consciences. When they are required as necessary, they bring exquisite torture to a conscience that has omitted some observance. On the other hand, their abrogation involves its own difficulties and problems. (AP XV, 49)

D. Forms of true worship are edifying to the local congregation and therefore also to the surrounding community.

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. (Acts 15:28-29)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. Therefore we keep Latin for the sake of those who study and understand it, and we insert German hymns to give the common people something to learn that will arouse their faith and fear.

This has always been the custom in the churches. Though German hymns have varied in frequency, yet almost everywhere the people sang in their own language. (AC XXIV, 3-4)
See also: Luther, *German Mass*, AE 53, 80; AC XXVIII, 73-74.

E. forms of true worship teach the faith.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ. (AC XXIV, 3)

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (AP XXIV, 3)
See also: AP XV, 20.

VI. Uniformity in forms, rites and ceremonies while desirable, is not essential to the unity of the Church

But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility. So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's day, and the other more important feast days. With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced. (AP VII/VIII, 33)

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. (AC VII, 2-3)
But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men . . . (AP VII/VII, 33)

If human traditions are not acts of worship necessary for righteousness before God, it follows that somebody can be righteous and a child of God even if he does not observe traditions that have been maintained elsewhere . . . (AP VII/VIII, 34)

The ancient Fathers maintained such liberty with respect to outward ceremonies, for in the East they kept Easter at a time different from that in Rome. When some regarded this difference a divisive of the church, they were admonished by others that it was not necessary to maintain uniformity in such customs. Irenaeus said, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy unity in faith," . . . (AC XXVI, 43-44)

See also: Luther, *German Mass*, AE 53:80, 68.

VII. The polarization that is affecting the Church concerning the issue of forms, rites and ceremonies is sinful and hinders the proclamation of the Gospel.

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:24-25)

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. (Galatians 5:19-21)

We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith." (FC Ep X, 7)

VIII. The people of God are commanded by God to keep talking with each other, under His Word, so that divisions are healed and the Church is united in doctrine and practice.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . . (Ephesians 4:15)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

In the church we must keep this teaching, that we receive forgiveness of sins freely for Christ's sake by faith. We must also keep the teaching that human traditions are useless acts of worship, and that therefore neither sin nor righteousness depends upon food, drink, clothing, and similar matters. (AP XXVIII, 7)

S.D.G.
LC-MS Council of Presidents

WINNING THE LOST

Introduction: Following is a study of an average hundred church members:

- 5 cannot ever be found
- 20 don't pray
- 20 don't read the Bible
- 30 rarely attend church
- 40 have no stewardship consciousness
- 50 never attend Bible Class
- 60 never attend a special service
- 75 never engage in organized work of the church
- 90 have no family worship
- 95 admitted they never won a soul for Jesus.

I. PRAY TO WIN

A young student asked Spurgeon, "What is the secret of your power? What work will I have to do to get the power you have?" Spurgeon replied, "Knee work, young man! Knee work."

Jesus went out on the hill to pray and continued all night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12) And the Lord said to Simon, "Simon, I have prayed for you." (Luke 22:31-32) They crucified Jesus, but Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:33, 34)

Pray to win. Pray—

Lead me to some soul today. Oh, teach me, Lord, Just what to say; Friends of mine are lost in sin, and cannot find their way.
Few there are who seem to care, and few there are who pray, melt my heart and fill my life—Give me one soul today.

II. SEE TO TELL THEM—TELL THEM TO WIN THEM.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Lasting fruit in New Year | Parable: Fig Tree, Luke 13:6-9 |
| 2. You are salt! Light! | Matthew 5:13-16 |
| 3. You are commissioned! | John 20:20-23 |
| 4. Have compassion! | Matthew 9:35-38 |
| 5. Holy Ghost blesses your witnessing! | Acts 1:8; Acts 4:31 |

Discuss:

Is it a sin not to pray for souls? Is it a sin not to witness for Christ?

Are you making a prayer list of souls?

If you pray earnestly, will you hesitate to visit them?

What makes us hesitate to talk about Christ?

Do you need training in soul winning?

CONSIDERATIONS

1. We face a world of billions of people, two thirds know nothing of Christ ... a world population which grows at the rate of 60,000 persons a day; more spiritual need and human misery than the world has ever known; Over the last generation the world's population went from 2.8 billion to 6.6 billion. THIS STAGGERS THE IMAGINATION! It places an even greater responsibility on the Christian Church. Are we going to be able to keep pace with this rapid increase in bringing them the Gospel?

2. If each member of a congregation of 300 communicants would go out and win one for Christ the first year. There would be 600; the second year 1200, and so on. Were that pace to maintain, over 600 million would have been approached in 21 years. In less than 24 years EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD will have been contacted.

Martin Rothe

SUGGESTIONS FOR LAY VISITORS

I. Some of the problems

A. In ourselves

1. lack of love
2. lack of zeal
3. conditioned not to “talk religion”

B. In our prospects

1. “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor. 2:14)
“No man can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:3)
2. Unsatisfactory experiences with a church.
3. False impressions of the church
4. Excuses (whether clearly expressed or not)
 - a. guilt
 - b. pride
 - c. other interests
 - d. other persons

II. Some of the answers

A. For ourselves

1. God’s promises with regard to salvation and work for the Kingdom
2. Prayer
3. Concern over the destiny of unbelievers

B. Dealing with prospects

1. You can’t work out every answer in advance.
2. You are not out to win arguments but souls.
3. Some problems are only “smokescreens.”
4. Accentuate the positive:
 - a. Appeal of Jesus
 - b. Appeal of Bible
 - c. Appeal of heaven
5. Speak with conviction by speaking of what you know.
6. Guide the conversation but don’t monopolize it.
7. Leave an appropriate tract.
8. Leave the door open for another visit.
9. Not every call will be successful—our business is to make calls—conversion is God’s business.
10. Carry a stock of a few important Bible verses.
(John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Mark 16:16; Romans 3:28)
11. If your prospect has
 - a. obstacle—help him remove or go around it.
 - b. excuse—use a common sense answer.
 - c. closed mind—depend on prayer and the Spirit’s help.

