

Clergy Shortage Study

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Board for Higher Education
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
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To The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod:

The attached report of the Clergy Shortage Study presents the findings of a major study into the underlying causes of the growing shortage of parish pastors. The study uncovered several important issues that need attention, even by those who may contest the existence of a “clergy shortage problem.”

The study consisted of interviews with a wide variety of people. The study has internal consistency, in that the findings in all parts support each other. The study has external validity, in that a wide variety of people inside and outside the LCMS support the accuracy of the findings. Even though some will disagree with parts of the study, there is no denying that the overall picture portrayed by the research is accurate.

The document includes a list of twenty problems. It suggests potential solutions to each of the problems. More important than the stated possible solutions is the need for widespread discussion within all parts of the church about the central issues uncovered. This discussion is especially important within local congregations.

We commend this study to The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod for its consideration. We thank Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood for providing funding to underwrite the costs of the study. We thank Alan Klaas and Cheryl Klaas of *Mission Growth Ministries* for a professionally designed and executed study.

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November 11, 1999

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Clergy Shortage Study

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

November 11, 1999

Background

In 1998, different groups within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod secured four separate pieces of information:

1. The Board for Higher Education found that during the ten years of 1988-1997 there was a net loss of 1,305 clergy.
 - 1,970 entered parish ministry
 - 1,500 retired
 - 1,775 resigned before normal retirement age
 - 1,305
2. The Council of Presidents calculated in spring of 1997 that 15% of congregations were vacant and calling, up 7% from ten years earlier.
3. The Department of Planning and Research discovered that the number of pastors reaching normal retirement age was going to increase over the coming twenty years.
4. North American Missions announced plans to increase the number of domestic mission stations from 6,200 to 7,000 within a decade.

An analysis of these trends and plans revealed a potential problem of significant proportions. Chart 1 shows that if what occurred between 1988 and 1997 continues, the total number of parish pastors would drop significantly over the coming twenty years.

Chart 1

Current Path		1987	'88-'97	'98-'07	'08-'17
A	Total ordained clergy – beginning		9,940	8,635	7,330
B	Entering		1,970	1,970	1,970
C	Retiring		-1,500	-1,500	-1,900
D	Leaving		-1,775	-1,775	-1,775
E	Total ordained clergy – end	9,940	8,635	7,330	5,625
F	Missionaries, faculty, staff, other		3,405	3,405	3,405
G	Total parish pastors		5,230	3,925	2,220

The sobering possibility of a dramatic reduction in the number of parish pastors was further analyzed in terms of the number of vacant congregations (see Chart 2). While the precise details are difficult to accurately project, the general trend is clear. If the trend established in 1988 to 1997 continues through 2007, approximately 24% of LCMS congregations will not have a pastor, and the shortfall continues to escalate through 2017.

Chart 2

Current Path	1987	1997	2007	2017
G Total parish pastors		5,230	3,925	2,220
H (Multiple congregation pastors)	588	588	588	588
I Stations	5,949	6,215	6,500	7,000
J Number Vacant	551	1,573	3,163	5,368
K Percent Vacant	9%	25%	49%	77%
L Actively calling	416	868	1,581	2,684
M Calling vacancies	7%	14%	24%	38%

The Clergy Shortage Study was launched to understand what is going in the hearts and minds of the key people involved. The issues needing exploration seemed to center on recruitment of people into parish ministry, and retention of those already in parish ministry. Understanding the issues creating recruitment and retention problems seems required before meaningful action can be undertaken to dramatically increase clergy recruitment and retention rates.

Results of the research focuses on three objectives:

- A. Achieve an increase in the number of men entering seminary, especially recent graduates from Concordia University System institutions.
- B. Experience more men entering training for parish ministry.
- C. Experience fewer pastors leaving parish ministry.

The detailed explanation of the numbers in Chart 1 and Chart 2 are as follows:

Line B – Assumes that the number entering parish ministry from all sources is unchanged.

Line C – Results of the actuarial study of pastors reaching normal retirement age.

Line D – Assumes that the number leaving the ministry prior to normal retirement is unchanged.

Line E – Arithmetic combining of Lines A through D.

Line F – Assumes the number of “Rostered Clergy” who are not parish pastors remains unchanged.

- 2,100 Emeritus
- 350 CRM status
- 240 Missionaries and chaplains
- 190 Educators in LCMS educational institutions
- 140 Executives and staff in districts and the International Center
- 380 in assorted other situations

Line G – Subtract those who are not parish pastors from the total number of Rostered Clergy.

Line H – Assumes that the number of clergy in congregations with more than one pastor remains unchanged.

Line I – Subtract the number of pastors from the number of stations to calculate the number of stations without pastors.

Line J – Total projected number of stations without a full-time parish pastor.

Line L – Assumes that half of stations without pastors will continue to seek a full-time pastor.

Lines M – The projected percent of congregations that are vacant and calling if the 1988-1997 trends continue for the following twenty years.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases. Parish pastors were interviewed during Phase I. Their insights shaped the investigation during Phase II. The information from both phases is reported in the remaining pages of this document.

This study utilized statistically appropriate small samples in order to be able to contact the wide variety of persons necessary to understand the issues. Because the individuals were contacted to participate in a random manner, the sample sizes are sufficient to be useful and the findings considered accurate. These are the same principles that permit polling organizations like George Gallup to accurately predict election results using samples of 1,000 people to predict the actions of over 100,000,000 voters.

Because of the sensitive nature of the topics, this study chose to use in-person interviews whenever possible. This decision proved invaluable to the study. For example, in-person group interviews allowed us to observe that while 25% of seminary wives *said* they were happy to be there, they exhibited quite different feelings in behaviors such as biting lower lips, wringing hands, and fighting back tears. In many instances, these non-verbal answers were important to understanding the pressure people are under to have the "politically correct feelings and attitudes."

A. Parish Pastors

Two groups of parish pastors were interviewed in each of six locations. The discussions lasted between ninety minutes and two hours each. Comments were recorded by two project staff and are listed in Appendix A.

Invitations were mailed to all LCMS pastors who met the community definition (rural, suburban, or urban) and were located within reasonable driving distance of the interview location. Those not responding to the mailed invitation received a telephone invitation. In all locations, most of those receiving invitations agreed to participate. Each received an honorarium of \$30.

The interview locations and number of participants:

<u>Rural</u>	
Rural, Kansas	15
Rural, Ohio	5
<u>Suburban</u>	
Greater Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota	13
Greater San Antonio, Texas	10

<u>City</u>	
Chicago, Illinois	13
Detroit, Michigan	<u>13</u>
	69

These pastors matched the profile of LCMS clergy as a whole. They were:

First career	50%
Second career	50%
In parish ministry:	
Less than 5 years	9%
5 – 25 years	55%
More than 25 years	36%

Over the last twelve years, average worship attendance at their churches was:

	Average weekly worship attendance of:	
	<u>Congregations</u> <u>in the study</u>	<u>Congregations</u> <u>in the LCMS</u>
Growing by at least 10%	23%	23%
Stable	23%	25%
Declining by at least 10%	54%	52%

B. Wives of Parish Pastors

Six groups of women who are wives of parish pastors were interviewed in three locations. The women received letters inviting them to the sessions. The letters were addressed in care of the congregations within reasonable driving distance of the interview locations.

Fewer than half of those receiving invitations were willing to participate in the interviews. This relatively low level of participation is both a problem to the study, and a major finding in itself. Virtually all of those who did not participate were married to pastors serving congregation with declining weekly worship attendance. The nonparticipation proved to be a major source of important information and is discussed in the Findings section below. Each participant received an honorarium of \$30.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Irvine, California	5
St. Louis, Missouri	7
St. Paul, Minnesota	<u>5</u>
	17

C. Children of Pastors in CUS Institutions

Four groups of students who are children of pastors and are also enrolled in CUS institutions were interviewed—two each on two campuses. The students were contacted by officials at the institution and invited to interview sessions. Virtually all of those agreeing to participate actually attended the sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia University, Irvine, California	11
Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota	<u>4</u>
	15

D. Children of Pastors in Lutheran High Schools

Six groups of students who are children of pastors currently serving a congregation and also enrolled in Lutheran high schools in four cities were interviewed. The students were contacted by guidance or the principal's office and invited to interview sessions. Virtually all of those agreeing to participate actually attended the sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia Lutheran High School, Ft. Wayne, Indiana	8
Orange County Lutheran High, Orange, California	5
Lutheran High School South, St. Louis, MO	14
Lutheran High School North, St. Louis, MO	7
Lutheran High School of Greater Minneapolis, Minnesota	7
Concordia Academy, Roseville, Minnesota	<u>4</u>
	45

E. Former Pastors

Twenty men who had either resigned or been removed from the clergy roster of LCMS were interviewed by telephone. Their names were gleaned from 1999 issues of *The Lutheran Witness* and official publications of LCMS districts. A letter was sent to the last known address listed in *The Lutheran Annual*, AT&T telephone directory assistance, or supplied by the last congregation of record. The letter explained the purpose of the telephone interview, printed the last known telephone number, and indicated that they should feel free to call an 800-number to decline participation. Ten of the former pastors called to provide an updated telephone number. Only one former pastor called to decline participation, and only one declined to participate when contacted by phone.

This study benefited from a prior study completed by Dr. William Wachholz, Director of Counseling at Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska. Dr. Wachholz interviewed nine former pastors as part of an advanced degree program. The methodology he used was adopted in this project and his case studies are included in the Findings.

The number of participants:

Clergy Shortage Study	15
Dr. Wachholz' study	<u>9</u>
	24

F. Wives of Former Pastors

At the conclusion of the interviews with former pastors, the question was asked if their wife would consent to be interviewed.

The number of participants:

Clergy Shortage Study	7
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G. Seminary Students

First-year and fourth-year seminary students were interviewed at both seminaries. The wives of married seminary students were interviewed at the same time, but in separate sessions. The student affairs office at both seminaries invited the students and their wives to attend the sessions. Virtually everyone that accepted the invitation appeared for the discussion groups. Both the students and their wives received a \$30 honorarium.

The study design allowed for the possibility that first-year and fourth-year people might have different responses. There was not a substantial difference between the different years for the questions asked in this study. Therefore, the data has been combined.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana	
First-year seminarians	14
Fourth-year seminarians	9
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri	
First-year seminarians	10
Fourth-year seminarians	<u>8</u>
	41

H. Wives of Seminary Students

The wives of married seminary students were interviewed at the same time as their husbands, but in separate rooms. The student affairs office at both seminaries invited the students and their wives to attend the sessions. Virtually everyone that accepted the invitation appeared for the discussion groups. Both the students and their wives received a \$30 honorarium.

The study design allowed for the possibility that first-year and fourth-year people might have different responses. There was not a substantial difference between the different years for the questions asked in this study. Therefore, the data has been combined.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana	
Wives of first-year seminarians	9
Wives of fourth-year seminarians	5
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri	
Wives of first-year seminarians	9
Wives of fourth-year seminarians	<u>8</u>
	31

I. CUS Students in Pre-Seminary Programs

Students enrolled in pre-seminary programs in two CUS institutions were interviewed on their campuses. Personnel at the institution arranged attendance. Virtually everyone invited to participate showed up for the discussion sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia University, Irvine, California	8
Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota	<u>14</u>
	22

J. CUS Students in Church Worker Training Programs Other Than Pre-Seminary

Students enrolled in church worker preparation programs other than pre-seminary in two CUS institutions were interviewed on their campuses. Attendance was arranged by the institution. About half of those invited at Irvine showed up for the discussion sessions. Most of those invited at St. Paul attended the sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia University, Irvine, California	4
Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota	<u>14</u>
	18

K. CUS Students in Other Programs

Students enrolled in programs other than church worker preparation programs in two CUS institutions were interviewed on their campuses. Personnel at the institution arranged attendance. About half of those invited to participate showed up for the discussion sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia University, Irvine, California	13
Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota	<u>9</u>
	22

L. Lutheran High School Seniors

Senior class students who are members of LCMS congregations and are also enrolled in Lutheran high schools in four cities were interviewed. The students were contacted by guidance or the principal's office and invited to interview sessions. Virtually all of those agreeing to participate actually attended the sessions. Each received an honorarium of \$10.

The interview locations and number of participants:

Concordia Lutheran High School, Ft. Wayne, Indiana	11
Orange County Lutheran High, Orange, California	14
Lutheran High School South, St. Louis, MO	15
Lutheran High School North, St. Louis, MO	14
Lutheran High School of Greater Minneapolis, Minnesota	13
Concordia Academy, Roseville, Minnesota	<u>15</u>
	82

M. Seminary DELTO/TEE Officials

The senior academic official for the DELTO program on both seminary campuses was interviewed. In addition, three of the faculty teaching in the DELTO program and two DELTO support staff persons also participated in the Ft. Wayne discussion session. The

seminary official responsible for TEE on the St. Louis campus, and the director at the Hispanic Institute in Chicago were interviewed.

N. District Presidents

All 35 LCMS District Presidents were interviewed via telephone.

O. Pastoral Human Care Givers

A brief interview was conducted with the persons named by the 35 district president as providing human care counseling to pastors in the district working through severe personal issues. Pastoral human care assistance is provided primarily in one of three ways:

- 35 District Presidents

- LCMS Worker Benefits program

- One or more other individuals in the district. Some are parish pastors, some are parish pastors with advanced degrees in counseling, and some are full-time therapists.

P. Other Denominations

A telephone interview was conducted with at least two judicatory level officials in the following denominations:

- Assemblies of God

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

- Episcopal Church

- Presbyterian Church in the USA

- Roman Catholic

- Southern Baptist

- United Church of Christ

- United Methodist Church

- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Findings

Each portion of this Findings section summarizes the observations or comments offered by the people being interviewed. A corresponding Appendix exists for each section of the Findings. The Appendix contains the interview guide followed by the comments received from the discussion participants. Many of these individual thoughts were repeated by more than one person, but in the interests of paper conservation, not reported in the Appendix. The overall flavor of all sessions is reflected in the listed answers.

From time to time, the summary provided below includes number percentages. These percentages are provided to give a general sense of frequency or strength. They should not be taken to mean exact amounts. For example, using the percentage "20% of clergy" gives a general impression that should not be taken to mean precisely 14 out of 69 interviewed clergy made a specific observation.

A. Pastors

The comments provided by the pastors are listed in Appendix A. Please turn to those pages and scan through the comments before reading the summary observations below.

1. What is it like being a pastor these days?

This open-ended question is neutral in nature. As such, the pastors are not guided by the question to focus on positive or negative reflections. The pastors sat around a table with several other pastors from their geographic area. They knew their answers would be reported to the LCMS Board for Higher Education, though they were promised not to be personally quoted.

We found that:

1. There were about twice as many negative comments as positive comments.
2. Of profound importance is that 5% of the pastors began the meeting by explaining that they had either just resigned, or were going to resign the following week.
3. An additional 10% specifically stated that they would resign today if it wouldn't "screw up" their retirement.
4. The discussion clearly revealed that about 20% of pastors are severely depressed, highly distressed, and experiencing advanced stages of burnout.
5. Also clear is that an additional 20% are moderately distressed and are approaching burnout.
6. About 30% expressed great joy in their ministries, and an additional 30% had mixed feelings about their ministry.
7. A few discussed how hard their being a pastor has been on their families.

2. Why do people choose parish ministry?

We attempted to group the answers by general topic. This is a difficult task, and a few comments might better be placed in another category.

We found that:

1. Perhaps 70% of the clergy named some version of the term "called." However, most went on to elaborate on their meaning with additional definitions.
2. Only three pastors explained their "call" using terms that directly touched the Great Commission.
3. A frequently heard variation on the "call" concept is that many of these men ignored that calling, but God did not give up on them.
4. About 30% identified feelings of responsibility or duty. An equal number described duty to their families as pastors who discussed responsibility to their Lord.

5. A strong factor was some other person who encouraged the individual to consider the pastoral role.
6. Closely related is that the “recruiting” individual kept up that encouragement over a period of years.
7. When that encourager was a pastor, the current pastor was often included in pastoral duties in the congregation.
8. Perhaps 15% of these current pastors described someone discouraging them from becoming a parish pastor.

3. What do youth in your congregation say about becoming a parish pastor?

The answers to this question were intriguing. We chose to ask this more general question, rather than to ask specifically, “Are you talking to young men about become a pastor?” The politically correct response would have been “Yes.” We chose to ask the more general question, and then listen closely to hear if the pastor was describing an actual, recent conversation. This approach allowed us to receive a more realistic picture of the amount of actual recruitment going on.

This question was also constructed to be neutral and non-threatening. As such, the attitudes reflected in the answers will more accurately reflect what is going on inside the pastors we interviewed.

Only 25% of the pastors described specific conversations they recently had with young people. These responses included descriptions of locations or circumstances, quotations from both sides of the conversation, and descriptions of what subsequently happened in the situation.

Fully 75% of pastors provided no first-hand descriptions of recent conversations.

Our general conclusions are:

1. Perhaps 75% of current clergy are not actively talking with any of their young people about the pastoral ministry.
2. Large numbers of parents are observing their current pastor and strongly advising their children not to pursue pastoral ministry.
3. Every positive comment was offset by six negative comments.
4. Virtually all of the relatively few pastors who are actively encouraging their young men to pursue parish ministry are among the 30% of pastors who primarily express joy about their ministry experience.
5. A substantial number of pastors described how their negative experiences in ministry had turned their children against the possibility of being a parish pastor.

4. What do adults in your congregation say about becoming a parish pastor?

The pastors' comments and resulting observations for this question repeat what occurred for the prior question about youth—with four additions.