III. Our goal

- A. Arouse sincere interest in personal mission work.
- B. Training and practice in soul winning.
- C. Helping others to make some spiritual step forward.

-Martin Rothe

THE PASTOR’S SALARY

This is a sensitive topic. It can make the pastor, elders and voters ill at ease. It is a topic that some would like to avoid, but Christians must not and cannot treat this matter lightly. God expects the congregation to fulfill its responsibility as His servants in this area.

1. The Order of Installation says in regard to church officers’ duties that one is to “PROVIDE FOR PASTOR’S SUPPORT AND FOR ALL OTHER NECESSARY EXPENSES.” Many constitutions charge the elders with the responsibility of reviewing and suggesting the salary level for the pastor.
2. Following are some things to think about and discuss.
 - a. 1 Peter 5:2—God’s message to the pastor
Many congregations quote this passage when a pastor asks for a raise and they forget they are judging the pastor when they say that he is greedy. Isn’t this God’s message to the pastor? Doesn’t God know the heart? Is the congregation to be the judge in this matter? Discuss with Matthew 7:1, 2 in mind.
 - b. God’s message to the congregation
1 Cor. 9:7-12b—study keeping context in mind
1 Tim. 5:17, 18—what does “double honor” mean? What does the context suggest? Look carefully at verse 18.
3. Are pastors overpaid
 - a. Some members think so, but maybe it’s because they have not really evaluated this matter and looked at their expectations of a pastor.
 - b. Maybe the pastor is lazy
 - c. Though being a pastor is a Divine Call from God, should members conclude that this means he must be willing to put in more hours and take less salary? Discuss.
4. Things which might be helpful in determining a pastor’s salary

<u>PASTOR</u>	<u>HOURS WORK PER WEEK</u>	<u>AVERAGE WORKER</u>
On call 24 hours per day, no overtime		Puts in 40 hours per week plus increase pay for overtime with 2 days a week off and evenings
Most work 50-60 hours per week		
Only 1 day a week off		

<u>JOB DUTIES</u>	
Teaching, preaching, counseling administrator, personal calls on sick shut-ins, etc.	usually in area of a job skill

<u>YEARS OF EDUCATION</u>	
6-8 year of college	high school—4 years of college

<u>VACATIONS</u>	
Vary 2-5 weeks	Vary 1-5 weeks

DETERMINING “TAKE HOME” PAY

1. Check with your county to find out what the average “take home pay” was per household in 2010. (This is the paycheck after taxes are withheld.) You can also get these figures by doing a web search (“take home” example is for a family of 4).
Examples: Adams County \$41,734 median household income = \$35,394 “take home”
Sangamon County \$51,057 median household income = \$42,326 “take home”
2. Many members mistakenly determine their pastor’s salary by adding up the figures in the annual report of the congregation such as (District guidelines approx. 5 years experience):
Base salary: \$40,000; Housing allowance (includes utilities): \$10,000; Concordia Plan B (includes wife and children): \$26,000; Car Allowance; \$4,800 for a total of \$80,800.
To consider all this as a pastor’s salary is unrealistic. It is not his “take home” pay. Consider and compare the following.
 - a. CAR ALLOWANCE is the amount a pastor receives for doing church work and is not salary. The alternative to a car allowance is for the church to buy a car, provide insurance, gas and upkeep. Not to pay the pastor for use of his car would be like asking a trucker to use his truck to haul my wheat or goods to another city and not pay him for the expenses incurred.
 - b. CONCORDIA WORKER BENEFIT PLANS is a fringe benefit. Many working people receive such benefits from their place of work, but they do not see this on their pay check. FRINGE BENEFITS include health and disability insurance, retirement plans, social security payments by the employer, etc. Pastors must pay their own Social Security and Medicare taxes on a self-employed basis.
 - c. BUSINESS EXPENSES are not incurred by the average worker. Many pastors must take from their salary to pay for business expenses such as books, clerical robes, shirts, office expenses, computers and software, etc.

FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLE of how to determine the pastor’s “take home pay” so that it is in tune with the average home.

\$80,800.00	Total of items in annual report
<u>- 4,800.00</u>	Car allowance (reimbursement of expenses)
76,000.00	
<u>- 26,000.00</u>	Fringe benefits paid by church (Concordia Worker Benefit Plans)
50,000.00	
<u>- 7,700.00</u>	Social Security taxes paid by pastor because he is considered self-employed
42,300.00	
<u>- 4,300.00</u>	Federal & State income taxes (varies) withheld from most worker’s checks
38,000.00	
<u>- 1,000.00</u>	Business expenses for church work
\$37,000.00	“TAKE HOME PAY”

3. The district publishes guidelines online yearly to help in determining your pastor’s salary.

When a pastor and his elders and the members of the congregation take a realistic look at the pastor’s needs in regards to salary, vacation time and days off, it will create better relationships and blessing will flow.

-Gary D. Fortkamp / M.E.

Pastor-Elder Handbook

SUPPLEMENTS

MINISTERING TO INACTIVE MEMBERS

Before beginning this program it is important that the congregation is clear about its discipling goals. Hopefully it wants to “build up the body of Christ”, rather than just “clean up the membership rolls.” If mutual ministry is the method, everyone involved can grow.

Everything done in this process should be carried out with the knowledge and approval of the staff, elders, and voters. If the elders are the main ones making these calls then the pastor is free to be the pastor of the people. If the inactive members get mad at anyone (though surprisingly few did) it will be at the elders and not the pastor.

Policy areas which need to be decided on:

1. What measure do we use to determine who is an inactive member (Holy Communion attendance, worship attendance)? Hopefully, financial offerings will not be considered, because it is often suspected that money is all the church is interested in. We used Holy Communion, which was the only record we had.
2. When do we start calling on people? After an absence of 3, 6, 12 months, more than a year? We used Abdon’s suggestions on this (see page 72). But at the beginning we had to develop a policy for dealing with the 600 (of 1800) communicants who had not communed in a year or more—for about 100 of them it had been over 10 years.
3. What is the type of contact—a letter, a phone call, a personal visit? We started with those who had not communed in 10 years or more. We attempted/made a personal visit. If we could not find them at home, we tried a phone call. If they were not at home or could not be reached at home or did not receive Holy Communion three months after they were called on, the elders sent them a letter which urged them to make an appointment within the next two weeks to see the pastor to discuss their spiritual condition. If they did not see the pastor or attend Holy Communion by the next Voters’ meeting, their name would be brought up for self-exclusion at that Voters’ meeting (date given). Then we called on those inactive for 5 or more years. We made several calls on these and sent letters. If no response we followed the same process as above. Then we called on those inactive for 1 to 5 years using the same process. Then we were ready for the evangelism program on page 72.
4. What do we do with people we cannot locate because we have no accurate address or phone number? We printed their names in the monthly newsletter and asked for help in locating them. Those with whom we had no contact for 6 or more months were considered self-excluded until contact was re-established. Re-admittance was decided by the elders on an individual basis.
5. When do we send the names of those living permanently out of town to a pastor in that area? Forms are available from Concordia Publishing House for this.
6. How do we accept self-excluded members back into the congregation? Especially for those who were absent for 5 or more years, we insisted on them attending an adult information class first.

7. How old are the communicant members before being called on? We called on all ages, but we did not self-exclude anyone under 25 years old. We felt there might be too many things unsettled in their lives until then (job, location, spouse, friends) to have them self-excluded.
8. When/how do we train people in how to transfer their membership? Usually never. This information should be in a newsletter at least once a year.
9. What other support systems will this effort have (in addition to the policy statements of the voters)? We asked the pastor for sermons on tough love, church discipline, discipleship; articles were written for the newsletter; the congregational prayer chain was involved each week, especially from 7-9 p.m. on Tuesdays.
10. Who can be involved in the calling? Ordinarily, this is work the elders will do. But we did not see this work as limited to the present Board of Elders. We included former elders and men with one or more of the gifts of exhortation, teaching, wisdom, discernment. We generally paired up these non-elders with elders.
11. Calling in pairs or singly? Especially in the first year we found the calling in pairs to be very effective. One elder led the call, the other prayed and added comment as needed. Once trained, the experienced men could take new callers with them for training. After the first year some elders went on calls by themselves. The debriefing at the end of the evening was good for support and additional learning.
12. How will we make the people feel “at home” in the congregation again? In addition to the worship services there need to be multiple small group opportunities for the inactives to become part of. For example, choirs, home Bible studies, special interest groups, etc. Determining the gifts of the inactives would be an excellent avenue for involving them in the life of the parish. See Win and Charles Arn’s The Master’s Plan to set this up.

TRAINING SESSIONS FOR ELDERS WHO ARE CALLING ON INACTIVE MEMBERS

(Each session is 1_ hours in length)

Before the sessions began a commitment was made to meet eight Tuesday evenings in a row, 3 of which would be training sessions. On the 5 calling nights we met for a brief look at Scripture, and prayer, paired off (one leading the call, the other the prayer partner), made the calls, returned around 9 p.m. for sharing of calls and prayers. The last evening was also spent in evaluation. We had 6 to 8 consecutive Tuesday nights of calling in fall and spring. This gave mutual support, encouragement and debriefing. Thus we knew which elders made which calls.

SESSION I

- A. Open discussion on lessons for elders from: (put items on board)
- Luke 15—found, lost, found (sheep, coin, 2 sons)
 - Luke 23:34—weeping over Jerusalem
 - Matthew 18:15-22—brotherly love and discipline
 - Ephesians 4:15—speaking the truth in love—tough love
- B. Fill out and discuss “My Priorities List” on page 73 and how and when to use the list on a call. Be in touch with your feelings about filling in the priorities sheet. It will sensitize you to how other people will feel. On a call remember to wait quietly while the people complete it.

Review Evangel-Gram article on how to handle the priorities- you will develop this further from your debriefing sessions after you’ve made calls. You may also add, change, or delete items from priority list.

- C. Assignment for the next time: write out a paragraph or two on “What Jesus means to Me”.
- D. Close with prayer.

SESSION II

- A. Open with discussion of Psalm 1 (value of being close to the Word—problems of being distant from Word). Then have some elders share some thoughts from their “What Jesus means to Me.”
- B. Go through outline of a call (so we know where we are going—page 74)
- C. Outline for writing a prayer:
- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| <u>A</u> doration | Time of prayer: at home on the call
(silent and spoken) |
| <u>C</u> onfession | |
| <u>T</u> hanksgiving | |
| <u>S</u> upplication | |
- D. Listening skills—examples on calls from Augsburg, Caring Enough To Confront.
1. I win, you lose—Mark 11:15-19; Matthew 23
 2. You win, I lose—Passion accounts
 3. I withdraw—Luke 4:14-30
 4. We meet halfway (compromise)—Matt. 22:15-29
 5. I care and confront—John 8:1-11 (Jesus used all of these)

- E. Keep conversation in focus with “But what does Jesus mean to you?” Memorizing lists of objections and how to answer them is fine for those who can do it. But while we’re half-way through the answer to one objection the people are already thinking up the next question. This one question gets the conversation back on track. It lets the people wrestle with Jesus rather than with my apologetic skills. Kennedy questions can also be used.
- F. Work of the Church. Most of this (Bible passages, listening skills, work of the church) is for background and resources for the elders—so they have a grasp of the bigger picture of the church. It is not to be a long lecture to be given to the inactives.
1. Function—“What” the church is to do—there is no disagreement in congregations or denominations that these are the tasks of the church.
 - a. Worship—sacramental and sacrificial
 - b. Fellowship—created by Holy Spirit
 - c. Service—non-verbal
 - d. Proclamation (education, evangelism, law & gospel, and listening are part of this).
 2. Form—“How” the tasks are carried out. It follows function and is influenced by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26: 1 Corinthians 13), but this is where the complaints are. Forms fussed about are: I don’t like that pastor, hymnal, music, way of communing, stewardship approach—all forms, and not as important as the function (they aren’t complaining about the function!). Listen to all objections with active listening to make sure you heard them accurately and then get back on track with “But what does Jesus mean to you?”
- G. Assignment for next time: “What does my congregation mean to me?” What does Holy Communion mean to me? Write a prayer for an inactive member.