The four additional observations are:

1. Relocation of a spouse and children prior to even becoming a pastor is a major additional dilemma. This movement includes the need to physically relocate four times in four seminary years. The movement also includes the attitudinal adjustment to husband/father becoming a pastor and now suddenly financially stressed.
2. Perhaps 15% of pastors expressed strong negative comments concerning treatment received from seminary officials. Most of the African American clergy related a wide variety of stories emphasizing negative treatment they and other people of color had received from seminary officials. Most of these instances were relatively recent.
3. Everyone involved with the DELTO program expressed deep concern about what they describe as significant problems in the program.
4. A small number of pastors indicated lay people being interested in full-time church work, but not the parish pastor role. They used the term "deacon" to describe a possibility. All the pastors discussing this possibility were those who had earlier used positive terms to describe "being a pastor these days."

5A. Why are pastors dropping out of the parish pastor role?

This is the only question that would automatically evoke negative information.

This is an extremely powerful component of the study. The responses are introduced by displaying three direct quotations because they summarize the pervasive tone of this portion of the discussions:

"The joy is gone and I can't take the crap anymore!"

"I cannot encourage others into this."

"Young people see all this and say, 'no way'."

We selected these three quotations because they best summarized the following observations about all the answers to this question:

1. The pastors described an overwhelming list of problems.
2. Money issues were mentioned, but are only a small part of the overall situation. Money issues were generally summarized with the observation that "other professionals have problems, but at least they get financial perks to compensate for all the grief."
3. The pastors who had described their ministry as being joy-filled were mostly silent during this part of the sessions.

4. The pastors who had described the many problems in being a pastor (Question #1) dominated this part of the sessions. These pastors were animated and agitated. Many displayed raised voices, angry expressions, and hostility. Many displayed dejection and physiological signs of broken men.

5B. What help is available in this District?

Of the districts in which pastors were interviewed, all have some form of help available, and a few have extensive intervention programs. Important to remember is that for the person involved, perception is the same thing as reality, even when the facts are different.

Our observations about the pastors' comments are:

1. The best that can be said for the availability of help for troubled pastors is that a few of those we interviewed have a vague notion that something is available.
2. Most pastors (perhaps 90%) were not aware of any help being available.
3. All agreed that whatever help might be available from the district is not to be trusted.
4. All pastors who describe ministry experience using positive terms felt it is up to the individual to recognize they are in trouble and to find help. Most questioned the wisdom of "sitting there in misery complaining that the district is not helpful."
5. Only about 20% felt they had a support group of LCMS pastors in their circuit or Winkel group.
6. At least 50% of pastors had very negative comments about the lack of brotherly care and compassion displayed by fellow pastors in the circuit or Winkel group.

Summary of Pastors

1. A large proportion of pastors expressed modest to significant distress about their ministries. They might not be particularly effective at recruiting potential pastors. In fact, a strong case can be made for the notion that these pastors actually have a negative influence on recruiting. Findings from interviews with college and high school students confirm this observation.
2. PKs have been historically a substantial source of new pastors. The number of PKs entering seminary has dropped substantially. Fewer than 20% of first year students at St. Louis, and 5% at Ft. Wayne are children of clergy. Pastors' feelings of distress about ministry are transferring to their children.
3. The interviewed pastors felt that parents of young people were observing how poorly clergy are treated and want no part of that for their children.
4. About 75% of pastors did not describe recent contact with youth or adults in an overt discussion about becoming a pastor. This finding was confirmed by the interviewed youth. Fewer than 10% said their pastors encouraged young people to consider ministry.
5. The pastors describe deep and widespread discouragement from pursuing pastoral ministry by young people and adults.
6. Encouragement by many people, starting at a young age, seems to have been an important factor for current clergy.
7. Enough issues about the seminary treatment of applicants and about the DELTO program were surfaced to warrant that Phase II document the various points of view. The study found significant problems in DELTO.
8. Issues of wives and families were frequently mentioned as reasons for entering and leaving ministry.
9. The ability to retain current pastors would seem to be directly affected by the ability of pastors experiencing difficulty to receive support and assistance. Current pastors perceive virtually no help existing from the districts even though, we found that most districts do have some form of assistance.

B. Wives of Parish Pastors

The comments provided by the wives pastors are listed in Appendix B. This sample had considerable responder bias. Even though over half of LCMS congregations are experiencing declining average weekly worship attendance, only 7% of the pastors' wives who agreed to come to the interview sessions were from congregations experiencing declining worship attendance. Because the findings below do not include the observations from the most troubled of LCMS congregations, the actual situation being experienced by clergy wives around the Synod is judged to be much worse than is depicted in the findings listed below.

1. What are the best parts of being a pastor's wife?

The pastors' wives were noticeably struggling to develop answers to this question. There were significant pauses, halting responses, and some nervous laughter. Most identified relational areas as most satisfying – getting to know people, watching them grow spiritually, and “being inside of people's lives.” One woman stated that being married to a pastor had kept her on the “straight and narrow,” and another enjoyed the experiences of serving different parishes.

2. What are the down sides of being a pastor's wife?

Whereas the wives only identified 5 positive aspects of being married to a pastor, they quickly developed a list of 28 negative characteristics. The responses generally fall into one of the following categories:

1. Feelings of loneliness, isolation, superficial friendships (wives and couples)
2. Difficulties of moving, particularly on children of middle school age and beyond
3. Always being on display, living in a glass house
4. Unrealistic expectations of congregations (on both pastors and wives)
5. Conflicted congregations, criticism of husband's ministry
6. Husband's long hours, high stress, exhaustion, burn out

3. How do you deal with these issues?

Most of the clergy wives have learned to seek support systems **outside** the church. Most expressed feelings that pastors and their families are “pretty much on their own.” A few attempts have been made to gather circuit couples together, but attendance is quite low. A few wives reported District-sponsored conferences and retreats for wives, mostly held mid-week, and many wives cannot attend. Very few reported utilizing the services of a District counselor.

4. Do you know families that have left the ministry? What were the reasons?

The majority of responses centered on personal, financial, and family issues. Most connected high levels of stress, burn out, and criticism with reasons for leaving the ministry. A few reported clashes with District officials and conflicted congregations.

5. What are the financial issues connected with being a pastor's wife?

In some cases, the wives reported that they feel quite blessed and that God is providing for their family's needs. However, some of these wives also made statements reflecting that they do, in fact, struggle financially. A few reported severe financial situations, such as congregations holding paychecks for several days, large education debts, and that their children were unable to attend Concordia. Those with school-age children who are forced to work outside the home display significant anger and resentment.

6. How has being a PK affected your kids?

One person responded that her children had enjoyed positive experiences in their roles as pastor's children. Most of the wives reported difficulties with moving, especially when children are in middle school or beyond. Almost all lamented the fact that their husbands are unavailable to the children, miss important events, and that the children become genuinely upset over problems in the church.

7. What are your thoughts on the reasons for the shortage?

The most common responses pointed to financial issues connected with serving the church. Several identified problems in the culture: money-orientation of youth, lack of respect for clergy, negative portrayal of pastors in the media. Some reflected on conflicted congregations, and those that are too small to support a pastor. A seminary staff member reported that "50% of the seminary wives do not want to be there and display lots of anger and bitterness."

8. Anything we have not known to ask?

Some of the clergy wives took this opportunity to reveal some of their struggles...

"It's very tough to keep things above water"

"Perfectionism is a big part of pastors' problems"

"The decision to enter seminary should be a family decision"

... and some of their solutions:

"I have to be my own person"

"I encourage my kids to be who they are"

"I have resisted putting so much pressure on myself"

Summary for Wives of Parish Pastors

Clergy wives had a difficult time formulating answers to the question, "What's the best part of being a pastor's wife?" They consistently responded that they enjoy meeting a variety of different people and watching members grow spiritually.

At the same time, nearly all reported that they are unable to develop close friendships within the congregation, and that it is very difficult to be friends with other couples. They describe most of their relationships with other women as being "superficial" at best. Most express feelings of loneliness and isolation, and in some cases, abandonment. A few have found ways to cope, but most have not. Some have found satisfying relationships in their workplaces outside the church.

Clergy wives expressed many of the same "down sides" as their children did. These include difficulties with moving, unrealistic expectations from the congregations, and constantly being "on display." Some feel real guilt about not being able to live up to all the various expectations that are placed upon them.

Some clergy wives are outwardly angry, bitter, and resentful of the demands placed on their husbands, and the resulting strain on their relationships. Many describe frustration with long hours, emergency calls, and the general absence of their husbands from the rest of the family. One woman reported they had never been able to be physically away from the congregation for vacation for longer than six days at a time; others described having vacations cut short by emergencies.

Some wives perceive that the biggest issue is their husbands' tendencies towards perfectionism. They describe behaviors such as being unwilling to delegate, incapable of missing meetings, and insisting on doing all the teaching, preaching, and visiting themselves.

Many wives are genuinely worried about their husbands' overall health and well being. Several are experiencing severe health problems, including heart disease, multiple sclerosis, and depression. Some are eager for their husbands to consider early retirement.

In spite of all the difficulties, most wives in our interviews stated that they would not trade their lives for anything, and that they are happy doing the Lord's work along with their husbands.

C. Children of Pastors in CUS Institutions

D. Children of Pastors in Lutheran High Schools

These two groups of students had observations so similar to each other that the findings are combined into one section. There were two differences between the them:

1. The CUS students opinions had mellowed a bit, probably due to being older and no longer living in the home.
2. We only interviewed college-aged offspring who were enrolled in a church-related college or university. It is highly likely that this small minority of all children of clergy have more positive attitudes about their experience than those not at CUS institutions.

The comments provided by the children of pastors enrolled in CUS institutions are listed in Appendix C and from Lutheran high schools are listed in Appendix D..

1. How many churches have you been in?

All had moved at least once, over half had moved 2 or 3 times, and almost one-fourth had moved 4 or more times.

2. What are the best parts of being a PK?

Virtually all the pastor's children had a difficult time answering this question. In every group we observed nervous laughter, lots of fidgeting, and a period of silence before any statements were given. Responses basically fell into one of three general categories:

1. Special Treatment – perks, invitations, food, gifts, connections, everyone knows you
2. Personal Spiritual Growth – better knowledge of Bible, family devotions, unconditional love
3. Negatives Stated as Positive:
 - “You know what you’re getting into if you pursue church work”
 - “You see both sides of the church”
 - “You learn flexibility at an early age”
 - “We move a little less often than army brats.”

3. What are the toughest parts of being a PK?

Unlike the previous question, participants had no trouble at all identifying the more negative aspects of being a pastor's child. In fact, we received more than double the number of different negative responses as positive answers.

Almost all identified “moving” and the “threat of moving” as the most negative aspect of being a PK, although this issue tends to diminish as they pursue their college careers. Some reported difficulty feeling a sense of “home” in congregations because of their many moves.

The second highest responses were related to family and congregation expectations, extra responsibilities, and being “on display.” Most have been hurt by their dads’ lack of time to spend with them, and feel that they are a lower priority than the congregation.

Many of the kids are truly worried about the emotional and physical health of their dads, and talked openly about long hours, high stress levels, conflict in congregations, and lack of forgiveness in the church. A few reported their dads had experienced nervous breakdowns and other health problems. Some also reported emotional problems with siblings.

Another common area of difficulty for these kids is the family financial situation. Some described their families as “poor” and resent very much that their mothers are forced to work full time. One student described feeling guilty asking her parents for money: “It so hurts my parents, the money issue.”

Most shared their frustrations with always having to “put up a front of never being angry” within the family or congregation. They are acutely aware when problems in the congregation exist, and they internalize a lot of resentment. Many reported having “secret” meetings with brothers and sisters in order to cope.

4. Have you ever considered going into full time church work?

Only one CUS student reported he is definitely considering becoming a pastor and six indicated they might consider becoming a teacher or DCE.

Some CUS and high school students politely said they were “considering” church work, or “aren’t sure.” Most flatly said they would never consider church work, and many of the young women stated they would not marry a pastor. One sadly reflected, “I can’t imagine taking the abuse my mom has taken.”

All the rest were **emphatic** that they will not consider church work, for various reasons. Most feel the church has hurt them, or that salaries are too low to adequately support a family. One young man summed up his feelings by saying, “The Lutheran Church is so keen on tripping each other up and beating up on each other. They’re not focused on the unchurched.”

Summary for Children of Pastors in CUS Institutions and Lutheran high schools

We interviewed children of parish pastors who are enrolled in CUS institutions and Lutheran high schools. This is probably a sample that is biased in favor of those who are healthy and generally contented with ministry—especially those in CUS schools.

Most of these children of pastors had a difficult time coming up with positive reflections on their experience as a pastor's child. Most of their positive comments were minor issues such as "good pot lucks" and "got to meet a lot of people." A few positive comments were deeper life issues like "received a good spiritual grounding."

In contrast, the comments about negative aspects of being a pastor's child came fast and furious. Most of them were deeply personal on weighty matters of life, such as: "My dad had time for the parishioners but not us," "I watched my dad endure abuse and get kicked out," and "I'm okay, but my sister is a mess."

On the whole, these children of parish pastors have endured remarkable hardship. Some of this hardship is a result of fathers "dropping everything to make time for church and church members" with the children given the distinct impression they are of secondary importance. However, most of the hardship was heaped upon them by "living in a fishbowl" of parishioners unwilling to let clergy families live their own lives.

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E. Former Pastors

The comments provided by the former pastors are listed in Appendix E.

The interviews with former pastors conducted by this study, plus the case studies provided by Dr. Wachholtz point to four major findings.

First, half of the situations that resulted in a pastor resigning from the ministry started with a mismatch between the pastor and the congregation. The pastor had one view of ministry and the congregation (or a small, staunch part of the congregation) had another. This mismatch sometimes occurred when the congregation's call committee presented a view not held by others in the congregation. In other situations, the pastor came to "fix" the congregation, only to be chewed up and spit out in the process.

Some form of misconduct by the pastor (25%) and differences with official Synod positions (17%) were less frequently the central issue. Interestingly, in this relatively small sample, half of the differences were that the Synod's official position was too liberal and half that it was too conservative.

The second general finding is closely related to the first. The majority of the congregations were described as either fighting before the pastor arrived (35%), or there was a small group of people who really control things and started fighting with the pastor (25%) soon after his arrival.

The third general finding is that the district president was rarely viewed as supportive to the process. This was the case in about 25% of the cases where the pastor's conduct left the district president with few or no options, and 60% of the cases where the pastor felt ill-treated by the district president. In only 19% of the cases was the district president viewed as helpful.

Fourth, circuit counselors were largely not involved in the situation.

Perhaps the one thing that unified all these pastors is the feeling of being ostracized by their former "brothers in ministry." This was as true for those who had not been involved in a personal behavior problem as those who had. All these men were deeply hurt by the absence of grace they experienced from other pastors.

F. Wives of Former Pastors

The comments provided by the wives of former pastors are listed in Appendix F.

It is clear that some of the pastors and congregations were seriously mismatched from the beginning, and their situations had nowhere to go but downhill. One of the wives stated that although they were told of the congregation's history of conflict with pastors, the district president had said, "as long as you don't fight with these people, you'll do fine." There were a couple of cases of serious emotional and behavior problems on the part of the former pastors, and two were related to doctrinal differences. One involved inability to work with a co-pastor. One took the call in order to be near needed medical services for a child.

Obviously we only have one side of these stories. However, the perceived situations represent reality for these wives. In spite of enduring unimaginable stress and grief, most of the wives are actually quite relieved that their husbands are no longer part of the LCMS. They describe their current situation as much preferable to the "living hell" they were put through in the congregations.

The families of the former pastors have clearly suffered. Only one woman reported they were dealing with their new situation well, with "role reversal" their primary issue. All the rest describe severe emotional symptoms experienced by various family members, including the former pastors themselves. One family is moving out of state in order to "start over."

In two of the situations, the wives felt their husbands had been well cared for by the district or circuit counselor. One found help outside the church in the form of psychiatric care. The rest had strong complaints about the way that church officials treated them.

Many of these situations are results of congregational mismatch, but many are simply the outcome of burned out pastors attempting to stay in ministry without receiving any form of help.

G. Seminary Students

The comments provided by the seminary students are listed in Appendix G.

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?

The first important observation is that the number of first year seminary students who are children of parish pastors has dropped substantially from an earlier age. We could not locate exact numbers from prior decades. However, a large number of current parish pastors who completed seminary in the 1940's to 1960's estimate that around 40% of their classmates were children of pastors.

The 1999 first year class at Ft. Wayne has about 5% and at St. Louis about 18% children of parish pastors. This change represents an important drop in a historical source of parish pastors. In addition to simple recruiting of students, this change also represents an important drop in the number of seminarians who have a realistic understanding of what it is like to grow up in a household where their father is a parish pastor. This low level of "knowing what lies ahead" is a major concern for clergy retention levels within the current classes of seminarians.

As was the case with currently serving parish pastors, these seminarians indicated a wide variety of means by which they chose to become a parish pastor. Many chose to respond by correcting this question to a statement that "they did not choose, it was God who did the choosing." At the same time, a good portion of these seminarians indicated that "things were not working out in their prior role."

A wide variety of people who offered encouragement were mentioned in general terms while responding to this question. (More specific naming occurred in the Question #2 on the next page.) The influential people included pastors, parents, various levels of teachers, and a variety of other individuals.

Many first-career and second-career seminarians described trying other activities or directions prior to settling on parish ministry. Many talked about feeling an urge toward parish ministry from an early age, while others described first experiencing the calling later in life.

A larger number of these seminarians described the importance of participating with or "shadowing" a pastor than was the case for currently serving pastors. "Shadowing" includes such things as leading worship, chancel reading, accompanying on calls, youth leader. Some also mentioned childhood activities such as acolyte and standing next to pastor greeting exiting worshippers that helped them gain an appreciation for the role of parish pastor.

One striking similarity with currently serving parish pastors is that only four had responses directly related to the Great Commission as reasons for becoming a parish pastor.

Another critical observation is that only one of the 31 married seminarians indicated that his wife was directly involved in “how they chose to become a parish pastor.” On the one hand, most of these men reported having a discussion of some level with their wives about this future. On the other hand, it is clear that many of these seminarians seem to have made a major life decision that dramatically affects their families with only minimal real consultation with their spouse.

2. Who influenced that decision?

This question asked for the identification of specific people. Parish pastors, along with other church workers had a major impact on the decision. This observation is especially important in light of one insightful comment made to the last question. A seminarian said, “It is hard to sell the intangibles (of being a parish pastor).” The important role of the parish pastor throughout the life of the prospective seminarians cannot be understated.

Also important were parents and other relatives. Teachers at all levels of education were helpful.

A profound finding is that only six (18%) married seminarians indicated that their wives or fiancée influenced the decision. Our guess is that when reading this fact, the seminarians would counter that their wives were consulted about this major change, but that they simply did not mention it in the discussion. This very low percentage of wives specifically mentioned in response to the clear and direct question is important to family issues that develop later in ministry. These issues affect clergy retention problems.

3. Who was skeptical about this decision?

One-third of the seminarians indicated that nobody or nobody other than themselves expressed skepticism about their chosen path.

Interestingly, one-quarter of the seminarians indicated that their parents were skeptical. Sizable portions were mothers who were concerned about the life into which their daughter-in-law would be entering.

Only ten percent of the seminarians indicated that their wives expressed skepticism about this career direction. It is tempting to project reasons for this low level of reporting by seminarians of significant concerns held by spouses. One factor was mentioned both directly and indirectly enough times to be important. It is the feeling that both the seminarian’s admission and later career prospects will be diminished if there is a hint that

the spouse has reservations. Thus, the system forces spouses to repress significant, negative feelings.

One-fourth indicated that their friends or coworkers expressed concern about the seminarian pursuing a parish pastor role. These were about equally divided between acquaintances who do not understand why anyone would want to be a parish pastor, and those who were puzzled because this particular seminarian's past behavior pointed in directions opposite of being a parish pastor.

4. What is it like being a parish pastor these days?

As with currently serving parish pastors, these seminarians foresaw many, many more negatives than positives. They named 53 aspects that are negative compared with only 11 that were positive.

A goodly number (27) of neutral or descriptive statements were made. The large number of negative and neutral statements reflects a healthy awareness of current ministry realities.

5. Why does this shortage exist?

The largest number of comments (27) were an assortment of frustrations with various aspect of ministry in current times. These included statements about the world, society in general, treatment of clergy in the media, and dynamics within congregations.

The next most frequently identified reason for the shortage was low pastoral income. Nearly one-third of the interviewed seminaries listed this problem in one form or another.

Interestingly, only a relatively small number of comments addressed issues related to the seminary or the Synod as a whole.

Summary for Seminary Students

In terms of recruiting seminarians, it is clear that the issue is primarily one of helping people see themselves in the role of parish pastor. It is clear that a current parish pastor plays a major role in this process as an encourager, mentor, and friend. This role occurs over a long period of time. The recruiting role seems to have more to do with relationship building between the pastor and prospect, than with an "annual sermon on the importance of pursuing church work."

Relatively few of these future pastors described any significant amount of time in actual contact with the work of a parish pastor. This finding is in sharp contrast to the professional exposure experienced by other college students, where virtually all had first-hand contact with the details of the career before entering their educational program.

The role of significant others in the lives of prospects is also clear. Teachers at all levels have the opportunity to be helpful. Other paid or volunteer workers in congregations can add to the mix of encouraging.

It is also clear that the hand of God in the lives of prospects is perhaps the most powerful force. Although not mentioned often by the seminarians, it seems clear that the power of prayer and supplication should not be overlooked.

The problems encountered by parish pastors seem to be within the awareness of these seminarians, and their parents. This finding is healthy in that most people will be entering this difficult life role with at least some level of awareness. The prospect that parents are also aware of the realities facing their offspring might prove helpful as a support mechanism when problems arise.

A point of major concern for clergy retention is the role of the wives in this process. The discussions with the seminarians revealed that most of their wives had not been significantly consulted prior to the decision to pursue parish ministry. The discussion around attitudes of wives suggests that there seems to be significant pressure within the seminary application system and throughout the seminary experience for the spouse to repress important issues.

H. Wives of Seminary Students

The comments provided by the wives of seminary students are listed in Appendix H.

1. Describe the process that brought you to the seminary.

By far the vast majority of these seminarians are pursuing ministry as a second career. Only three were first career, and one of those decided to attend seminary only after failing at student teaching in his undergraduate program. The second-career students represent a wide variety of backgrounds, including aerospace engineering, law enforcement, publishing, and the military. Most of the wives we interviewed have baccalaureate degrees; a few have graduate degrees. Many had established careers, some had owned their own businesses, and a few were “stay at home moms” prior to their husbands entering seminary.

2. How was the decision made?

In the three cases of first-career students, the decision to enter seminary had been made prior to the beginning of their relationships. The vast majority of wives of second-career students reported that the decision had been made independent of them, and many were caught by surprise. Some knew that their husbands had not been satisfied in their first careers, and knew that ministry had always been in the back of their minds. A few described their husbands’ decisions as having been based on their desire to “set congregations straight” and their desire to be “in control” of congregations.

Most described the decision as having been “announced” or that it was a “done deal.” One woman reported that while she knew her husband had experienced some “bad years” in teaching, the decision to enter seminary was basically “dumped” on her.

3. What were reactions of both your families?

Most described positive reactions from parents and siblings. Some are finding it difficult to adjust to moving away from aging parents. Those with high school students reported issues related to moving; some were experiencing severe emotional and behavioral problems.

4. What are the sources of influence—support?

Many indicated that pastors influenced their husbands; a campus pastor encouraged one. A few mentioned that their husbands had brothers who were either pastors or enrolled in seminary at the time.

5. Was anyone skeptical—less enthused?

Some of the wives had encountered serious concern from their family members, particularly their parents. A few talked about their friends expressing shock, and in some cases attempting to persuade them to change their minds.

6. How are you feeling about this?

Responses to this question were noticeably different between the first-year wives and those in their last year at the seminary. The first-year wives reported being on an emotional roller coaster, with feelings that included excitement, anxiety, and fear. Most were still adjusting to moving and working at jobs that are completely unrelated to their training and background.

The fourth-year wives are eager to leave the seminary, even though they are expecting life in the parish to be “stressful.” They also dread moving their children again (for most this will be their fourth move in four years). Some express anxiety about the first-call process. Most reported concerns about financial stability for their families. One woman stated, “I feel like I took four years of my and my kids’ lives and chucked them somewhere.”

Summary for Wives of Seminary Students

Interviews with seminary wives were conducted separately from interviews with their husbands. They all participated well, were open and frank, and seemed to genuinely appreciate the opportunity to discuss the issues we raised.

It is clear that the seminary experience is very different for second-career families. Most have children; many are in middle school or beyond. Moving is extremely difficult for children, and the seminary experience involves four moves in four years for almost all of these families. In addition, many of the wives sacrificed their careers in order to make the move. Only one or two are actually employed in their career fields while at the seminary; most are working at clerical jobs on the campuses.

Nearly all the wives reported difficulties adjusting to the seminary experience, particularly with regard to housing. Although they perceived they would receive excellent help in re-locating, most reported they were simply sent a list of available housing with no information as to size, neighborhood demographics, or schools. They also expressed frustration with tracking down information about local physicians, dentists, shopping areas, and employment opportunities. It seems to us that a local congregation could conduct a wonderful outreach to these students and their families by providing specific information and helps in these areas.

Approximately half of the seminary wives are clearly unhappy about their life situations. They display anger, resentment, anxiety, and depression in discussing their experiences. Some cried as they described their feelings, and most revealed through body language that they are experiencing high levels of stress. These emotions are deeper in the fourth-year wives, although many first-year wives are also experiencing difficulties. This is especially true in the second-career families where the wives left satisfying careers, lucrative businesses, or have children who are 13 and older. Most of these families would clearly benefit from some type of counseling services.

Another group of wives (nearly one-fourth) are sincerely attempting to put their own frustrations and anxieties aside in order to project a positive attitude. However, even as they are expressing "excitement" about being pastors' wives, they display stress and anxiety in their body language and tone. Some actually covered their mouths with their hands while they were talking about their "happiness."

The remaining one-fourth of seminary wives appear to be genuinely positive and are looking forward to being partners in ministry with their husbands. They describe a sense of "call" and openness to God's direction in their lives. Most in this group have younger children (elementary age or below), are not forced to work outside their homes, and their husbands are pursuing ministry as a first call. Some of the second-career students' wives are very happy with their husbands' choice to be at the seminary.

I. CUS Students in Pre-Seminary Programs

The comments provided by the pre-seminary students in CUS institutions are listed in Appendix I.

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?

As with current pastors and seminary students, these pre-seminary students identify a parish pastor most often as being a big part in the decision for become a parish pastor. The role of a wide variety of other individuals is also important.

As with pastors and seminary students, a small proportion of pre-seminary students described “living a lifestyle significantly outside the norms of a church person” as the reason for entering parish ministry. For this small but not insignificant number, the parish pastor role is seen as a means of reversing an unhealthy lifestyle.

2. How was the decision made?

As with current pastors and seminarians, most of these pre-seminary students describe many years of resisting their calling to parish ministry. This repeated factor is especially important in light of the relatively young age of these people.

3. Who influenced that decision?

The pastor was repeated as the most often mentioned person who influenced the decision to become a parish pastor. Some of the pastors cited were not the current pastor at the home congregation of these students.

Parents, relatives and teachers also played significant roles.

4. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?

As might be expected because of their younger age and more limited life exposures, most of these pre-seminary students had either nobody discourage them, or their parents expressed skepticism about the decision.

5. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

Most of these pre-seminary students indicated a cordial, but relatively weak relationship between the young people at their home congregation and that congregation’s current pastor. Some even described the relationship in negative terms.

6. Other comments

Concerns about seminarians entering ministry with large debt spawned a program to eliminate the problem from the seminary years. These students respectfully point out that four years in a CUS undergraduate institution also produces significant debt. They are already concerned about how they will pay it off on the meager income they expect to receive. A second financial concern expressed by some is for spending choices made at their CUS institution rather than increasing aid to pre-seminary students.

A variety of concerns were expressed about the recruitment activities of the seminaries. A few in this group and the current seminarians realized that the seminaries should not be in competition with each other—but point out that they are. Some recognize that recruiters from one seminary should not talk disparagingly about the other school, but the students point out they really need to know the differences.

J. CUS Students in Church Worker Training Programs Other Than Pre-Seminary

The comments provided by the worker training other than pre-seminary students in CUS institutions are listed in Appendix J.

- 1. How did you choose your current career path?**
- 2. Who influenced that decision?**

For this group, they could not separate how they chose their career path from the individuals who influenced the decision. This is a critical finding. It demonstrates that personal contact with individuals is critical in their career choice.

- 3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?**

Unlike those in parish ministry or preparing for parish ministry, about half of these students experienced someone discouraging their chosen career direction. Most of the skepticism concerned the high cost of the education and the low income expected after graduation.

- 4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.**

Perhaps 80% of these students describe a low level, weak or poor relationship with their current parish pastor.

- 5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?**

Only a handful of these CUS students had considered becoming a parish pastor.

- 6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?**

The home pastors of the majority of these CUS students have not talked with them about becoming a pastor or other church worker. A minority of CUS students describe general comments by their local pastor from time-to-time. Only a handful described their local pastor as active in encouraging consideration of church professions.

- 7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?**

These CUS students describe a stunning array of problems, hurts and difficulties associated with being a parish pastor these days. Only two positive comments were

suggested in response to what it is like being a pastor. Students have picked up what the current pastors describe.

K. CUS Students Not in Church Worker Programs

The comments provided by the CUS not in worker training programs are listed in Appendix K.

1. How did you choose your current career path?

Virtually all of the students not preparing for full-time church work describe personal, direct involvement with the actual work they plan to pursue. This finding is in striking contrast to the fact that only a small portion of current pastors, seminarians or pre-seminarians identified involvement in ministry.

2. Who influenced that decision?

Virtually all of the students not preparing for full-time church work describe heavy influence upon their career path involving people actually working in their chosen field. This finding is in striking contrast to the fact that less than half of current pastors, seminarians or pre-seminarians named a pastor as being influential in their decision.

3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?

Unlike those in parish ministry or preparing for parish ministry, virtually none of these students experienced anyone discouraging their chosen career direction.

4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

Perhaps 70% of these CUS students describe a low level, weak or poor relationship with their current parish pastor.

5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?

Only a handful of these students had considered becoming a parish pastor.

6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?

A small number of these CUS students describe general comments by their local pastor from time-to-time. Only a handful described their local pastor as active in encouraging consideration of church professions.

7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

These CUS students describe a stunning array of problems, hurts and difficulties associated with being a parish pastor these days. Not a single positive comment was suggested in response to what it is like being a pastor.

L. Lutheran High School Seniors

The comments provided by the seniors in Lutheran high schools are listed in Appendix L.

1. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

A large number (almost half) indicated they have a very positive relationship with their pastors, that their pastors participate in youth and high school activities, and the students are quite comfortable asking questions and discussing personal problems.

A slightly larger group reported they haven't had much contact with their pastors since confirmation. They describe greeting the pastor once in a while and that he's a "nice guy," but they really don't have a relationship.

A few described a very negative relationship with their pastor.

2. What is your perception of what it's like being a pastor these days?

We did not receive one positive comment in response to this question. Most perceive the job of pastor to be very difficult and underpaid. They describe pastors as being on call "24/7". Some describe their own pastors as being perfectionists, spending much of their time in the office studying and preparing sermons, and having numerous of family problems. They also see pastors as trying to "please everyone" and being forced to be "upbeat" at all times. One student's comment reflected what most were saying: "It's messed up!"

3. Does the pastor ever talk to you about being a pastor or Lutheran school teacher?

In spite of the fact that nearly everyone reported either a positive or cordial relationship with their pastors, very few have ever been approached about church work. In 4 of the 12 groups, everyone quickly responded "never" when the question was posed. One student in each of 6 groups reported their pastor ever mentioning church work to them, and one of those conversations was initiated by the student.

4. Why do you think young men don't want to become pastors?

Most of the students reflected on their own pastors in answering this question with comments like "emotionally draining," and "you can't act like a normal person." Other reasons included low salaries, putting your family second to the church, and the level of commitment required to be a pastor. One student stated that young men are not choosing to be pastors because youth do not feel connected to the church. Many described the pastoral ministry as "boring, not exciting, and scary." One young man summed it up by saying, "You have to see the pastor and be inspired. My pastor looks like he's not having fun."

Summary for Lutheran High Seniors

Most of these students like their pastor. Only a few have negative things to say about their pastor. All these students are enrolled in Lutheran high schools. As such, for purposes of research, they are an exceedingly biased sample. Everything that is going well should be observed in these young people.

These Lutheran young people describe parish ministry predominantly in terms of misery and grief—for the pastors and their children.

Fully 83% of these Lutheran young people, attending a Lutheran high school and mostly liking their pastor, indicate that the pastor never talked to them about full-time church work.

M. Seminary DELTO/TEE Officials

More detailed descriptions of the comments provided by Seminary and DELTO/TEE officials are given in Appendix M.

DELTO

DELTO program officials and faculty at both seminaries were unanimous in their observation that the program has problems and that inadequacies exist in the level of support being brought to bear on solving those problems. However, the characterization of the specific nature of the problems was substantially different. Comments received at Ft. Wayne indicated disappointment in the quality of the students and the “watered down” nature of the program. Comments received in St. Louis praised the effort of the students and lamented that “we should be doing better for these students.”

At present program levels, the existing DELTO program will produce an average of seven new pastors per year. There is no chance of doubling or tripling the output of pastors without substantial infusions of additional seminary level faculty and major expenditures to produce educational materials appropriate to distributed education. (It is the opinion of the researchers that a major restructuring of the program's management is probably also required.)

TEE

The TEE program is an excellent model for what might happen in the Anglo portion of the LCMS. If the Anglo population of the LCMS was using the TEE program as effectively as is happening in the Hispanic community, there would be 97,500 people in some form of worker preparation, and 4,875 new pastors added every year.

At present program levels, the TEE program will produce about six new pastors per year. This program will double or triple its output as the number of Hispanic members of LCMS rises. However, the increase will be slower for the coming decade, and then more rapidly in succeeding decades.

N. District Presidents

The comments provided by the district presidents are listed in Appendix L.

All 35 district presidents, except three or four, are aware of and very concerned about the current and growing shortage in the number of parish pastors. Two suggested that the shortage might not be a problem. They expressed that the issue may be more a matter of not letting small and/or isolated congregations consume any of the remaining supply of full-time ordained clergy by having their own pastor. In addition, two district presidents felt that there is really not a shortage. These two district presidents also indicated that there "is no clergy burnout" in their districts.

Over half of the districts are currently using or aggressively pursuing development of the licensed deacon approach to providing ministry coverage to small and/or isolated congregations or ministry locations. All of these districts are devising their own curriculum and method of providing the necessary training. All the district presidents cite resolutions of the Wichita convention as authorization. All also cite resolutions of the 1997 St. Louis convention permitting exceptions to the rule that licensed deacons can only serve in that capacity for two years before enrollment in a seminary or DELTO program. Depending upon the specific definition, there are between 200 and 300 currently serving Licensed Deacons.

An additional one quarter of the districts are thinking about creating a licensed deacon program.

About one-third of the districts are aggressively pursuing some form of yoked or joint congregations arrangement. Yoked congregations are two or more separate congregations served by one pastor who rotates between the congregations for worship, meetings and pastoral services. The yoked model was widely used in the early days of the Synods that later became the LCMS. In those days these were small but growing locations that eventually received a full-time pastor. In current times these are small and dying locations that, without major change in ministry philosophy, will never have their own full-time pastor.

The joint congregation arrangement involves a cluster of three or more congregations jointly sharing the same three or four professional staff people. An example staffing model is one pastor, one DCE for youth and one DCE for education providing ministry services to four congregations. This creative approach is new and still in development.