SESSION III

- A. Discuss Titus 3:1-11, ask elders to share some prayers they have written.
- B. “Expectations I have of my congregation.”
- C. “Expectations I have of myself toward my congregation.”
- D. Discuss Mount Olive “Evangelism Policy” (Page 72)
- E. How are transfers handled with LC-MS, other Lutherans, non-Lutherans, and shut-in procedures (who is a shut-in and how are they put on or off of a list). See transfer requests on bottom of page 73.
- F. Role-play some calls.
- G. Value of Holy Communion (only record we are using) Luther: Once a week should be enough. Be aware of measure(s) your congregation is using, e.g. Communion attendance, worship attendance—hopefully not the offerings because we don’t want to get into that on this kind of call.
- H. Select partners for next time and for next time have 5 calls in same geographical area lined up for each pair.
- I. Close with prayer.

Love is the motivation of the following evangelism policy.

MT. OLIVE MEMBERSHIP EVANGELISM POLICY

The following procedure regarding “delinquent” or “inactive” members shall be followed under the direction of the pastor and the Board of Elders.

When a member has not communed for three months, he or she will receive a visit from their respective elder, and shall be admonished and encouraged. If such a member has not communed after 6 months, he or she shall receive another visit by at least two members of the congregation, one the respective elder and the pastor or some other concerned member of the congregation. Additional admonition and encouragement shall be given. If, after 9 months, such a member still has not communed and is not attending the worship services of the church, he or she shall be evangelically admonished more firmly and told that if such neglect continues for another 3 months, it shall be interpreted as impenitence, lack of faith in Jesus Christ, and indifference to church membership, privileges, and responsibilities. If, then, after 12 months, the member has not responded to Christian admonitions as outlined above, the member’s name shall be transferred to the mission file of the congregations or turned over to the Board of Evangelism. The individual shall be notified of such action by registered mail and shall be declared to have excluded himself from this Christian congregation.

Such self-exclusion releases the individual from all responsibilities to this congregation, but it also excludes the member from the privileges of church membership, such as Christian burial, Holy Communion, transfer to a sister congregation, right of marriage by the pastor, etc., and of any claim against the properties of this congregation.

SUCH A PERSON, HOWEVER, WILL AT ALL TIEMS BE CORDIALLY WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL DIVINE SERVICES IN OUR CHURCH.

Excommunication is to be applied to any member who conducts himself in an un-Christian manner; i.e., to one who openly adheres to false doctrine, gives evidence of an immoral and offensive life, or willfully despises the preaching of the Gospel and the Lord’s Supper. The Board of Elders shall administer church discipline in behalf of the congregation.

Discipline recognizes a distinction between excommunication and self-exclusion. Excommunication is expulsion from the congregation. Self-exclusion is precisely what it says—the individual excludes himself from the congregation by his own impenitence and unbelief.

The Board of Elders is delegated the authority and responsibility for dealing with discipline situations in ORDER TO AVOID HAVING ALL THE “DETAILS” REVEALED IN AN OPEN MEETING SUCH AS VOTERS’ OR CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS. The congregation retains the right to question any disciplinary actions and retains ultimate control.

(Or the voters may want all names brought to them for action.)

MY PRIORITIES

(What is most important to me in my life?)

Put a #1 by the item you consider to be most important, #2 by next important, etc. Skip those items which you feel do not apply to your life.

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| _____ Children | _____ Community | _____ Congregation |
| _____ Friends | _____ God | _____ Health |
| _____ House | _____ Job/School | _____ Parents |
| _____ Self | _____ Spouse (Fiancé) | _____ Recreation |

(This could be reproduced on a half sheet of paper and handed to members of the family present in the home. On the back side you can place name, address, phone number of congregation, time of services, Sunday school and Bible classes, adult information classes, and in which services Holy Communion is available)

It would be a good idea to leave the last Sunday bulletin at the home. Write a note on it and leave it if no one is there. At least they will know you cared and called.

A supply of each of these sheets should be taken into the home by the elders. No transfers, etc., are made without written, signed statements.

I, the undersigned, am requesting the following change in my membership status at _____ Lutheran Church, 12345 Church St., Central, Illinois, 61234:

1. _____ transfer to _____ Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)
address _____

2. _____ release, because I am joining _____ Church (not LC-MS)
address _____

3. _____ removal from the membership list.
Reasons: _____

Names of all members in the family who are affected by this change.