About half of the district presidents indicated aggressive measures to encourage recruiting of clergy. About one-third indicated a major effort to use retirees and CRM status clergy to meet the ministry coverage needs in smaller and/or isolated congregations.

O. Pastoral Human Care Givers

More detailed descriptions of the comments provided by pastoral human care givers are provided in Appendix O.

Estimating the number of parish pastors currently receiving human care assistance proved to be extremely difficult. Despite the logistical problems, several clear findings emerged.

1. A large percentage (31%) of LCMS districts do not have a human care referral system operating within the district, other than the Concordia Plans' 880-number.
2. A very large percentage (71%) of LCMS districts do not refer pastors in distress to full-time, professional treatment locations.
3. Places to which referrals are made are hard to make an initial contact and very difficult to reach the caregiver.
4. Currently, about 20% of pastors on a path to burnout are receiving some type of treatment assistance.

Considering that at least 1,000 clergy are in advanced stages of career burnout and another 1,000 clergy are rapidly approaching that stage, the LCMS has a pitiful and woefully inadequate means of conserving the \$100,000,000 it would cost to replace these pastors experiencing modest to severe levels of ministry distress.

(This estimate comes from the estimate that using a wide variety of subsidies to students and their seminaries, approximately \$50,000 of the actual cost of seminary education is paid directly or indirectly by the Synod or Synodical donors. \$50,000 per graduate times 2,000 headed to burnout and leave before normal retirement equals \$100,000,000.)

P. Other Denominations

More detailed descriptions of the comments provided by judicatory officials in other Lutheran church bodies and other denominations are given in Appendix P.

In an effort to learn from others, calls were placed to the judicatory offices of Roman Catholic and other mainline Protestant denominations to determine if they were experiencing a clergy shortage and what was being done about it.

Clergy shortages are being experienced in the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church USA, Roman Catholic, and portions of the United Methodist Church. The ELCA and United Church of Christ are currently not experiencing a shortage, but say that will change as shortages appear in the coming 10-15 years. Shortages are not being experienced in the Assemblies of God or Southern Baptist churches.

All denominations, including those not now experiencing shortages, are using or beginning to use some form of licensed deacon. By whatever title, all these people function as authorized clergy (i.e. serve on committees, voting on clerical matters, etc.) to a local congregation—usually small and/or isolated. (Only the Episcopal Church does not permit their licensed deacons to distribute Holy Eucharist.)

Lutherans stand alone in experiencing, or expecting to experience, levels of “clergy elitism” held by ordained ministers in relationship to licensed deacons. Most clergy in all other mainline Protestant denominations, regardless of level of formal education, are united in their desire to reach the lost with the saving message of salvation. Two phrases summarize the feelings held by all other mainline denominations about licensed deacons:

“It is not our business to decide who God calls. It is the church’s role to recognize what God has done.”

“If we are going to relate to multi-racial and multi-cultural settings, we will have to become adaptive.”

Overall Summary For Retention and Recruitment

This project began with basically two issues—recruitment and retention. Because recruitment normally precedes retention, the normal flow of summarizing the findings would be in that order. In this project, the findings uncovered in the retention portions point to most of the major issues affecting recruitment. Consequently, this summary will begin with retention.

In fact, the issues uncovered in the entire project are effectively summarized in the following quotation from the November 1, 1999 issue of *Newsweek* magazine (page 42):

Anne Marie Hochhalter had successfully moved her toes, six months after being paralyzed to a wheel chair after being shot in Columbine High School. She was thanking a group of elementary school children for raising money for Columbine survivors.

At about the same time, Anne Marie's mother, Carla, walked into the Alpha Pawn Shop and asked to see a .38 revolver. She loaded it with bullets from her purse and, while the clerk turned away, fatally shot herself in the head.

Carla Hochhalter was instantly dubbed 'the 14th victim' of the Columbine shootings, **but there are hundreds, if not thousands, of victims, and they continue to suffer—from wounds, from grief, from depression and from each other's jealousy and wrath.**

Here are some sample quotes that are typical of large percentages of the people in our LCMS community when asked questions about the LCMS clergy shortage.

Pastor "We shoot our wounded."

Pastor "I would quit tomorrow if it wouldn't screw up my retirement."

Former Pastor "I just couldn't take the crap anymore."

Former Pastor "I was in deep depression and went to my Winkel. They ridiculed me in front of me and behind my back."

PK Daughter "I would never marry a pastor and subject my kids to what we have had to endure."

PK Son "My dad was depressed for many years"

High schooler "Being a pastor is like being the rope in a tug-of-war"

Does this overall summary seem harsh? It is. There is a harshness that has crept into many of our congregations and a substantial portion of our clergy corps. This attitude is chewing up and spitting out wonderful people of God who have made incredible personal and familial sacrifices to engage in full-time work in God's kingdom here on earth.

This harsh and intolerant spirit is poisoning the infrastructure of the LCMS. It is at the heart of most of the issues listed below related to problems in recruitment and retention of LCMS parish pastors.

To be fair, we want to emphasize that perhaps 30% of currently serving parish pastors truly love their work and eagerly approach each day. They describe ministry with terms of joy and look forward to completing their time in ministry at normal retirement age. This 30% represent positive role models for what life can be as a parish pastor. They are effective recruiters of people into parish ministry. These pastors have developed ways to deal with the harshness and despair that surrounds them in the LCMS. Large numbers of these pastors no longer attend circuit Winkels and most of them actively avoid participation in discussions with colleagues. Even though they can be effective recruiters of parish pastors, some of these joy-filled pastors indicate a bit of reluctance to recruit people into the turmoil.

To be fair (sort of), there is an additional approximately 30% of currently serving parish pastors who are ambivalent about their ministry. They describe positive aspects of ministry but equally and immediately discuss strife and/or hardship. On the one hand, they are giving the positive reflections one would expect them to give. On the other hand, their final comments are quiet, thoughtful reflections displaying modest levels of despair—which they are quick to pull back into check and repress. Some of these pastors participate in Winkels and discussions of key Synodical issues, and some do not.

We conservatively estimate that fully one in five (20%) of currently serving parish pastors are in **advanced stages of burnout**. (Interestingly, all of the several dozen interviewed human care professionals who treat clergy depression concurred with this estimate.) That means over 1,000 parish pastors who are not simply saying, “I am tired” or “I need a few days rest.” They are saying, “I would quit today if I thought there was something else I could do” and “I just do not know how I can take much more of this.” These people are in depression and despair, either unaware of or not trusting “official” channels of help. They are headed for physical and/or behavior meltdown. The role model they present is instrumental in discouraging first and second career people from entering full-time parish ministry.

We conservatively estimate that an additional 20% of currently serving pastors are well on their way to burnout. This represents an additional 1,000 pastors. They are angry and hurt. They describe ministry with terms of hardship and bitterness. They are headed to join the burned out group because they are either in denial about how bad things really are, or none of their fellow pastors have stepped forward in love and compassion to assist them in getting the help they will soon desperately need.

The best way to gain a clear understanding of the principal problem with retention and recruitment of parish pastors is to read how pastors responded to a simple and neutrally worded question, “What is it like being a parish pastor these days?”

Two-thirds of replies to this question were negative. It is important to remember that this information was gathered in a group discussion with other pastors and researchers from the BHE writing down what was being said.

You might be wondering why a “summary” provides detailed answers. We have chosen this approach to be sure that readers are firmly aware of the issues. It is critical to be absolutely clear about the nature of the primary problem for retention (and recruitment). Please read each comment, word-for-word.

What is it like being a pastor these days?

Most in my circuit are suffering
Some staff tensions
We are too hard on ourselves
Depressing time
Frustrations
Frustrating if you need order and structure
Never feel like I have gotten enough done
Failing by not getting enough done
Always putting out fires and not getting enough done
Lonely
Tension
Young pastor in an old congregation
Not much outside support in this long, steady track to be the Great Commission
I was trained for a world that no longer exists
High levels of anxiety among the clergy
In old days, it was a noble profession—not so much now
In small towns, the pastor was the highest paid—not now
In rural areas, the pastor was the best educated—not now
Less automatic respect
People no longer think of pastor as helper
Out of a clear blue sky, people will zap you
Hard to get a first class congregation
So much of what appears in public media about LCMS is negative
See a lot of meanness in Synod
Hate being administrator
Some feel pastor is supposed to do everything
People want you to make all the decisions
Lonely for me and my wife
Too many expectations put on my children
Son says he would never be a pastor
Need to get away
Rural ministers do not get support to get things done
Beginning to not like working every Sunday
Less and less like the administrative

Not so joyful
 Difficult to maintain personal well being—physical, mental, emotional
 Takes a lot of idealism to overcome difficulties
 Tired of carrying the load
 Tired of doing more administrative tasks
 Constantly doing mess prevention
 There have been dark moments
 Have to develop personally to continue doing everything
 LCMS teaches doctrine, but not how to develop spiritually
 There are not a lot of trained people out there and there needs to be more
 It is tough
 More difficult in post modern definition of “truth is relative”
 Pastor is not respected
 We have to be prophets—a lonely task
 Aren’t we just supposed to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments
 Need more devotional time
 I have been trying to live in God’s grace, not expectations
 Not enough time with my wife
 Not enough time with my kids
 Too many meetings
 I am never done
 It just keeps coming
 There has to be more support for pastor, wives, and children
 Doctor keeps my blood pressure under control
 It is the best job you will ever hate
 The hierarchy is killing the church
 We do not take care of ourselves
 Growing up I respected pastors, but people today do not
 I miss being able to worship with my family
 I do not get respect. They call me by my first name.
 I am troubled by a growing understanding of pastor as employee
 Where is the closure on the old issues
 Generations have changed. Older people have worn out Bibles and devotional
 books, while younger people want to be “palsy-walsy.”
 Kids going to basketball and not confirmation class
 Turmoil over worship. Congregation A is “not one of us.”
 Pastors with personality disorders create problems
 Pastor is part of a large family that will drain you if you do not take care of
 yourself
 Can’t go bowling or have a beer in my neighborhood
 Pastor is “on” all the time
 Some are proud of being workaholic
 We battle popular culture and evangelists who are con artists
 Mutual suspicion of the brethren. Tendency to put people in camps
 No compassion for when pastor needs to be father
 Prepared to be a theologian, not a pastor

Time pressure robs from the family
People do not respect boundaries. They call during dinner and demand to be put through
Someone dies and they expect you to return from vacation
Competitive
Can't open up to other pastors. They will report it to the district president.
Be good if we could preach, make sick calls, and share Gospel with unchurched.
But administrative functions prevent priestly functions
Lots of guilt about always being behind.
Too many things to do and not getting enough done
Not clear what God's work is. Old members want to maintain the status quo.
Lack of success or growth pinned on the pastor
Very isolated, especially around holidays
Feel confused as pastor today
Parochial school is a hornet's nest and I am not sure what my role is
Lutherans are not moving into our neighborhood, and youth are moving out
Same leaders re-elected and can't get new leaders

One-third of the comments were positive. They are printed in Appendix A-6 through A-6.

Parish pastors were directly asked, "Why are pastors dropping out of the pastoral role?" This is a question designed to elicit an articulation of problems. What is striking is the extensive and pervasive list of issues. Here again, to understand the list of problems and suggestions, it is helpful to fully grasp the nature of the issues.

Why are pastors dropping out of the parish pastor role?

"The joy is gone and I can't take the crap anymore."
"I cannot encourage others into this."
"Young people see all this and say, 'no way'."

Problems

We see someone drowning and let him drown
Ten of the 80 pastors in my area have dire problems
A few get into behavior problems
Cannot emotionally and spiritually deal with today
I hear lots of "I've had it up to here"
Self-esteem issues when ministry has not been "successful"
Most clergy not challenged
Not achieving
Not accomplishing what we thought we would

Lots of discouragement:

- Pressures
- Family life
- Pressure cooker
- No life
- No outlet
- Life is the parish

Feel isolated and abandoned

Spiritual warfare with the devil

Hurts

Lots of hurting pastors

Being a passive shepherd will not create recognition

No "promotion and advancement"

There is pressure and no praise

Hard to feel successful with so much negative feedback

Working hard, but declining in success

If you stand for something, you get flack

Lots of pastors not building relationship with Jesus Christ

We handle problems poorly

Reality of ministry was not like the dream

Taking problems to the Lord and not getting answers

General burnout

Lack of fulfillment

Very heavy workload

"I cannot do this anymore"

"If I could, I would leave it tomorrow"

After 15 years you look at lack of accomplishing much

Success oriented society is big pressure

Pastors need to know themselves

Many pastors lack people skills:

- Cause conflict and then make them worse

- Cannot deal with disruptive people

- Cannot manage themselves

No positive acknowledgments

People are quick with criticism

My sons resent the way their father was exploited

Burnout from high expectations

Pastors are scared of seeming less than adequate

Few rewards to compensate for the problems—just leave

Workaholics

Vanity

Expected to be Jesus incarnate

Tremendous pressure

Ministers demand too much of themselves

People told me pastors are uppity

World is negative, so I get treated aggressively

Lovelessness and lack of forgiveness in the church
Recognize the marks of toxicity: 1) high negativity, 2) quick temper, and 3) need to dominate agenda. This is the LCMS
Theological debates belong behind the scenes, not dumping all over the place
Lack of free time
Lack of support within and without
Suspicious
Still paying price for 70's wars
Lack of trust
Lack of support
Hierarchy is living a lie. They claim to be servants, but don't wield authority effectively. This leads us to deny that parents have authority and that Synod officials have authority of the church.
We get mixed messages. Told to work hard and to take time for family.
Isolation
Internalized frustration

Family Issues

New graduates are insisting on family life
Pastors have above normal family problems—caused by neglect
Pastors are attacked—and family sees abuse
Wives have no friends—and have had it with being pastor's wife
Family takes brunt of it when the pastor and congregation fight
Lots of family problems and nowhere to go
Been a weak husband and father
Wife never wanted to be a pastor's wife
Pastors' wives are less willing to keep quiet
Congregation wants to get "two for the price of one"
Pastors marrying Ph.D. and MAs who cannot find work in small towns
Pastor is gone all the time:
 Not paying attention to wife
 Not paying attention to kids
Do not see my kids much
No support mechanism for kids
Kids can be hung out to dry in some congregations
Families disintegrating
PKs see pastor cared for everyone but them
Pastors take issues home with them
Relationships are hurting, but we can't let anyone know
My wife is right when she says that "I am married to the church and can't say no."
Pastors need to hear more clearly that they need to take some time. District needs to tell this to congregations.

Definition of Ministry Issues

Paradigms changed and pastors did not keep up
Society is moving away from the church
The whole structure is changing
Trained one way and cannot adapt
Ministry has changed
We have to be visionary, train leaders, and multiply ourselves
The members should be the visionaries
Older people do not want to change and younger ones do
Soloists (pastors)
We are still pumping out lone rangers who are generalists in a world going the other way
We are now doing stuff we were never trained for
Lack of accountability
Maintenance ministry is tiring and boring
Begin to accept inferior as acceptable
Hard to feel doing a good job during declining attendance
Do not see an end result
Hard to see successes
New pastors did not build relationships
Things have become routine, doing the same things year after year
No longer clear on my role
Getting different messages
“Keep the main thing the main thing”
Pastor does everything
People are bringing tougher issues for which we have lower skills in new areas
No time for long-term counseling
Pastors like to please and can't say no
People want pastor all the time no matter what
People coming out of seminary worship theology over Christ
Lots of guys are lazy. They want to study and preach. All they do is complain
It is tough to keep a proper perspective when little children call you God
Give all praise to God and problems to the pastor
If I don't do it, it all falls apart

Congregation Issues

Conflict—more from interpersonal relationships than philosophical
Congregations have camps that fight—in the street we call them gangs
Expectations are much higher
Different expectations
Big difference between expectations and reality
Expectations on growth, but not growing
Congregations do not pay for continuing education as a way of getting back at pastors
Mission oriented pastor in typical congregation will be very frustrated
Often not a good match between pastor and congregation

The first call is like a "shotgun wedding"
 Lay people attend conferences and come back with very high expectations
 Want CEO, visionary, hire and fire staff, and pull everything together
 I was hired to preach the true Word, and now they want all this other stuff
 Mismatch of pastor with congregation
 Put too many city graduates in rural settings
 Some pastors "have all the answers" and battle with congregation
 Unloving battles
 Different opinions about how the church can grow
 No support for the pastor
 After a time, pastor and congregation cannot stand each other
 Decade old problems erupt in congregations
 Feel like walking on eggs all the time
 Low integrity in the call process with congregations not being truthful
 Congregations expect us to do everything, even though people in congregation
 have skills
 Pastors have trouble letting go of doing everything
 Pastor becomes co-dependent with congregation
 Pastors are control freaks
 Congregations eat up pastor's time and take it away from the family
 People will not respect pastor's private time
 People have lower levels of tolerance for each other
 It is more the little pot shots than the big conflicts that drive men out
 Ill-will accumulates like toxins and poisons the congregation
 Had to drive 20 miles away from congregation to have a beer with classmate
 Have to have shirt on when cutting the grass
 Congregation yells at me for spending too much, then gives me new task of
 mentoring the principal

Money Issues

No money
 Huge debt
 No hope of having a home
 Some are paid well, but most are not
 Retirement based upon earning is a real negative for rural and small congregation
 ministries
 I am earning half what I was earning in my first career
 Torn between wanting to stay at home and need to work
 Hard for wife to find work in rural areas
 Did not become pastor to make money, but left seminary with \$40,000 debt
 Cannot pay back loans very fast
 Ministry in rich community and kids do not have designer shorts
 Pastors are struggling financially and cannot afford the help they need
 Pastors cannot live in the congregation's community
 We dishonor the pastor by forcing him into poverty
 I was eligible for food stamps, but did not want to embarrass the congregation

Low income, but do not want to see sloppy shoes or frayed pants
Pastor has to know himself. Money is a ramification of bigger issues
Wife says I am underpaid, but I rarely hear that from church leaders

Retirement

Lots of pastors eagerly approaching retirement
Want to retire from the congregation, not the ministry
People getting old and tired

Miscellaneous Issues

We know a lot about theology, but are not spiritual:
We say prayers, but do not pray
We study texts, but do not study the Bible
We talk the talk, but do not walk the walk
“What keeps me going is my personal faith life”
This is no different from business. Yes, but in business at least you get other rewards
Deterioration of doctrine
Pastor has different doctrine from congregation (communion, live-ins)
Divided church-body for decades
Shortage of pastors may be God’s way of saying that perhaps we should have 4,500 churches
Perhaps some are getting out because they are focusing on themselves, not the Lord
Seminaries need to be (are not now) places where questions will be encouraged
Seminaries now are “cooperate and graduate”
“I asked a question that did not fit, and the class was dismissed for the day”
Seminary students are afraid and professors are afraid
Professors say, “I am here to tell you and you are here to learn what I say”
Seminaries make it very hard for second career people

Real and practical solutions were discovered within the project that can positively impact retention and recruitment. However, the impact of these interventions will be dramatically muted in the absence of attention to the primary problem outlined above.