_____	_____
_____	_____
Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: _____	Signature: _____
	_____ (date)

OUTLINE FOR AN ELDER CALL (in the home)

- I. Introductions and getting acquainted should take about 5-10 minutes.
- II. “We came here tonight as members of the same congregation to which you belong. We came as friends, not foes, listeners, not accusers. We have noticed from your Communion attendance (or whatever measure is used) that the last time you received the Sacrament was _____. Is that accurate?”
- III. “In that connection, we would like to hear your story.” (Here they can respond to their Communion record, or anything else.) “Thank you for sharing that.” If they attack or become defensive, ask:
- IV. “What does Jesus mean to you?” (Give them plenty of time to respond) After they are finished, you might want to say what He means to you. (If conversation is very open in III., you would go to V. and skip IV.)
- V. “I have found this helpful for me to sort out my priorities. Would you be willing to take a few minutes to fill in this list? There is no right or wrong list, it will just help me understand better where you are coming from.”
- VI. “This is what God provides for you through our congregation. Worship, fellowship, hospital calls, funeral, education, etc....” Explain how to register for Holy Communion, and how it is served, and at which services. This should be listed on the back side of the Priority Sheet.
- VII. “What do you expect from yourself toward our Lord through our congregation? To what do you want to commit yourself?” (We found that people usually were not ready for this if they were inactive for more than a year.)

“To grow in your faith life I would strongly encourage you to attend an adult information class on ...”

If they want to transfer or have their name removed have them fill out and sign the half sheet on Page 72.
- VIII. Closing prayer. (This is very important. A prayer may not have been said in that home for many years.)

Subsequent calls can cover different areas of caring.

Note all the places where we do the listening.

Royal W. Natzke

Books For Further Study

- Abdon, Donald A. Training and Equipping the Saints. Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, Inc. 1977. (LC-MS attempt at organizing and equipping lay workers to carry out the Great Commission. Good discussion of signs of spiritual delinquency and handling objections which callers may encounter.)
- Arn, Win & Charles. The Master's Plan For Making Disciples. Pasadena: Church Growth, 1984. (Good on relational evangelism and making people feel at home in the church.)
- Augsburger, David. Caring Enough To Confront. Glendale, CA: Regal Books Div. 1979. (Working through conflict, exercising tough love.)
- Bagby, Daniel G. Understanding Anger In The Church. Nashville: Broadman, 1979. (Excellent on positive approach to dealing with anger, especially with angry - often inactive - members - very practical.)
- Gallup, George Jr. Religion in America 1982. Princeton: Princeton Religious Research Center, Inc., 1982 and The Unchurched American, 1978. (Good statistics on who is unchurched, why, and what the unchurched want from a church. Newer editions are published periodically.)
- Hale, J. Russell. The Unchurched: Who They Are and Why They Stay Away. New York: Harper & Row, 1980. (Report of interviews with people in 6 most unchurched counties in U.S.)
- Rauff, Edward A. Why People Join The Church. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979. (Report of visits in some areas which Hale researched, to see why unchurched people did join a church again.)
- Harre, Alan F. Close the Back Door: Ways To Create A Caring Congregational Fellowship. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984.
- Knutson, Gerhard. Ministry To Inactives: A Manual For Establishing A Listening Witness To Inactive Members. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979. (This manual started my thinking in the approach I used.)
- Rainer, Thom S. Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. (Insights gained from interviews with formerly unchurched individuals about why they have now joined churches.)

Royal W. Natzke / M.E.

OUR PASTOR’S JOB DESCRIPTION

This study guide has been developed to assist pastors and elders in strengthening the pastoral office in their congregations. It simply takes the accepted tasks of the pastoral office and helps pastors and elders to arrive at a unity of expectations of the pastor. It will also help the pastor to be responsive to the needs and desires of the congregation from his ministry.

The center column lists fourteen areas of work in the pastoral ministry. They are listed randomly so that there is no indication of one being more important than another.

The left-hand column of lines is for rating the duties according to the following:

1. highest importance
2. high importance
3. important
4. not very important
5. not important at all

The right-hand column is for each participant to write down his/her estimate of time needed each week to accomplish that particular area of tasks.

PROCEDURE

1. The study guides are distributed with the leader giving an explanation of the center column of tasks in the parish ministry. Adjustments may be made according to the individual parish.
2. When everyone understands the tasks of the pastoral office the participants are to complete the left-hand column which rates the importance of this particular area of tasks in total ministry. Now develop a group rating through a composite of individual ratings and group decision.
3. Since a pastor is going to be unable to accomplish all of these tasks, the three receiving the lowest rating should be automatically dropped from his expected duties.
4. Now that the pastor’s duties have been rated and ranked, the group is to individually estimate the amount of time in the third column to accomplish each area of tasks per week. When this is completed a composite of the group should be compiled. Eliminate and adjust the expected planned weekly duties of the pastor to be no more than 50 hours. He will be adding from three to ten hours of unplanned time each week.

MINISTERIAL TASKS

RATINGS			TIME (WEEKLY)	
My own	Group		My own	Group

_____	_____	<u>COUNSELING</u>	_____	_____
		Marriage and Family, Personal, Pre-Marital, Support at Time of Death, Visiting bereaved after death (non-members also?) Problem solving.		

_____	_____	<u>YOUTH MINISTRY</u>	_____	_____
		Presence at meetings and activities, planning Youth Ministry, leading topics and devotions		

RATINGS
My own Group

TIME (WEEKLY)
My own Group

EVANGELISM

_____ _____

Visitation, Training visitors, Membership classes
Preparation for baptism.

_____ _____

MEMBER VISITATION

_____ _____

Active members

_____ _____

_____ _____

Inactive members

_____ _____

_____ _____

Social (receptions, dinners, parties)

_____ _____

_____ _____

Writing notes of thanks and congratulations

_____ _____

_____ _____

Writing letters to college students and
service personnel

_____ _____

_____ _____

Total

_____ _____

HOSPITAL AND SHUT-IN

_____ _____

Private communions, devotions & prayers

_____ _____

_____ _____

How frequently should the pastor visit Hospital?