“Current Retention” Problems and Possible Solutions

The Clergy Shortage Study contract called for the identification of problems and proposal of solutions to those problems. Different people will read the above findings and arrive at a different list of specific issues raised. More important than the specific listing below is the hoped for general discussion of several fundamental issues uncovered in the study.

The problems and solutions are presented in the form of eleven issues related to retention, and eight related to recruitment. These problems are listed in the approximate order of magnitude or importance to eliminating the shortage of parish pastors. At least one solution is offered for each problem.

The last suggestion offers observations on a different way of viewing the overall question of providing ministerial support to congregations.

Problem #1 – People beating on each other.

People are spending a lot of time verbally and emotionally beating on each other. Pastors are beating on pastors. It has gotten so bad that some Winkels will not celebrate Holy Communion together. Important numbers of pastors do not trust each other. As a result, many pastors are extremely lonely.

Pastors and parishioners are beating on each other. They fight about details of congregation life. They insist are getting their way and make life miserable for each other when they do not. They engage in EGOcentric ministry, meaning they are only interested in what they prefer, and intolerant of another point of view. (EGO stands for Edging God Out.)

Large numbers of people are using directly confrontational and indirect “stabbing behind the back” approaches to dealing with differences of opinion. They display the attitude that, “Since we disagree, and because I know that I am right, therefore you must be wrong. As a result, you must either change your attitude or leave. If you do not volunteer to leave, I will make your life miserable and I do not care how long it takes.”

This problem is already affecting the seminarians during their time at the seminary.

Solution #1A

Confess, seek repentance, and stop this sinful behavior.

Solution #1B

Ask all circuit Winkels to sign the following two-part covenant:

1. I will not speak ill of any other member of this circuit Winkel.
2. I will admonish other members of this circuit Winkel when they have not honored their covenant.

This solution does not discount the fact that there are differences of opinion. This solution addresses the *manner* in which those differences of opinion are handled. The harsh and hostile manner of handling differences is the root cause of perhaps 40% to 60% of the overall problems being experienced with clergy recruiting and retention.

Solution #1C

Ask all church councils and their parish pastor(s) to sign the following two-part covenant:

1. I will not speak ill of the pastor or members of this congregation.
2. I will admonish those who do not honor their covenant.

These two ideas are central behaviors at healthy congregations. Not honoring these two behaviors are key characteristics of congregations in turmoil, that constantly fight, and experience a revolving door of pastors.

Because The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is advisory to congregations, the various levels of administration are not able to administer this concept into existence. However, congregations unwilling to make such a pledge to each other also have the characteristics contained within Problems #7 and #8 below. They can be handled within the solutions suggested.

Solutions #1B and #1C do not ignore the fact of differences of opinion that exist within congregations and the LCMS. Rather, they address the manner in which these differences of opinion are handled.

All congregations and institutions have differences of opinion. Healthy congregations and institutions have differences of opinion. They handle those differences within a focus on a common, overall ministry goal toward which all are working. In healthy organizations, people treat each other with love and respect, even in times of conflict. They always find a way to handle their differences in ways that do not destroy each other.

Sick congregations and institutions handle differences with violent and destructive behavior. People are treated disrespectfully. They are chewed up and spit out in the most callous, harsh and intolerant ways. In fact, celebrations are heard when someone is run off, beaten down or authoritatively disciplined. These behaviors are cancers that destroy institutions.

Those who tolerate this inappropriate behavior in others contribute as much to the problem as those who engage in the behavior.

The large amount of pastors beating up on pastors plus pastors and parishioners beating up on each other accounts for perhaps 40% to 60% of the total problem with retention (and through that, recruitment.)

Problem #2 – Mismatching of pastors and congregations

The most frequent reason that pastors leave ministry is because of a mismatch of pastor and congregation. Many of these differences are in the areas of worship style and communion practices. Sometimes pastors and parishioners do not agree on how the pastor spends time. Too often, heated disputes arise over absurd and mundane details (e.g. what color to paint the bathrooms).

Mismatch of pastors and congregations seems to come from four sources. First, the congregation's "self-study" is completed without involving the congregation. It is completed by a few members, often seeking to drive the congregation in a direction different from either the vast majority, or different from the very small circle of members who insist on getting their own way. The result is that the pastor starts under conditions discussed during the call process, only to be blind-sided by an entirely different contingent within the congregation.

The second mismatch problem comes when those involved with the vacancy are in too big a rush to fill the vacancy. In their haste to fill the slot, too many important steps in the process are treated too quickly. This haste sometimes causes congregations and candidate not to ask enough of the key questions.

The third mismatch problem comes from a district president encouraging a pastor into a sick congregation "to fix it." Settling divisiveness in a fighting congregation takes a minimum of five years of "living hell." Only a very few, strong, mature pastors can endure that much misery and turn the situation around. Mostly, the congregation chews up the pastor and family and spits them out. (Side note: In our twenty years of studying congregations, we have only encountered a handful of examples where a pastor was able to bring health to a sick congregation.)

The fourth source of mismatch comes when the pastor or key leaders receive some form of education that causes them to change their understanding of the congregation's ministry.

When these mismatches are discovered, the common course of action is for the two sides to commence silent warfare. This usually escalates to open warfare with the pastor and the family being treated in the harshest manner imaginable.

Solution #2A

Outreach minded pastors and internally focused congregations should avoid each other. Maintenance minded pastors and externally focused congregations should avoid each other. These two mismatches are like trying to mix oil with water. No amount of stirring will get them together. Demanding and EGO-centered people inhabit internally focused congregations. No one can satisfy EGO-centered people. Conversely, externally focused congregations want their pastor to lead them with the Great Commission into the community. Maintenance minded pastors do not provide outreach leadership.

Solution #2B

Be clear about key questions that often divide congregations from their pastor. The general question that applies to most issues is, "Does Article VII of the LCMS Constitution have meaning in this congregation?" Within that context, the congregation should be asked specific questions about communion and worship practices.

Solution #2C

Be sure the entire congregation has determined how it responds to these few key questions. If the congregation cannot agree, then the call process should be stopped until they reach agreement. Avoid the temptation to assume (hope) that putting a pastor into a congregation that cannot agree on these key matters will create harmony as the parishioners rally around the pastor's ministry. They will not. The pastor will be hurt, the family will be brutalized, and another servant of God will be thrown on the scrap heap.

Problem #3 – Getting help to pastors

Approximately 1,000 parish pastors are currently in advanced stages of career and personal burnout. Virtually all of these people need advanced levels of professional help—immediately. A second 1,000 parish pastors are rapidly approaching that stage of distress.

As nearly as can be estimated, about 20% of these 2,000 pastors are currently getting some form of counseling or therapy. The new MAP program provided by Concordia Plans seems to have good potential for being helpful—for those covered by Concordia Plans.

This problem is exacerbated by extremely low levels of trust held by the pastors about "official" district channels of assistance. Also, most pastors are unaware of available help.

Solution #3A

Providing free counseling to perhaps 2,000 pastors and 2,000 family members is far cheaper than replacing people who leave parish ministry prior to normal retirement. Twenty hours of counseling-type assistance at \$150 per hour totals to just over \$6,000,000 per year in the first few years. Lesser amounts will be needed in succeeding years—perhaps reducing by \$1,000,000 per year to a constant \$3,000,000 per year. Over a ten-year period, that totals to \$35,000,000 over ten years.

It will cost LCMS \$89,000,000 to replace the 1,775 pastors who resigned from ministry between 1988 and 1997. LCMS covers about \$50,000 in tuition costs for these 1,775 "replacing" pastors. Thus, between 1988 and 1997, LCMS lost \$89,000,000 in human resources—just under \$9,000,000 per year. LCMS had further losses in the form of other health care expenses and decreased income from fighting congregations.

A detailed analysis would probably reveal that for every dollar spent preventing loss of a parish pastor, three dollars would be saved.

Solution #3B

Dramatically build up the currently largely ineffective structures within most districts to provide human care assistance to pastors in ministry distress. Platitudes and meetings need to be replaced by action and intervention.

Solution #3C

Recognize that there are significant limitations to the notion that the district president can be the “pastor to the pastors.” Strong relationships of trust between pastors and their district president are very important. It is also true that the person who exercises vast amounts of control and influence of present and future employment situations of an individual cannot receive some kinds of confidential information and then fail to act on that information. Certainly, from time-to-time a district president can be helpful to a troubled pastor. However, it only takes one incident where the district president had to act on information received in confidence for confidentiality to be ruined for a decade within that district.

Perhaps more importantly, district presidents need to repeatedly and publicly divorce themselves from any connection between themselves and the district’s human care system. Only in that way is there any chance that some of the troubled clergy will believe the district president and use the system.

Solution #3D

Parish pastors can help each other. People in depression usually do not recognize it when they are in the early stages. They need help from caring “brothers in ministry” to understand what is going on. They need encouragement to seek help.

People in depression are often so debilitated that they are not able to muster the strength to get help. Here again, they need help from caring “brothers in ministry”

(Notice the importance of Solution #1B to solving Problem #3.)

Solution #3E

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has two programs that have greatly aided their efforts to retain parish pastors. These two programs deserve study and possible adoption.

Parish Ministry Enhancement One (PME1) involves the Synod-funded return of all pastors to the seminary campus for one week at the end of their first year of ministry. WELS has discovered that these pastors are now ready to receive real world training in practical details of leading a congregation. This approach is summarized by a pastor’s observation that “you can not teach a seminarian about running a congregation until after the third voters’ meeting.”

The second program, called PME15, involves the Synod paying for a several day retreat for all pastors and their wives at a non-Midwest, comfortable location. The pastors themselves deal with four topics: marriage enrichment, financial planning, professional growth, and ministry nuance (informal discussions of what they have found works so that others can work smarter, not harder). The wives participate in their own sessions on topics important to their role as wife of a parish pastor.

The third WELS idea is to institute a Care Committee for Called Workers at the district and local congregation level. These committees develop ways to support the parish pastor in the ministry.

Problem #4 – Support for wives and children

As bad as the situation is for pastors, it is worse for their wives and children. Wives not only have to endure the carnage being heaped upon their husbands', they also have to try to keep the family together. Many have had to give up personal career goals because employment is not available in their small community. All are forced to be members of congregations, even if the congregation is a loveless place to which they would never belong if given a choice.

The children are relegated to a life of being stigmatized as a PK. They are held to expectations that far exceed the standards for other children of the congregation. Every natural misstep of youth is amplified. Large numbers of "well meaning people" make their lives miserable. Additional large numbers of people are intentional in making the life of a PK miserable. Other children often treat them in a different and unhealthy way. All the PKs and all the high school students we interviewed agreed that about half of PK feel forced to act out in major, destructive ways to compensate for the stigma of being a PK.

These issues make for a miserable life for many wives and children of pastors. These realities destroy families and add significant pressures to pastors already under great strain.

Solution #4A

Congregation level support groups could be formed to be supportive of the pastor's family. These groups would need training to understand the difference between support and interference. They would need to understand that the most valuable service they can perform is more a matter of dealing with members who like to gossip, and to a lesser extent actual contact with the pastor's family.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is developing this concept. They have instituted a Care Committee for Called Workers at the district and local congregation level. These committees develop ways to support the parish pastor in the ministry.

Solution #4B

Parishioners need to recognize the importance of granting their pastors and the pastors' family the same level of privacy they demand for themselves. Parishioners need to recognize that people are people, and families are families. The pastor, his wife, his children, and their family unit are not perfect. Parishioners need to:

1. Stop offering judgments about the pastor's family
2. Encourage other congregation members to stop "wagging their tongues" about the pastor's wife and kids.

It is not clear exactly how to implement Solution #4B. Solution #4A might be a good start.

Solution #4C

Free counseling and therapy that is not connected to the district needs to be available to the wives and children. This service needs to be available from the first day the family enters seminary and continue throughout ministry service. It would probably cost \$2,000,000 per year.

Problem #5 – Clergy income

Pastors always say they do not enter ministry to get rich. Pastors also say, they did not enter ministry to live in poverty.

It was fascinating how often this topic was raised, even while pastors were quick to say that money was not the issue. The fact is that many pastors live in or near the poverty level. LCMS pastors have earned the academic equivalent of a Ph.D., M.D. or J.D. (lawyers) and earn per hour what a crew chief makes at McDonald's. Large debt and low income forces some spouses of pastors who would prefer to not work to earn a second family income. Financial problems make all the other challenges of ministry worse.

Solution #5A

Establish the minimum guideline for all congregations to pay salary and housing equivalent to 50% above government established poverty level in order to receive a call list for any full-time pastor (including new graduates). Decline to send a call list to any congregation failing to meet this standard. Congregations choosing to pay less are welcome to utilize a part-time pastor, retiree, or licensed deacon.

A substantial number of congregations will protest that they cannot afford this major amount. To this objection, we offer three observations:

1. This is the same cry heard for decades from long-term subsidized congregations. When districts finally eliminated subsidies, the vast majority "found the funds" to make up for the lost subsidy income.
2. "Money follows mission." Virtually all established congregations that claim to have money problems really have self-centered, EGOcentric ministries.
3. When weak, EGOcentric congregations are allowed to control the salary structure recommended by the district, they spread their disease of self-

centeredness throughout the district. When ministry weakness controls policy, it simply further spreads that weakness.

Solution #5B

As a way of helping congregations understand the appropriate amount to pay their pastor, ask them to consider the philosophy to “Pay so our pastor can live like we live.”

Solution #5C

Debt assistance programs that pay off church worker debt based upon years of completed service would be very helpful.

Undergraduate education at CUS institutions costs an average of \$18,000 per year. Students are enrolling in seminary with large undergraduate debt. The “tuition free” program at the seminaries is not the same as free tuition. It means you pay all you can and LCMS makes up the difference for tuition. This results in draining of savings possessed by entering students. Tuition is only half of the cost of a year at seminary. Also, the tuition program is counted as income for Medicaid, resulting in seminary students no longer having Medicaid insurance coverage for their children.

Problem #6 – Grossly unreasonable expectations of pastor

Pastors are attempting to do entirely too much. Many only take two or three days off in six months. Most work all or part of every day, including “pastor’s day off.” Most neglect their families. They always make time for parishioners and treat their family as a lower priority. Simply stated, wives and children miss their husbands and fathers.

Solution #6A

Pastors need to give up 30% of what they currently handle in their “in basket.” Pastors need to give up their tendencies for perfectionism. This does not mean slipshod ministry. It means everything does not have to fit the pastor’s definition of perfect. Pastors identify problems with expectations held by parishioners. However, it is also true that people in congregations lead the way they experience being led. This study and all other research on this topic makes it clear that the pastors are often the source of the problem.

Solution #6B

Congregation members need to develop a more realistic understanding of the pastor's time. Congregations force pastors to complete clerical functions. Sometimes congregations actually expect the pastor to conduct janitorial functions. Many congregations delude themselves with misplaced "stewardship" decisions by permitting small, part-time office or custodial staff. This mistaken savings forces the congregation's most expensive staff member to complete clerical staff duties.

Solution #6C

Both Solutions #6A and #6B point to the same need for mobilization of the laity into significant ministries that utilize the gifts God has given them. When the pastor does ministry that lay people could do, the pastor is hoarding ministry. When parishioners require the pastor to attend every meeting, create every document, visit every sick person, and generally do everything, the parishioners will never be satisfied. They simply grow the ministry down to the point that the subservient pastor can handle the relatively few remaining EGO-centered parishioners.

Problem #7 – Fighting and sick congregations

Large numbers of LCMS congregations are always fighting within themselves. They are very sick. They chew up and spit out pastor after pastor. District presidents keep sending them pastors to "straighten out the situation" and most of these congregations simply grind up another pastor and family.

Solution #7A

Decline to send a call list to congregations that forced several pastors to leave within a limited number of years. Generally these congregations have internal strife that cannot be solved by injecting yet another pastor. Self-centered, EGO-centered, greedy people populate many of these congregations. One thing is clear. It is not possible to satisfy self-centered, EGO-centered, greedy people. (Those congregations where only a few members inflict themselves on the majority are considered in Problem #8.

These congregations need to reach internal agreement, split, or dissolve before receiving another call list from the district president.

Solution #7B

Continue development of the interim ministry professionals to provide ministry services to troubled congregations while helping those congregations out of their problems.

Solution #7C

Match pastors who cannot seem to stay in a congregation for more than two or three years with congregations that cannot manage to keep a pastor for more than two or three years. At beginning, agree that the pastor will leave in three years. In that way, the pastor knows he does not have to put up with these people and the parishioners

know that they do not have to put up with the pastor for more than three years. As such, they do not have to engage in destructive fights. The amount of turmoil they heap on each other can be reduced because the need to “force out the pastor” has been eliminated.

Those who feel that Solution #7C is outrageous might like to bear in mind one irrefutable fact. This is what is happening now, only in a random manner. Solution #7C is simply a way of organizing what is already happening.