_____ _____

Estimate number of visits per week _____

CIVIC SUPPORT

_____ _____

Organizations, task forces, or special agencies,
Ministerial association

_____ _____

TEACHING

_____ _____

Sunday Bible class, Mid-week Bible classes, Youth
Confirmation, school staff, Sunday school staff,
Scouting program

_____ _____

PREACHING

_____ _____

(Plan _ hour minimum preparation for each minute
In the pulpit)

_____ _____

WORSHIP

_____ _____

Bulletin preparations, hymns, liturgy & prayers,
weddings, funerals, conducting services. (How
Many weddings & funerals each year—10 hours each)

_____ _____

FUND RAISING

_____ _____

Writing articles, sermons, personal encouragement,
planning stewardship program

_____ _____

RATINGS			TIME (WEEKLY)	
My own	Group		My own	Group
<u>CONGREGATIONAL ORGANIZATION</u>				
_____	_____	Meetings to attend, consultation with leaders, preparing goals for congregational ministry	_____	_____
<u>CHURCH AT LARGE</u>				
_____	_____	Serve on positions or as guest speaker for conventions, circuit, LLL, District, LWML	_____	_____
<u>PASTORAL GROWTH</u>				
_____	_____	Personal Bible reading & study, conferences, seminars, graduate schooling	_____	_____
<u>ADMINISTRATION</u>				
_____	_____	Office manager, church business manager, scheduling use of buildings, implementing programs, reading, sorting & answering mail, newsletter, writing and publishing	_____	_____
			TOTAL HOURS	_____

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

How many evenings a week should the pastor have for himself and/or his family? _____

Should the congregation accept the pastor scheduling his duties around participating in his children's school programs or social events?

Agree Disagree I feel the pastor should be on call 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Agree Disagree I should feel free to call upon the pastor at any time of the day or night in an emergency

Agree Disagree The pastor should take time off regularly.
(How much per week? _____)

As a regularly employed lay person I have _____ days off per week. Apart from vacation I have _____ days for holidays and special occasions. I have _____ vacation weeks.

I believe the pastor should have _____ days off each week. He should feel free to take about _____ days surrounding national holidays and special personal days apart from his vacation. He should have _____ weeks of vacation time.

WHAT GOD'S WORD HAS TO SAY ABOUT THE HOLY MINISTRY

Study the following passages carefully.

HEBREWS 13:17—obey, submit

God gives this rule. It is not man made. Basically it is the same as the rule that the wife submit to her husband. If lay people submit, beautiful things happen.

HEBREWS 13:7

- a. People are to follow our faith (look to us).
- b. Pastors are leaders. Lay people are not to rise above their pastor.

GALATIANS 6:6-7

- a. People have an obligation to care for their pastor.
- b. God is not pleased with people who do not care for the financial needs of their pastor.

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-18

- a. Let the elders (pastors) that rule well be counted worthy of double honor.
- b. The laborer (pastor) is worthy of his reward.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13

- a. This passage points out that laymen have a responsibility to know their pastor.
- b. Pastors are to be esteemed for their God-given office.

LUKE 10:16

- a. People who despise faithful pastors or lay people are despising God.
- b. Those who listen are listening to God and will find comfort.

1 CHRONICLES 16:22

- a. This passage gives a word of warning.
- b. God says “Do not touch my anointed ones; (Pastors are called anointed in this Bible verse.) do my prophets no harm.”
- c. What is the result when people work against faithful pastors?

-Gary D. Fortkamp

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TRAINING EVANGELISM CALLERS

Please incorporate these tips for effective communication into your evangelism training program by role-playing visits. Role-playing will allow you to demonstrate both the right way and the wrong way to communicate effectively, and help your evangelism callers identify their communication strengths and weaknesses.

A. Ground Rules for Effective Communication

1. Both parties have the same rights.
2. Methods to be used must be “out in the open.”
3. Values of both parties must be given the same attention. (Very difficult to do. Understand the distinction between “acceptance” and “agreement.”)
4. Both parties have the right to make their own final choice.
5. Assume and express the worth of the other party.

B. Why Communication Is So Difficult

1. We speak about 100-150 words per minute, think about 400-500 words per minute, receive 7 bits of information per second consciously and up to 1,000 bits subconsciously. There are actually six individual messages in a dialogue:

- a. What you mean to say.
- b. What you actually say.
- c. What the other person hears.
- d. What the other person thinks he or she hears.
- e. What the other person says in response.
- f. What you think the other person says.

2. The “transmitter” often veils or couches his real feelings and actions with defense mechanisms (projection, digression into stories, etc.). Perhaps real feelings and actions are too painful or discouraging to surface; perhaps guilt is overwhelming; perhaps there is mistrust of you or the church because of previous experiences. You, the “receiver,” because of your past experiences, tend to bring preconceived notions about non-members in general and about the person in specific, so that it’s difficult to listen well.

3. Satan is alive and well.

The natural propensity for all callers is to give ready solutions to the problems they encounter, to over-react and to get engaged in one of the roadblocks to effective communication. None of these roadblocks enable us to speak the Gospel or to witness to someone else's need where they are. A common thread running through all of the roadblocks is poor listening, not reflecting and not helping someone work through their problems toward a responsible solution. The heart of the visit, then, is truly the listening skills that need to be practiced again and again.

C. Traps to Avoid in Effective Communication

1. You think that the person is telling you the real reason right away.
2. You think that you must solve all the person's problems.
3. You think that God "is on your side" alone.
4. You manipulate the person to say what you want him or her to say.

D. Roadblocks to Effective Communication

1. Order: "Stop fighting God ..."
2. Threaten: "You better change your lifestyle ..."
3. Moralize: "Real Christians never feel that way ..."
4. Advise: "I think you ought to ..."
5. Logically Argue: "It's perfectly clear that you are ..."
6. Question Veracity: "When are you going to be honest and admit ..."
7. Interpret: "You are just trying to avoid ..."
8. Name Calling: "You are acting like a child when you ..."
9. Pretend: "I'm sure you will figure it out ..."
10. Over-praise: "You are such a fine person that ..."
11. Expect: "I'm sure we'll see you at ..."
12. Denial: "You don't really feel that way ..."
13. Put-Down: "That's a crazy thing to say ..."
14. Emotional: "How could you say that ..."
15. Divert: "Let's talk about something more pleasant ..."
16. Withdraw: "I guess there is nothing more to say ..."

The following listening skills, most applicable for the longer visits that occur in the home of the person visited, can also be applied to the short visit that never gets you inside the door. In fact, they may help you get past that barrier!

E. Listening Skills to Practice That Enhance Communication

1. Ask Questions: First about what they do, then what they feel, then about what they think, and finally about what they believe (the last two are harder to surface). As you state your reason for the visit, enter into chit-chat first about the family, home, mob, surroundings, etc. Then move into the area of church membership and activity. Be patient and take your time in letting the person tell his or her story. If you are patient, the story will come.

2. Observe body language: bottom lip changes color (white=fear, red=anger), crossed arms, legs (crossroads, blocking out), pupils dilated (anger), turned or looking away (unsure, uncomfortable).

3. Acceptance: “I see ... Yes, go on ... would you like to talk some more about it? ... I see you have some deep feelings about this ... I appreciate that you shared that.”

Respect the person’s opinion, affirm his or her right to say what he or she does, feels, thinks, and believes. Hopefully you convey that you accept him or her as a person, even though you do not agree with all that he or she says or does. This also means that you must control your anger, not get discouraged or give up too soon, watch your body language (smile or nod appropriately) and empathize. Try to put yourself in the person’s situation.

4. Reflect: “If I understand you correctly, you did (behavior description) ... and you feel (feeling description) ... Then the problem in your way of thinking (clarify) ... Let me make sure I heard you correctly; you said (help the person hear how it sounded) ...”

Make sure that you do not jump to the wrong conclusions. That is why it is so helpful to feed back, to be a reflective listener. Mirror back what you think you heard the person say. You can also reflect on what the person did, feels, think, and believes. He or she will tell you whether you are right or wrong.

5. Paraphrase: “Your major point is (a brief summary) ...” extremely helpful when the conversation begins to get drawn out or go off on a tangent.

6. Perception Check: “You seem to ... It appears to me that ... I have a hunch that (state perception), and I’d like to check it out.”

Make sure that you do a perception check. This allows you to insert some interpretation of what you feel has happened in the person’s life. Your real concern is to discover where they perceive themselves to be now in their relationship to God and the Church.

F. The Time to Witness

After a person has told his or her story, with all its excuses or pain, and since you have been an active listener, the door is open for you to share your faith. Do not hesitate to do so, for these reasons:

1. Most folks have not had God's good news shared in a personal way for their life situation. Make God's forgiveness, grace, and love as personal as you can.
2. If you have listened well, the person will listen to you. He may or may not agree, but he will listen. You "earn" the right to speak by first listening.
3. You are an ambassador for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). You represent Him. The person you visit primarily accepts or rejects Him, not you.
4. The Spirit will use your testimony, working in the person's life long after your visit. Share God's Word, and the Spirit has all He needs to turn a heart and life around.

Taken from LC—MS "His Love / Our Response" Appendix A

THE FINE ART OF LISTENING

1. Do not conclude that you must supply answers to problems being shared.
2. Most Christian people have many answers, the reasons, and logic in their own minds already, but their high emotion blocks them from reaching and seeing their own answers.
3. Your goal as a listener is to help persons speak, declare, express, state their own feelings and emotions, so that they can lower their emotional level in order to get back in touch with their own reason.
4. As a person talks about his feelings he is often unaware of his own feelings, but just knows that he is up tight.
5. Reflective and interpretive listening by another person helps a person hear his own words and so get in touch with his own feelings.
6. Be an instant play-back TV camera in your listening, using words like: I hear you say...; I understand that you feel ...; You feel that ...; You feel Joe doesn't like you. ...; You feel angry ...
7. Seek to hear a feeling or emotion in what is said, and share it with the speaker.
8. Try not to ask, "Why?" or ask in any way a reason or logical explanation for what is being said. Stick with describing the emotions being felt and expressed.
9. Later, much later, (10, 30, 60, or 120 minutes) depending upon the level of emotion and the time it takes to release that emotion, you will reach the "why" level. Let the speaker introduce the "why?"
10. Each person will be different. Some will need only 5 or 10 minutes to empty themselves of feelings. After 1 or 2 hours it is best to adjourn and set up a second meeting. Both of you need more time to assimilate what has been said.
11. You will hear people say, after a listening session, "You helped me so much!" But you may feel, "But I didn't tell them any answer." The help was in freeing them from their emotional bind so that they could get back in touch with their own knowledge.
12. Have real care, concern, love for others to be an effective listener.
13. Try not to match their stories or experience with those of your own. Guard against saying, "I had surgery too!" or "I know a person who feels just what you feel." (At least not in the initial stages of emotional bind. Save *your* story for another day.)
14. Hold all of your own feelings and emotional needs in check until after you have listened fully and completely to the other person.

15. You will know when the need for emotional release has ended when the person runs down, finishes sharing feelings, and begins to say, "What do you think I ought to do?"
16. When the person asks for advice, his emotional blockage is about over.
17. Again, guard at this time against giving answers, but review what options they have told you that they see.
18. When they can offer no more options, you might suggest possible options following these words: Would this work for you ...? Have you thought of this possibility ...?
19. It can be helpful to write down (for the person talking) the separate feelings he has, in order to get over talking in circles. Seek permission from the speaker for taking notes and share that the notes are for him to keep, not for you.
20. Most people do not need a professional counselor for their general listening needs. Any good friend with listening skills will do quite capably. There are, however, times for professional counselors, if you think you're in over your head.
21. Before you can be a listener to others you must be free of your own emotional binds. Someone has to be strong enough to be the first listener.
22. Our needs for a listener will not be continuous. When we have found release, our need is met until the next time we reach an emotional bind.