Problem #8 – Congregations where a few members dominate the vast majority

Many LCMS congregations have a few strong willed individuals who hold the majority of the members hostage to their personal point of view. The majority of members want different things for the ministry, but are powerless to stand up to the core group. The majority of members see a progression of pastors abused and run off by this influential core, yet do not know how to handle the problem.

Solution #8A

Provide congregations with training in techniques that have been developed to deal with strong willed individuals who are unwilling to conform to the wishes of the majority.

Solution #8B

District officials need to acknowledge when congregations have this problem and address the issues rather than sending in pastor after pastor. District presidents should never approve a call for a pastor entering this kind of congregation unless that pastor has already been successful in similar situations elsewhere and the pastor’s family situation can stand the huge stress they are about to experience. District officials are most helpful as they proactively inform pastors about congregation histories.

“Future Retention” Problems and Possible Solutions

The three problems listed in this section currently exist. They are highlighted with the label “Future Retention” because they describe situations discovered in current seminary students that will lead to *future* difficulties with retention. Stated another way, these seminarians are headed for the list of clergy who “left prior to retirement.”

Problem #9 – Seminarian spouse and family problems.

Significant spousal and family problems exist at both seminaries. This study and an independent source verified that at both about 50% percent of wives of seminarians do not want to be in the seminary. They are forced to repress these feelings. They understand that if their discontent comes out, their husbands might not even be admitted or will face administrative problems later. Half of these freely speak of their issues. The other half state they are pleased to be there, while they bite their lower lip, wring their hands, and visibly fight back tears.

Many families are severely distressed, with junior high school and high school age children taking the brunt of an abrupt change in lifestyle and living circumstance.

On top of general unhappiness with their situation, some spouses at the Ft. Wayne seminary report being verbally attacked by other seminary spouses for their life choices regarding work and child rearing. At the St. Louis seminary what was advertised as transitional help finding appropriate employment, decent housing, or information about schools for children is outdated and woefully inadequate.

Large numbers of seminary wives and children are very unhappy. Unfortunately, most of these families will be injected into meat grinder congregations after ordination. There is serious concern for the ability to retain these people in ministry.

This is a particular problem when we recognize that typical second career clergy will not contribute the 50 years of ministry service provided by pastors of bygone days. An already shortened term in ministry is further shortened by risk of early burnout.

Solution #9A

Free counseling and therapy needs to be available “with no questions asked or qualification required” to all spouses and children of seminarians. This assistance needs to be provided by skilled professionals, not well-intentioned retirees or other “cheap” care providers. This assistance needs to be provided without any record passed to the seminary.

Solution #9B

Problems with transition at the St. Louis seminary need to be addressed by providing up-to-date housing and schooling information, and professional appropriate employment assistance. All this assistance can probably be better provided by an

action team of lay people within the community than by the already overworked seminary staff. (These issues were not raised in interviews at Ft. Wayne.)

Solution #9C

Generally do not accept any student for admission to the seminary if the family has children in high school—particularly if entering either of the last two years of high school.

Problem #10 – People entering ministry to “fix” congregations

A discernable number of seminarians describe entering ministry to “fix all that is wrong.” While these are not the majority, we encountered enough to recognize the issue. In over fifteen years of work with a huge number of congregations, we cannot recall a single congregation that is eager “to be fixed,” particularly by a newly ordained graduate. These students are the retention problems of the future. They will also run off a significant number of congregation members in the process.

Solution #10

Seminary admissions staff and seminary faculty might like to bear in mind the virtual certainty that this type of attitude will create upset and turmoil in congregations. The issue needs to be addressed in both the admissions process and during educational experiences.

Problem #11 – People entering ministry when all other options dried up

Small, but discernable portions of first and second career seminarians describe that they are entering ministry because all other options have closed. A few of these people will have successful ministries. Unfortunately, most will not. They will become part of the retention problem.

Solution #11A

Seminary admissions personnel are in a most difficult place on this issue. It seems inappropriate to turn down someone who presents themselves as having received a call from God, even though their past employment or academic major path is full of instability. Perhaps the answer lies in a deeper level of admission screening, possibly involving the type of clinical psychological screening that businesses often use. It might be helpful to remember that LCMS is about invest as much as \$50,000 of LCMS funds in this candidate’s education. Another \$500 for an expert screening might be good stewardship.

Solution #11B

Initial placement of graduates with checkered employment or academic major path is probably best in stable, well-behaved, and relatively small congregations. These new pastors will not be able to handle a distressed or complex congregation.

Recruiting Problems and Possible Solutions

The Clergy Shortage Study uncovered nine problems related to recruiting. At least one solution is offered for each. These problems are listed in the approximate order of magnitude or importance to eliminating the shortage of parish pastors.

Problem #12 – Depressed, burned out clergy

About 20% of currently service parish pastors are experiencing depression and advanced stages of burnout. An additional 20% of the parish pastors are rapidly approaching that condition. Over 2,000 currently serving parish pastors daily display a profession filled with pain, depression, abuse, neglect of family, stress, and all the negatives identified by virtually everyone interviewed in this project. These clergy repel youth and adults from considering parish ministry.

Solution #12A

The solutions to this huge part of the recruiting problem can be achieved by addressing the issues already identified as part of overall retention. These solutions include people not beating on each other, achieving better matching of pastors with congregations, providing help to struggling pastors and their families, addressing problems in clergy income, and ending warfare within congregations.

Solution #12B

Pastors experiencing burnout should be very careful about engaging in recruitment efforts. In current times, young people are particularly able to sniff out and be repelled by fraudulent adults. These teens seek out and thrive on authenticity. Most of these young people are already aware when their pastor is not enjoying ministry. If that pastor then tries to recruit young people to ministry, they are driven even further from considering that career.

Problem #13 – Parents degrading their pastor

When children hear parents run down their pastor, they reject parish ministry as an option. Many seminarians and pre-seminarians overcame parental objections to pursue a future in parish ministry. These are a clear minority. The vast majority of college and high school students are heeding their parents' advice to avoid parish ministry.

Solution #13

The main solutions to this second aspect to the recruiting problem also lies in solutions proposed to the retention problems described above. Parents simply have to stop running down their pastor, especially in front of their children. However, this is difficult to achieve when pastors engage in that type of behavior toward each other. Implementing the solutions suggested for the first problem—People stop beating on each other—will help greatly.

Problem #14 – Pastoring is mostly invisible

Most of what a pastor does is invisible to most people. This is especially true for young people who only see the pastor in Sunday morning worship. Virtually all CUS students pursuing professions other than pre-seminary cite substantial, first-hand experience with the profession they are pursuing and an individual in that profession. Because the majority of a pastor's work is invisible, clergy experiencing healthy ministry need to initially nurture mentoring relationships with young people.

This reality is particularly true in larger congregations where a DCE or others, who are not pastors, operate the majority of youth ministry.

Solution #14A

“Shadowing” is a concept where an individual accompanies a person already functioning in the career under consideration. Pastors can take older youth and adults with them on prospect visits, shut-in calls, to professional gatherings. They can secure assistance with parts of sermon preparation, worship planning, and other activities that display major parts of being a parish pastor. Shadowing can also occur with younger people by being an acolyte, standing next to pastor while greeting people before and after service, and assisting pastor with age appropriate activities.

Solution #14B

Pastors of larger congregations who have only limited time for direct involvement with young people can consciously build a relationship with individuals possessing ministry potential. The pastor can hire a young person with ministry potential to assist with tasks around the house. This and other similar ideas gives the young person “quality time” with the pastor in order to gain first-hand exposure to a healthy person in ministry.

Problem #15 – “Recruiting” is about relationships

The current emphasis on recruiting to church worker professions will have the tendency to produce the “once a year sermon” on recruiting. While such a sermon might be helpful, the study clearly shows that recruiting is more about relationships than exhortation.

Solution #15A

Everyone interested in encouraging youth and adults to consider parish ministry should remember that building interest is a long-term process. Some individuals will respond immediately, but the majority will take more time. Large portions of first and second career parish pastors describe many years of rejecting the calling.

Solution #15B

Seminary recruiters need to remember that building relationships is just as key for them. Building a relationship means sharing the recruiter's faith development with the prospect. It means sharing what will happen spiritually on the campus while giving the tour of the buildings.

Solution #15C

Districts can operate programs to identify and recruit potential church workers. For two decades, the Texas District has invited its most gifted young people to a five-day Ministerial Youth Retreat at Concordia University in Austin. The young people visit church workers to receive hands-on exposure to many types of ministry.

Problem #16 – Post education debt

Even though students are in the seminary or enrolled in pre-seminary programs they worry about money issues after ordination. They wonder why they will have completed eight years of college and incur large undergraduate debt, only to receive poverty wages. Virtually all of the college students not enrolled in pre-seminary curriculum had the same observation. All of the high school students expressed similar reflections. They saw the educational costs as being high, only to receive a low paying job after completion.

Solution#16

Districts and congregations can help their church workers with debt repayment relief over a period of years. Implementing solutions described above to the problems of low income would also greatly help.

Problem #17 – Parents reluctant to encourage children into clergy

Large numbers of LCMS parents are reluctant to encourage children into clergy.

Solution #17

The main solutions to this second aspect to the recruiting problem also lies in solutions proposed to the retention problems described above. As the life of the pastor is made more humane and peace comes to more congregations, parents will be more supportive of encouraging their children to pastoral ministry.

Problem #18 – Children of clergy not entering ministry

Some children of parish pastors speak positively of the experience. However, most want no part of that life. Even other young people who watch their friends who are PKs see what they go through and say "no way."

Solution #18

The main solutions to this second aspect to the recruiting problem also lies in solutions proposed to the retention problems described above. As the life of the

pastor is made more humane and peace comes to more congregations, parents will be more supportive of encouraging their children to pastoral ministry.

Problem #19 – Mechanics of recruiting

It was interesting to observe that not once during eight months of interviewing hundreds of people on recruiting were the topics of materials, brochures, or referral systems for recruiting ever mentioned.

Solution #19A

Construct all materials, brochures, and referral systems with a polished look and professional manner. Recognize that matters related to materials and procedures represent less than 5% of the decision to become a parish pastor.

Solution #19B

Pastors take time to establish personal relationships with the young people in their congregation. This is difficult when the pastor does not particularly like young people or can never “find the time” to be with them. Recruiting is about personal relationship building. The future of the church rests upon this important activity.

Meeting Clergy Shortage Problem Through a New Solution

Problem #20 – Licensed Deacons

Even if seminary enrollments doubled and dropout rates were cut in half, the LCMS will still have over 1,000 ministry locations without a parish pastor. Virtually all of organized Christendom (in the United States and around the world) is embracing the concept of deacons licensed. In the United States, these people conduct ministry under supervision of a local pastor. They are trained in a judicatory operated program for a specific ministry location as long as they are at that location. This trend includes denominations with theological traditions as stringent as those of the historical LCMS.

All these denominations continue to stress the value of an advanced level theological degree. At the same time, they recognize that:

1. “It is not our business to decide who God calls. It is the church’s role to recognize what God has done.”
2. “If we are going to relate to multi-racial and multi-cultural settings, we will have to become adaptive.”

Solution #21A

Conduct a formal study of the difference between advanced theological degreed education and a call from God to ministry to a group of believers.

Solution #21B

Develop creative solutions to problems of providing parish leadership training.

This project has been the most difficult in twenty-five years of professional research. That tenure includes studies in criminal justice and among people dealing with death of a loved one.

While many in the LCMS are flourishing in parish ministry, the majority are not. What has been so troubling about grappling with the contractual commitment to identify problems and propose solutions is that this tragedy has roots deep within the fabric of the Synod.

Only time will tell if those most responsible for the problems and those most capable of implementing solutions will be sufficiently moved to say, "we have had enough."

We close with prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the thousands of people who have chosen to serve your church on earth in full-time church work. Thank you for those who are experiencing joyfilled ministries.

Comfort and befriend the thousands of pastors, their wives and children for whom parish ministry has been miserable. Grant healing to those who have been deeply wounded and left the ministry.

We ask you to help those who insist on being harsh to come to understand what the life of Jesus was all about.

Be with the many who will read these words, feel compassion for the message and decide to be part of the solution.

We ask all this in the name of your Son who died for all of us.

Amen

Appendixes

Each Appendix matches the latter and group description of the group of people interviewed. The appendixes only provide a listing of the comments offered. They do not provide the intensity or body language cues so important to in-person interviewing. This information is captured in the Findings section.

A. Parish Pastors Interview Guide

Introduce discussion facilitator

Introduce participants

- Name
- One minute history summary

Take notes

Confidential

1. What is it like being a pastor these days?
2. Why do people choose parish ministry?
3. What do youth in your congregation say to you about becoming a parish pastor?
4. What do adults considering a second career say to you about becoming a parish pastor?
- 5A. Why are pastors dropping out of parish pastor role?
- 5B. What help is available in this District?
6. Is there anything you wanted to be sure to say that we have not covered?

Honorariums

Thanks

A. Parish Pastors Comments

Note: The listed comments are short phrases capsulizing how groups of pastors responded to the general questions listed in large, bolded type. In order to capture the power of the commentary as a whole, remember that these comments were shared in a:

1. Semi-public gathering,
2. With area pastors present, and
3. In front of facilitators from the LCMS International Center.

These comments are probably more positive than participants actually feel.

Note: All the questions were neutral, not it itself evoking a positive or negative response. The nature of the answers comes from the pastors, not the question. (The exception is the one question on why people are leaving the ministry, which would naturally evoke negative information.)

1. What is it like being a pastor these days?

Negative Comments

"I resigned last week"
"I resigned yesterday"
"I am resigning tomorrow"

Most in my circuit are suffering
Some staff tensions
We are too hard on ourselves
Depressing time
Frustrations
Frustrating if you need order and structure
Never feel like I have gotten enough done
Failing by not getting enough done
Always putting out fires and not getting enough done
Lonely
Tension
Young pastor in an old congregation

Not much outside support in this long, steady track to be the Great Commission

I was trained for a world that no longer exists
High levels of anxiety among the clergy
In old days, it was a noble profession—not so much now
In small towns, the pastor was the highest paid—not now
In rural areas, the pastor was the best educated—not now
Less automatic respect
People no longer think of pastor as helper
Out of a clear blue sky, people will zap you
Hard to get a first class congregation
So much of what appears in public media about LCMS is negative
See a lot of meanness in Synod
Hate being administrator
Some feel pastor is supposed to do everything
People want you to make all the decisions
Lonely for me and my wife
Too many expectations put on my children
Son says he would never be a pastor
Need to get away
Rural ministers do not get support to get things done
Beginning to not like working every Sunday
Less and less like the administrative
Not so joyful
Difficult to maintain personal well being—physical, mental, emotional
Takes a lot of idealism to overcome difficulties
Tired of carrying the load
Tired of doing more administrative tasks
Constantly doing mess prevention
There have been dark moments
Have to develop personally to continue doing everything
LCMS teaches doctrine, but not how to develop spiritually
There are not a lot of trained people out there and there needs to be more
It is tough
More difficult in post modern definition of "truth is relative"
Pastor is not respected
We have to be prophets—a lonely task
Aren't we just supposed to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments
Need more devotional time
I have been trying to live in God's grace, not expectations

Not enough time with my wife
 Not enough time with my kids
 Too many meetings
 I am never done
 It just keeps coming
 There has to be more support for pastor, wives, and children
 Doctor keeps my blood pressure under control
 It is the best job you will ever hate
 The hierarchy is killing the church
 We do not take care of ourselves
 Growing up I respected pastors, but people today do not
 I miss being able to worship with my family
 I do not get respect. They call me by my first name.
 I am troubled by a growing understanding of pastor as employee
 Where is the closure on the old issues
 Generations have changed. Older people have worn out Bibles and
 devotional books, while younger people want to be "palsy-walsy."
 Kids going to basketball and not confirmation class
 Turmoil over worship. Congregation A is "not one of us."
 Pastors with personality disorders create problems
 Pastor is part of a large family that will drain you if you do not take
 care of yourself
 Can't go bowling or have a beer in my neighborhood
 Pastor is "on" all the time
 Some are proud of being workaholic
 We battle popular culture and evangelists who are con artists
 Mutual suspicion of the brethren. Tendency to put people in camps
 No compassion for when pastor needs to be father
 Prepared to be a theologian, not a pastor
 Time pressure robs from the family
 People do not respect boundaries. They call during dinner and
 demand to be put through
 Someone dies and they expect you to return from vacation
 Competitive
 Can't open up to other pastors. They will report it to the DP.
 Be good if we could preach, sick calls, and share Gospel with
 unchurched. But administrative functions prevent priestly
 functions
 Lots of guilt about always being behind.
 Too many things to do and not getting enough done
 Not clear what God's work is. Old members want to maintain the
 status quo.