Erwin Ruhlig

PASTORS' COVENANT REGARDING WEDDINGS AND MARRIAGES

- I. We pastors of the Jacksonville Circuit of the Central Illinois District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC-MS), with the desire to support one another in service to God's people, hereby solemnly covenant, in agreement with the Scriptures, our Lutheran Confessions, and the resolutions of our Synod to teach and confess publically the following doctrines concerning living together, weddings, and marriage.
- A. Marriage is the life-long union of one man and one woman established and blessed by God.
(Gen. 2:18-24; Matt. 19:3-9; Matt. 5:31-32; Eph. 5:21-33; Mal. 2:13-16; 1 Cor. 7:12-17; Mark 10:2-12; AC 23, 3-4; AC 23, 19; AP 23, 29; SA III 12, 3; LC 1, 206-209; LC 1, 212)
- B. It is a sin against the express will of God for a man and woman who are not married to each other to commit fornication and/or to live together.
(1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:8; Ex. 22:16; AC 23, 3-4; AP 12, 174; AP 23, 35; SC 6th commandment; FC Ep 4, 19; FC SD 4, 32)
- II. Furthermore, we solemnly covenant to adhere to the following practices deriving from the above doctrines:
- A. The following are situations when we pastors will **not** normally perform the wedding service:
1. for those couples in which one or the other is not a believer in the Triune God.
 2. for those couples who are living together.
 3. for those couples in which neither is a member of our congregation or a sister congregation of the LC-MS.
 4. for those whom a brother pastor has refused to marry.
 5. for those who have received a divorce contrary to Scripture (Scriptural allowances for divorce are malicious desertion and adultery).
(1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 5:31-32)
 6. for those who are unprepared for marriage by reason of immaturity, alcoholism, drug addiction, imprisonment, etc.
 7. for those who are unwilling to receive pre-marital pastoral counseling.
 8. for those who are living in any other unrepentant public sin, such as, for example, refusal to participate in the worship services of our congregation.
- B. Exceptions to the above situations will be dealt with according to the following principles:
1. They are true exceptions in the sense that they are characterized by all of the following:
 - a. they are infrequent and
 - b. have aspects that are unusual
 - c. and are compelling for the spiritual welfare of the people involved and for the kingdom of Christ.
 2. Where the couple is currently involved in unrepentant sin, the pastor will lovingly speak law and gospel with the couple, in order to lead them to repentance (broadly defined), namely:
 - a. to sorrow over their sin,

- b. to rejoice in the forgiveness that they have in Christ and
 - c. to the determination to change their sinful lifestyle through the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Evidence of repentance will involve some spoken acknowledgment of sin and active involvement in pre-marital pastoral counseling, but vary according to the situations in paragraph II.A. above; for example:
- a. Couples will agree to immediately cease having extra-marital sexual relations.
 - b. Couples living together will agree to marry very promptly or to establish separate residences.
 - c. Couples will attempt to be reconciled with the pastor who has refused to perform their wedding.
 - d. Unbiblically divorced persons will attempt to be reconciled to their former spouses, in terms of seeking their forgiveness and forgiving them, and where possible, to “re-marry.”
 - e. Inactive or nonmembers will regularly participate in the worship services of the congregation.
- C. We pastors will perform wedding services only for those couples who show evidence of their repentance, after being involved in the situations in Paragraph IIA. above.

The Pastors of the Jacksonville Circuit, Central Illinois District, LCMS
(October 1999)

PASTORAL APPROACH TO MARRIAGE

_____ Lutheran Church is a signatory to the _____ County Community Marriage Policy. Along with other Christians in the county, we have covenanted to uphold marriage and sexual purity in our preparation for and conduct of weddings. This stance is reflected in our policies below.

At least one of the parties requesting marriage shall be a member of Trinity or of a sister Lutheran Church. Exceptions to this policy shall be made on a case-by-case basis by the pastor(s) in consultation with the Board of Elders.

All couples requesting marriage shall undergo a period of premarital counseling as determined by the pastor(s). This counseling may include the participation of a mentor couple from _____ Marriage Saver's program, pending the willingness of the couple to receive this assistance.

_____ Lutheran Church, along with most other Christian churches, regards cohabitation prior to marriage as sinful. Cohabiting couples shall be counseled to deal with the issue of their decision to cohabit. Under normal circumstances, the couple shall seek separate living quarters before any wedding planning may proceed, so as not to give offense. Exceptions to this rule must have the approval of both the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders.

The remarriage of divorced people is not to be undertaken lightly or automatically. Because divorce is both serious and widespread, we at _____ are pledged to do all in our power to strengthen troubled marriages and, where possible, reconcile broken marriages. This may include the assignment of a mentor couple to partner with those who are troubled (when they are willing to receive such help). On the basis of conscience, the pastor(s) may decline to participate in a remarriage, if he determines that the reasons for divorce were not Scriptural and/or if there has not been repentance for the sins that led to the divorce. In any case, the pastor(s) will seek the advice and counsel of the Board of Elders before proceeding with plans for a remarriage.

Policy Statement on Church Use for Weddings

_____ Lutheran Church shall be available for any member of _____ in good standing to use for his or her wedding.

Request for the use of the church facility assumes the involvement of _____'s pastor(s) in the planning and/or conducting of the wedding. Couples who wish for another pastor to be involved in the ceremony in some manner must have such a request approved by the pastor(s) and Board of Elders. _____'s wedding coordinator is to be consulted at the direction of the pastor(s).

An exception to the above is the request for the use of our building by non-members who are currently without a usable structure or a sister congregation whose facility is inadequate or unavailable. If approved by the pastor(s) and Board of Elders, such a use by non-members is regulated in the same way as any other use of the building for the community at large. Policies set in place by the Board of Trustees govern such usage.

Clergy from another denomination will not conduct or co-officiate at a wedding service here, since such a practice is not sanctioned by the LC—MS doctrine of church fellowship.

Michael Kasting / M.E.