Lack of success or growth pinned on the pastor
 Very isolated, especially around holidays
 Feel confused as pastor today
 Parochial school is a hornet's nest and I am not sure what my role is
 Lutherans are not moving into our neighborhood, and youth are
 moving out
 Same leaders re-elected and can't get new leaders

Mixed Comments

Roller coaster of highs and lows
 People can be difficult and wonderful
 Balancing act of extremes
 We get involved with pain and joy
 Need to take care of our own grief and joy
 Sometimes cry and sometimes happy
 Sometimes I feel on top of the world, some around the world, and
 some under the world
 Upside is I have time to read and study, but downside guilt about not
 doing enough

Positive Comments

I'm having a ball
 Good busy
 Exciting, enjoyable and overwhelming
 Exciting. Different from at first
 Challenging
 Changing
 Constant need for creativity
 I want to give people something worthwhile
 I see a lot of joy in results
 Excited about our situation
 Like raising up staff from within congregation
 Lay people with calling want education
 People are starting to accept lay ministers
 Seeing acceptance of ministry
 Fun as pastor
 Interesting, so many facets
 Like flexibility
 No other job is more rewarding
 Growth experience
 I have the best job there is; getting paid to help people
 Great, love being a pastor

Like the freedom
 Challenging
 Nice to be a friend of Jesus and get paid for it
 Getting lay people into ministry makes it easier
 In large congregation we develop people able to take responsibilities
 Developing part-time people is helpful
 I like it
 Many opportunities to help people find faith
 When seriously in the Word, I have become more joyful
 Old pastors talk about life satisfaction, old CPAs never do
 Interesting
 Feel good about my call
 I do not want to do anything else
 Define what you do best and find others to do the rest
 Pastor leads, but not shepherd tucking everyone in at night
 Need to see how to use spiritual gifts like never before. No way one
 can do it all.
 Overwhelming unless you prioritize. Doing everything is sick.
 Church is not vacant when pastor is gone
 There is more joy and satisfaction when you watch priorities.
 Pastor has to set the tone and get his own hours in order
 Lots of joy
 98% joy and 2% pure hell
 I am not a numbers person. I like to see individual's faith grow.
 Teaching is exciting
 Great support from my older members
 Neighborhood is run down, but people are committed to stay

 Even with all the struggles, I would not want to be anything else

2. Why do people choose parish ministry?

Great Commission

Hope it is a passion to bring people to Christ
 Desire to reach the lost
 Spread the Gospel

Felt called

An inner call
 Sometimes not clear at first
 I felt an inner call, but no one affirmed

Holy Spirit calling
 Did not choose role, but God dragged me in
 Idea kept coming back to me
 Always called. Just a matter of when we start listening.
 God is calling more than are answering
 Call you can't run away from
 I tried to run away
 Gut feeling
 It kept coming up, even if I was not listening
 Felt called from little on
 Was committed since a small child
 I overcame discouragement with my idealism
 A call, not a choice, I tried to run away, but God did not give up on me
 See this as a way to serve others
 Have love for people and the church
 Where you feel the Lord wants you to be
 Feel a strong sense of calling
 Youthful idealism
 No one in family is religious, but I felt called
 Desire to serve God
 How God put me together
 Spiritual relationship with God

 Feel called even in my darkest moments as a pastor

Responsibility, duty

Sometimes it is motives other than bringing people to Christ
 Service to Christ
 Some feel call from Christ is to "preserve the truth," not to reach the
 lost
 Dedicated to Lord and Savior
 Debt to pay to God
 Service, duty, loyalty
 Nobility of career
 A form of repentance
 Loved theology and developed love for people
 Used to be a noble, high calling
 Predominant form of ministry
 Wanted to bring about change in habits for my race
 Tradition
 Curiosity
 Power

Lots of pastors in my family
Seminary suitemates were PKs and felt tremendous pressure
Some PKs have to even though they do not want to
“Dedicated” to it because whole family were pastors
My family admired and respected pastors
Good fit with my talents
Do something worthwhile

Escape

Idealization of career satisfaction
Part of second career wave
Some second career had good first career experience and others did not
Having trouble (“in the mud”) and not able to admit, so switch to pastor
Some escaping from the world
This would be an easy career
If I can’t do anything else, I can be a pastor
Can be a safe second career
I wanted to be a pastor or baseball player. Did not make it to pro-baseball

Someone Encouraged

Somebody motivated me:
Pastor
Teacher
Adult leader
Wife, parent
Bible class I was teaching
Mentor
Godparents
Professor
Pastor picked out and encouraged people
When pastor says you are called, you can’t say no
First pastor talked to me in junior high
Pastor involved me in a number of worship activities
Older pastor had me involved at the altar
Campus pastor suggested while I was in another major
In high school, changed idea daily. Pastor kept encouraging me
Good role model
Modeled after father
Encouraged by those around me

Decision affirmed by other adult leaders
God calls you and puts people in your life to support
Visit by Springfield Seminary choir
Visit to LCMS college/university campus
Personal faith in my heart
Grew up in congregation holding pastor in high regard
People in the men’s Bible study
Sunday school teacher and grandmother encouraged me
Affirmed by many people over the years
Saw how people in the church truly loved each other and want to participate

Someone discouraged

Other people were negative about being pastor
Parents were particularly negative
Parents know how bad it is, so discouraged children
Father discouraged me
Lots of discouragement
Wife discouraged me
30% to 40% of seminary classmates had similar stories about wives
Wife lived next door to pastor—wanted no part of role
Negative perception in media—effeminate, weaklings, social but not spiritual
I am the only one of the four of us PKs

Miscellaneous Answers

Easy to be, older brother was getting the farm
Don’t want to be a farmer, so go be a pastor
Wanted to do, but do not have the gifts
Never would have done this in my right mind—constantly busy, people calling
Outreach drive gone because we are no longer pioneers
Make twice what teachers and DCEs make
Wanted power and extra money
A step up
Want the pedestal position pastors are put on
Want to be the hero
Place of safety
Good way to spend your one and only life
Perception that pastor walks around and people give him \$100 bills
Masochist
Blessedly naïve
Idealistic that we can make a difference

3. What do youth in your congregation say about becoming a parish pastor?

25% of the pastors named or discussed one or more specific young persons with whom they had recently discussed "becoming a parish pastor."

75% of the pastors spoke only in general terms, describing relatively few actual conversations, and mostly shared their personal perceptions.

Negative Comments

Pastor gives picture of one who is unhappy, doesn't reflect joy and satisfaction

Lots of pastors do not show joy in ministry

We display the pressures and the kids pick up on them

70% of pastors "do not have a friend"

Pastors don't look happy

PKs in high school say, "Are you kidding"

I see what you do and you could not pay me enough

Families have expectations in addition to church:

Should be family, self, church

I have no life

Grieved by the amount of time lost with family

So many PKs are turned off by criticism, poor income, living without

Congregations are very hard on pastor's family, so PKs want nothing to do with any Concordia

Younger pastors listen to the amount of time we put in and say, "Not me"

When we talk about congregation alligators, it gets to our children

I rarely talk about

As a pastor, I chose to be neutral in discussing with my children

Could not make it through system

Eight years of education, no way

Eight years of school followed by not making any money is nonsense

"I can't go to school that long"

Pay is so low, pastors cannot afford a car or to have children

It costs a lot of money to become a pastor, and rewards are not there

If I have to work long hours like a doctor, I want the financial rewards

Not much money for all the hassle

Can make a lot more money in other fields

Want to be a millionaire

"I don't want to be poor"

Want to drive Mercedes

Relatives outside ministry get rewards we do not get

Mother said, "We will not waste his talent on ministry"

High drive parents want kids to do better

Parents talk it down

Boy was interested, but parents wanted him to make money—now a lawyer

Overwhelmed by how hard it will be

Must be a hard job

Pastor has very long days

Congregations make high demands

90 hour work week

Apprehension about responsibilities

Concerns about non-Germans not being accepted

Had several, but they received no encouragement from Synod

Ones I had were told they were not wanted

The system is more interested in being right than in encouraging participation

System does not support African Americans to become pastors

Very few African American role models

Synod is generally a negative place. Who would want to go into that.

Negativity in the synod for decades

A pastor said to me "why would you want to participate in anything to help BHE"

Two groups of new seminarians-either very rigid or open

Young people see politics in the church and want no part of it

People are not going into helping professions

Lots of guys are shy about the role

Lots of guys are shy about hospitals

Did not want to leave community

"People worthy of the calling see joy in service and joy in overcoming hassle"

There are limits to how much we can be encouraging

After confirmation we do not keep up with kids in high school and college

We do not expose kids to system high schools where they get encouragement
 Pastors work hard, but focus is not the same
 Kids do not talk about unless you bring it up
 Kids are rarely asked about being a pastor
 I do not ask in confirmation
 Higher up people in church body have bad reputation—turns off young people
 Well established church does not want to reach in the community
 No fun in the ministry because no fun in the church
 Boring
 Blank stares
 We are small enough, but I do not discuss it with them
 Some interested when young, but survival gets to be an issue in inner city
 Costs way too much
 Life here is McDonald's and welfare-costs too much
 I talked to a few kids who were flattered, but declined, so I gave up

 Have no youth in our congregation

Positive Comments

At home we (pastor and wife) are always intentional about speaking positively about ministry
 Hire young person who is a potential pastor to help with yard work around the house—so can talk about becoming pastor
 Had personal relationship with pastor, even though he did not realize it
 Gen-Xers are not concerned about "getting ahead"
 I try to keep other jobs in front of people
 I help my offspring understand they can augment income with another job
 It is important to show joy, not hold back or be staid
 Oldest son accompanied me in pastoral activities
 Closely related to quality of entire congregation spiritual development program where the whole staff is involved and supportive
 Dedicated at an early age

Miscellaneous Factors

Live ministry, not talk ministry
 Have to be recruited way before high school
 Have to continue talking about through high school

Don't just talk about. Keep in personal contact
 In larger churches, pastors do not deal directly with youth much.
 Have interested young men participate in worship leadership and stand at door shaking hands
 When our children are old enough to speak plainly, they are involved in worship
 Catalyst for one was to read lessons in services
 Let them be an acolyte
 We need to give kids hands on opportunities to feel call to be ministers
 It takes lots of people in the congregation to keep this idea in front of individual young people
 We send our kids to Appalachia each year
 We send 30 lay people a year to foreign field
 Adults come back and talk it up
 Adults take kids
 This is marketing, not posters or once in a while exhortations
 We have a strong emphasis on ministry of the laity
 Many pastors in my circuit hold lay people in low esteem
 Large percentages of Hispanic youth drop out of high school
 Youth being attracted to non-denominational churches with lower entry standards
 Kids are not saying much
 Need to look beyond straight "A" students
 Congregations could provide scholarships
 Young women asking "why not me in Missouri"

4. What do adults in your congregation say about becoming a parish pastor?

- 30% of the pastors named or discussed one or more specific adults with whom they had recently discussed "becoming a parish pastor."
- 70% of the pastors spoke only in general terms, describing relatively few actual conversations.

Negative Comments

Pastor's wives are the saddest looking people I know
 Wants to serve the Lord, but does not want all the hassles
 Conflicted congregations are a bad example of what it means to be clergy
 Congregations have horrendous expectations

PKs neglected

No system support for pastors. Fear and suspicion

They feel our struggling

No money in clergy career

In seminary, lack of money came up some

Biggest money issue is for the family, the wives

Want to serve the Lord, but economic issues are strong

Suburban people have strong tie to money

Mediocre money, so wife has to work, but can't get job in field

Lack of health care coverage is a real concern

I lost everything because we had no health coverage and seminary
wife got sick

Can't make a living

Lots of interest, but only had three willing to pull up roots

It takes four moves in four years and is real hard on families

Afraid to uproot

I had one man take a DELTO class and really felt it when he had to
miss the overtime income

Sixteen men came forward for DELTO, and then rules stiffened and
program closed

Lots of confusing signals about worth/value given in DELTO
orientation

Lots of inconsistency and confusion

Lots of issues:

DPs do not know the rules

Purpose is confused

Will not pour into system hundreds of men

Real snobbery exists in existing clergy toward DELTO completers

DELTO is not as stringent

If we have good pastors, they can teach locally

Do not need to go to campus

DELTO will create two-track system

Wonder what is the minimum needed to be a parish pastor—call?
Education?

Need to be apt in the doctrine of the Scriptures

Theology without history is a loose cannon

Not every pastor needs the same theological depth

Men in ministry need to be eye-to-eye with faculty and fellow students

People I encourage are rejected by Synod

Synod says, "Go get Greek and then come back"

Synod does not want people

Seminary only wants mature theologians

Seminary rejects people who are raw and don't know the right words

Seminary is very abusive to people who are interested

Seminary now declining 13% and should be declining more

Need a separate track. I no longer use Greek

I have seen grown men cry when they could not pass Greek

Wife says, "NO WAY"

Wife does not want the role

I had one, but his kids did not want to go

Families are not encouraging

Fear of leading worship

Fear of hospitals

Lay person wants to be helpful, but not in charge

Some people want to stay as laity

People are turned off about career

Interested, but feels too old

Lay people want to stay local

Many lay people want to keep a narrow focus

Second career is great, but have concerns about third and fourth career

Many want structure and control

We recruit to commitment and challenge, not compassion and
community

We put up many obstacles

I never talk about

I don't have many

Concerns about going back to that much school

Strong job market—no pressure to look in other directions

Lots of prejudice in the church

Pastor is no longer held in such high regard

I've had a few who were in one job after another

Missouri strictness is stifling

Some pastors and circuit counselors frown on second career people

Too expensive to go

This is the Lord's work and we treat it like our work

We are more concerned about central control than spreading ministry

Adults say, "I would not have your job for anything."

Church does not hold office of pastor in high esteem

Positive Comments

Lots of interest, but only had three willing to pull up roots
I have one elder
Encouragement for other members helped one decide
Some people have the gifts
Some say, "there is a lot wrong that I could help straighten out"
I talked to my three so they have their eyes wide open
They feel the call
Second career people have a better shot at being realistic
Second career people have more conviction and faith
Have different levels of commitment, challenge, compassion and community
Have to plant the seeds and keep it in front of people
I have tried to get close to a few people
Seeds were planted long ago
My congregation members are working on one man

Miscellaneous Factors

Lot of lay people looking for different ministry track (than seminary)
I think the second career disasters are about as frequent as first career
Once a month all three of us work on sermons they will preach
Keep stressing "Don't close your mind—listen for God's call"
Worker-priest is a good solution to the money issue
I hear more talk about church work than about ordination
Deacon program will be extremely important

5A. Why are pastors dropping out of the parish pastor role?

"The joy is gone and I can't take the crap anymore."
"I cannot encourage others into this."
"Young people see all this and say, 'no way'."

Problems

We see someone drowning and let him drown
Ten of the 80 pastors in my area have dire problems
A few get into behavior problems
Cannot emotionally and spiritually deal with today
I hear lots of "I've had it up to here"
Self-esteem issues when ministry has not been "successful"
Most clergy not challenged
Not achieving
Not accomplishing what we thought we would

Lots of discouragement:

Pressures
Family life
Pressure cooker
No life
No outlet
Life is the parish
Feel isolated and abandoned
Spiritual warfare with the devil
Hurts
Lots of hurting pastors
Being a passive shepherd will not create recognition
No "promotion and advancement"
There is pressure and no praise
Hard to feel successful with so much negative feedback
Working hard, but declining in success
If you stand for something, you get flack
Lots of pastors not building relationship with Jesus Christ
We handle problems poorly
Reality of ministry was not like the dream
Taking problems to the Lord and not getting answers
General burnout
Lack of fulfillment
Very heavy workload
"I cannot do this anymore"
"If I could, I would leave it tomorrow"
After 15 years you look at lack of accomplishing much
Success oriented society is big pressure
Pastors need to know themselves
Many pastors lack people skills:
Cause conflict and then make them worse
Cannot deal with disruptive people
Cannot manage themselves
No positive acknowledgements
People are quick with criticism
My sons resent the way their father was exploited
Burnout from high expectations
Pastors are scared of seeming less than adequate
Few rewards to compensate for the problems—just leave
Workaholics
Vanity
Expected to be Jesus incarnate

Tremendous pressure
 Ministers demand too much of themselves
 People told me pastors are uppity
 World is negative, so I get treated aggressively
 Lovelessness and lack of forgiveness in the church
 Recognize the marks of toxicity: 1) high negativity, 2) quick temper,
 and 3) need to dominate agenda. This is the LCMS
 Theological debates belong behind the scenes, not dumping all over
 the place
 Lack of free time
 Lack of support within and without
 Suspicious
 Still paying price for 70's wars
 Lack of trust
 Lack of support
 Hierarchy is living a lie. They claim to be servants, but don't wield
 authority effectively. This leads us to deny that parents have
 authority and that synod officials have authority of the church.
 We get mixed messages. Told to work hard and to take time for
 family.
 Isolation
 Internalized frustration

Health Issues

I exercise daily
 I take daily time with my wife
 I only go back two nights a week
 I beat down that German work ethic
 We need to stop and smell the roses
 We need to find a diversion
 Exhaustion

Family Issues

New graduates are insisting on family life
 Pastors have above normal family problems—caused by neglect
 Pastors are attacked—and family sees abuse
 Wives have no friends—and has had it with being pastor's wife
 Family takes brunt of it when pastor and congregation fight
 Lots of family problems and nowhere to go
 Been a weak husband and father
 Wife never wanted to be a pastor's wife
 Pastors' wives are less willing to keep quiet

Congregation wants to get “two for the price of one”
 Pastors marrying Ph.D. and MAs who cannot find work in small towns
 Pastor is gone all the time:
 Not paying attention to wife
 Not paying attention to kids
 Do not see my kids much
 No support mechanism for kids
 Kids can be hung out to dry in some congregations
 Families disintegrating
 PKs see pastor cared for everyone but them
 Pastors take issues home with them
 Relationships are hurting, but we can't let anyone know
 My wife is right when she says that “I am married to the church and
 can't say no.”
 Pastors need to hear more clearly that they need to take some time.
 District needs to tell this to congregations.

Definition of Ministry Issues

Paradigms changed and pastors did not keep up
 Society is moving away from the church
 The whole structure is changing
 Trained one way and cannot adapt
 Ministry has changed
 We have to be visionary, train leaders, and multiply ourselves
 The members should be the visionaries
 Older people do not want to change and younger ones do
 Soloists
 We are still pumping out lone rangers who are generalists in a world
 going the other way
 We are now doing stuff we were never trained for
 Lack of accountability
 Maintenance ministry is tiring and boring
 Begin to accept inferior as acceptable
 Hard to feel doing a good job during declining attendance
 Do not see an end result
 Hard to see successes
 New pastors did not build relationships
 Things have become routine, doing the same things year after year
 No longer clear on my role
 Getting different messages
 “Keep the main thing the main thing”
 Pastor does everything

People are bringing tougher issues for which we have lower skills in
 new areas
 No time for long-term counseling
 Pastors like to please and can't say no
 People want pastor all the time no matter what
 People coming out of seminary worship theology over Christ
 Lots of guys are lazy. They want to study and preach. All they do is
 complain
 It is tough to keep a proper perspective when little children call you
 God
 Give all praise to God and problems to the pastor
 If I don't do it, it all falls apart

Congregation Issues

Conflict—more from interpersonal relationships than philosophical
 Congregations have camps that fight—in the street we call them gangs
 Expectations are much higher
 Different expectations
 Big difference between expectations and reality
 Expectations on growth, but not growing
 Congregations do not pay for continuing education as a way of getting
 back at pastors
 Mission oriented pastor in typical congregation will be very frustrated
 Often not a good match between pastor and congregation
 The first call is like a “shotgun wedding”
 Lay people attend conferences and come back with very high
 expectations
 Want CEO, visionary, hire and fire staff, and pull everything together
 I was hired to preach the true Word, and now they want all this other
 stuff
 Mismatch of pastor with congregation
 Put too many city graduates in rural settings
 Some pastors “have all the answers” and battle with congregation
 Unloving battles
 Different opinions about how the church can grow
 No support for the pastor
 After a time, pastor and congregation cannot stand each other
 Decade old problems erupt in congregations
 Feel like walking on eggs all the time
 Low integrity in the call process with congregations not being truthful
 Congregations expect us to do everything, even though people in
 congregation have skills

Pastors have trouble letting go of doing everything
 Pastor becomes co-dependent with congregation
 Pastors are control freaks
 Congregations eat up pastor's time and take it away from the family
 People will not respect pastor's private time
 People have lower levels of tolerance for each other
 It is more the little pot shots than the big conflicts that drive men out
 Ill-will accumulates like toxins and poisons the congregation
 Had to drive 20 miles away from congregation to have a beer with
 classmate
 Have to have shirt on when cutting the grass
 Congregation yells at me for spending too much, then gives me new
 task of mentoring the principal

Money Issues

No money
 Huge debt
 No hope of having a home
 Some are paid well, but most are not
 Retirement based upon earning is a real negative for rural and small
 congregation ministries
 I am earning half what I was earning in my first career
 Torn between wanting to stay at home and need to work
 Hard for wife to find work in rural areas
 Did not become pastor to make money, but left seminary with \$40,000
 debt
 Cannot pay back loans very fast
 Ministry in rich community and kids do not have designer shorts
 Pastors are struggling financially and cannot afford the help they need
 Pastors cannot live in the congregation's community
 We dishonor the pastor by forcing him into poverty
 I was eligible for food stamps, but did not want to embarrass the
 congregation
 Low income, but do not want to see sloppy shoes or frayed pants
 Pastor has to know himself. Money is a ramification of bigger issues
 Wife says I am underpaid, but I rarely hear that from church leaders

Retirement

Lots of pastors eagerly approaching retirement
 Want to retire from the congregation, not the ministry
 People getting old and tired

Miscellaneous Issues

We know a lot about theology, but are not spiritual:

We say prayers, but do not pray

We study texts, but do not study the Bible

We talk the talk, but do not walk the walk

“What keeps me going is my personal faith life”

This is no different from business

Yes, but in business at least you get other rewards

Deterioration of doctrine

Pastor has different doctrine from congregation (communion, live-ins)

Divided church-body for decades

Shortage of pastors may be God’s way of saying that perhaps we
should have 4,500 churches

Perhaps some are getting out because they are focusing on themselves,
not the Lord

Seminaries need to be places where questions will be encouraged

Seminaries now are “cooperate and graduate”

“I asked a question that did not fit, and the class was dismissed for the
day”

Seminary students are afraid and professors are afraid

Professors say, “I am here to tell you and you are here to learn what I
say”

Seminaries make it very hard for second career people

5B. What help is available in this District?

Clergy treat other clergy worse than they treat the unchurched

We dare not display problems

My wife almost left me in the first year and I got no help. I could not
go to the district because they would kick me out. I could not go
to other pastors.

In LCMS, we shoot our wounded

No good support systems among the brothers in the church

The only support system is the family. Should not dump on the
family, but have nowhere else to go.

When the going gets tough, we cut and run

Pastor shows symptoms, but we do not know what to do

Nothing available for help in this district

We force “all or nothing choices” (no respite or healing opportunities)

No friends—especially in rural areas

We all have very few Lutheran pastor friends

We do not support each other

You have to know you need help

Pastor needs to find a “pastor confessor”

Biggest barrier is my self-denial. I can’t admit that I need help.

If I have a problem, an anonymous voice will not help.

Some circuit counselors are good, but others are not

Cannot trust confidentiality of “in-system” help

Circuits and Winkels are really bad—competitive, harsh, ill-will

Not nearly enough ministerial health

Pastors are not honest with themselves about themselves

Sabbaticals are rare

We need ways to help pastors in trouble

Need to rediscover that your wife is your best friend, but they need
time off

Nothing much available except what you create

DPs interested in settling situation rather than finding out what is
going on

DPs too quick to side with troublemakers and not support pastor

Easier for DP to replace pastor than to deal with conflicted
congregation

Pastors are expendable, but congregations go on

Troublemakers call the DP and he feels compelled to intervene

System is not designed to deal with “crazy-makers”

Organized groups attacking pastors

System is passing problem pastors from congregation to congregation

Area ministerial association is good place for help

Pastors have to find someone in the community to bleed on

No support in the circuit

Circuit was a good place for help prior to the wars. Now run into
some conservative pastors who scare me

Structure creates isolation

We need to help people develop coping skills

I have no expectations that the district can be helpful

District provides help—BUT...

Have a vague awareness that something is available

Help is there, but you have to go and get it

We have a district chaplain
 I get help from 2 or 3 older men in my congregation
 Good people in my circuit
 Circuits and Winkels are helpful—supportive, confidential
 We have a group and rate ourselves 1-10 so the lowest rating goes first
 In prior place, I had four other pastors who lunched on Tuesdays and
 helped the most hurting one of us. Don't have that here.
 Health plan 800-number
 Networking at conferences is very supportive, but some do not come
 Best support is from outside LCMS

6. What did you want to be sure to say?

Dragging wife to seminary is problem
 Seminary requires four moves in four years—very hard on family
 Like to see three years of course work followed by some kind of
 internship in the place you will eventually be called
 Perhaps we need model of one pastor with lots of professional and
 volunteer workers
 We used to have a two-track system—St. Louis was academic and
 Springfield was practical
 We talk about multi-cultural, but all of leadership is German
 Noticed all the German names of people in discussions with ELCA
 Of seven vicars and four interns, many feel entitled
 I do not see much passion for ministry in some people
 Circuit meetings are not a brotherhood
 Our circuit meetings are a brotherhood
 Circuits are really brutal
 Parishes are squeezing people
 Proportion entering is greater now from a smaller pool
 We need to be training team people
 We should only send vicars to growing churches
 Synod needs to address how pastors are judged
 Need ways to help pastors be better pastors
 Need to get knowledge from head to the heart
 Spend a lot training pastors, and then do nothing after that
 Perhaps God is refining ministry
 Perhaps we rely too heavily on clergy

B. Wives of Parish Pastors

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Family
- One minute history summary

Take notes

Confidential

1. What are the best parts of being a pastor's wife?
2. What are the down sides of being a pastor's wife?
3. How do you deal with these issues/what resources are available?
4. Do you know families that have left the ministry? What were the reasons?
5. What are the financial issues connected with being a pastor's wife?
6. How has being a PK affected your kids?
7. What are your thoughts on the reasons for the shortage?
8. Anything we have not known to ask?

Honorariums

Thanks

B. Wives of Parish Pastors

Comments

Before presenting the comments received from the wives of parish pastors, it is necessary to describe an interesting phenomenon that occurred in those who chose to attend the sessions. In three different cities, fifteen wives were invited to attend either of two discussion sessions. The specific people were invited because they were the fifteen congregations closest to the hotel where the discussions were to take place.

A significant bias occurred in those who attended. Virtually all the wives whose husbands are the pastor of congregations experiencing declining worship attendance chose not to attend the sessions. Comments received from wives and children of pastors, together with observations of clergy burnout in declining congregations, shed light on the bias. The strong possibility exists that things are so bad for these women that the opportunity to "let it all out" would be too much to endure. Once the "genie of discontent is let out of the bottle" it might not be possible to put it back..

Change in Average Worship Attendance At Congregations 1985 – 1997

	<u>Synod</u>	<u>Invited</u>	<u>Attending</u>
Growing by at least 10%	23%	23%	60%
Stable	25%	41%	33%
Declining by at least 10%	52%	36%	7%

1. What are the best parts of being a pastor's wife?

Loving, kind people we've met
Positive experiences for the children
Being inside of people's lives
Being in different kinds of parishes
Watching people grow spiritually
It's kept me on the straight and narrow

2. What are the down sides of being a pastor's wife?

Can't have friends within the congregation
Loneliness, isolation
Any friendships are very superficial
Once you've been "burned" you are very cautious about sharing with anyone
No connection with other clergy wives in circuit/district
Don't really have a pastor
Moving is hard, especially on the children
Financial struggles
It's hard to learn to say "no"
Unrealistic expectations of congregation
Expected to participate in lots of things
Always on display; expected to be "upbeat" all the time
Live in a glass house
In one rural setting, people watched us with binoculars
Long hours, high stress, always on call
Husband is gone all the time; exhausted when home
Everyone wants everything from him
Friendships are very difficult for us as a couple
No ability to plan social activities as a couple
Overhearing people's criticisms
People come to me directly to criticize my husband; won't go to him
Hard to live in contentious situation; I need to be liked
I can't count on my husband to be available to me when I need him
Inability to disagree with anyone in the congregation
Difficulties with staff
Trying to do the Lord's work and feel you shouldn't complain
Tough not to feel guilty about not doing all the volunteer jobs that are needed
My husband is totally overworked; we wave to each other; he is looking at early retirement
His biggest adversary is what's inside of him – he is driven, will not take a day off.

3. How do you deal with these issues/what resources are available?

Confront complainers directly
See pastoral counselor
Find a friend outside the congregation
Have a job that is not related in any way to the church

District-sponsored conference for wives provides safe environment to be honest and open

District-sponsored retreat is held during the work week so many can't attend

Attempts to bring circuit couples together hasn't worked; low attendance

The district counselor is real hard to get in touch with

Pastors are pretty much on their own; there is fear about being open with one another

I can't stand to attend events for clergy wives because all they do complain and talk negatively

4. Do you know families that have left the ministry? What were the reasons?

Could not take the criticism

Spousal abuse

Too much stress

Wife extremely unhappy

Financial struggles

Clashes with District officials

Battles over expectations of clergy

Many churches are in turmoil

Complete burn out

5. What are the financial issues connected with being a pastor's wife?

Live paycheck to paycheck, but have been very blessed

God always provides

Children not able to attend Concordia

Some churches hold paychecks for several days

Learn to make choices

A constant struggle

We are paid below District guidelines, but we're content with what we have

Money is a huge issue

We left seminary with a large debt

I resent having to work outside the home

6. How has being a PK affected your kids?

Easier on younger children

Get upset by problems in the church

Moving is really hard on them

They will never forget that their dad worked a lot

Work hard to encourage individualism

Moving in junior high years was very tough

They are real disappointed when dad is at meetings and misses their activities

Resented having pastor's study in home; had to be quiet all the time

7. What are your thoughts on the reasons for the shortage?

Problem is the money-orientation of the culture

Today's youth are money-driven

Come out of seminary with huge debt

Clergy education is the same amount of time as doctors and attorneys, but with a fraction of the salary

Respect for the pastoral office is not what it used to be

Conflict in congregations

Pastors go through a lot of anguish

Pay is not equal to amount of time pastors put in

Takes a long time to build trust

Most younger pastors throw in the towel too soon

Lot of pastors are strong introverts; have to work at being extraverted

Clergy are portrayed negatively in the media

Over 50% of seminary wives do not want to be there and display lots of anger and bitterness

There are a lot of very small congregations that refuse to give up; need to look hard at why they exist

The LCMS is perceived as being very closed-minded and looking down our noses at other people; young people will not put up with this attitude

8. Anything we have not known to ask?

LCMS does not market itself

Pastors don't talk about experiences or opportunities

As a pastor's wife, I have to be my own person

I have resisted putting so much pressure on myself

The decision to enter ministry should be a family decision

It's very tough to keep things above water.

Lack of understanding of the Great Commission, everyone is a minister

Perfectionism is a big part of the problem

My husband feels every shut in must be visited every month by him, "because there's no one else who can do it"

C. Children of Pastors in CUS Institutions

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker?

Take notes

Confidential

1. How many churches have you been in?
2. What are the best parts of being a PK?
3. What are the toughest parts of being a PK?
4. Have you ever considered going into full time church work?
5. Anything else?

Honorariums

Thanks

C. Children of Pastors in CUS Institution Comments

1. How many churches have you been in?

2, 2, 2, 6
3, 2, 3, 2
4, 3, 2, 3

2. What are the best parts of being a PK?

(lots of silence and nervous laughter)

Sunday School teachers can't get mad at you
Everyone knows you
Fun, pot lucks, lots of invitations and gifts
Feel comfortable in church because you're there 7 days a week growing up
You know what you're getting into if you pursue church work
Learn flexibility at a young age
You see both sides of the church
Enjoyed our dinner table discussions and devotions following
Liked sneaking into church and watching dad practice his sermon
I knew all the answers in my religion classes
Dad always demonstrated unconditional love

"You're the golden child until you mess up"

3. What are the toughest parts of being a PK?

(Immediate responses were spoken. Thoughts were expressed so fast it was hard to keep up with recording them.)

MOVING and the constant threat of moving
People have higher expectations of you
You have more responsibilities
You live under a microscope all the time; life is in a fishbowl; life is an open book
You can't mess up or it reflects on the pastor

If you screw up, people assume it's because you're a PK and they think they
 have a right to know everything
 Youth pastors expect us to be helpers, not recipients of ministry
 Makes it hard to find a pastor because you're never exposed to other preaching
 styles as a kid
 Dad's way becomes the way
 There is a lack of forgiveness in the church
 The political aspect is very negative
 Lots of back-stabbing and people in it for their own gain
 People blame things on our dads, but take it out on us
 I have no sense of where "home" is
 We're not treated well by other kids
 The expectations of perfection ruined my older sister's life
 I can't talk to my dad; only my brothers and sisters (we have private meetings)
 Listening to my parents talk about money is hard
 My parents' biggest fights are over money
 Dad's always on call
 I worry about my dad, that he's headed for a breakdown because of all the
 stress
 My parents think they're keeping secrets from us, but kids always know what's
 going on in the congregation
 My dad puts the congregation first; it's hard to not see him very much
 I was usually asleep when he came home; sometimes would not see him for 2
 or 3 days at a stretch
 We always had to put up a front of never being angry; my parents often fight
 and put on the "good show" at church
 We were always forced to sit in front
 Could never wear jeans to church
 I hated it
 My mom became a workaholic
 Dad never made it to any school special events
 If my dad was ever home, he was always watching television; I learned to play
 golf in hopes he would spend time with me.
 Politics makes it really hard for pastors to do anything; if the big givers get
 mad, you're screwed
 The message gets lost in all the politics
 Lots of congregations are in "attack mode"
 People use accountability as a hammer on pastors; they forget that pastors are
 people, too
 It's a "one man show" – the pastor against the world

4. Have you ever considered going into full time church work?

Four considering it

Two not sure

"I was so hammered with being involved at everything at church. Even if I had
 to miss school for illness, I still had to go to church. There's no way I'm
 going to work for the church."

"Church work really takes a toll on the pastor"

(Asked the women if they would consider marrying a pastor)

"My sisters and I all agreed we'd not marry pastors"

"I could not live with my husband being called out – as a child you know your
 mom is hurting"

"It sucks to be a pastor's wife, there's no way around it"

"I can't imagine taking the abuse my mom has taken"

5. Anything else?

We need to educate congregations about what a valuable asset a pastor is.

Don't question a person's call (female friend now ELCA pastor)

D. Children of Pastors in Lutheran High Schools

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker?

Take notes

Confidential

6. How many churches have you been in?
7. What are the best parts of being a PK?
8. What are the toughest parts of being a PK?
9. Have you ever considered going into full time church work?

Honorariums

Thanks

D. Children of Pastors in Lutheran High School Comments

1. How many churches have you been in?

3, 2, 4, 3, 3 (in last 8 years), 4
3, 4, 2, 3, 1
3, 1, 2, 5
1, 1, 4, 2, 3, 2
4, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2
5, 1, 4, 2, 4 (1 move), 2
2, 2, 2, 2

2. What are the best parts of being a PK?

(Silence, then a few replies started to come.)

Free food, nice gifts
You learn the hymns before everybody else
Religion classes are easier
You're exposed to the truth of the Gospel
It opens your eyes to how much pastors care and how hard they work
Everyone knows you
You're always doing something
Get to attend youth conventions
It's good for us, whether we like it or not; keeps us from destruction
I like the challenge to be my best
You have parents that care
We move a little less often than army brats

3. What are the toughest parts of being a PK?

(Instant replies stated so fast it was hard to keep up.)

MOVING

My dad tries really hard to please everyone, but he's still criticized all the time.
Seeing a congregation split in two and being stuck in the middle
Dad is always working; gone a lot; I miss him a lot
My dad cleans toilets when the janitor is sick

People expect us to be perfect
We have lots of extra responsibilities – acolytes, ushers, choirs, etc
We're also expected to have all the answers, and people look down on us if we don't

We actually have more problems; either we try to be perfect or go rebellious
Constant rejection from other kids

I can't get dates because I'm a PK

You're never accepted in a new school, especially a Lutheran school where you're resented for being a pastor's kid

People think I get lead roles just because I'm the pastor's kid

"I went through a stage where I really wanted my dad to be plumber"

Dad is really different at home

Parents are extremely over-protective

I hate it when he uses stories about me in sermons

Your life is in a fishbowl; no secrets in your family

People are extremely nosy; want to know details

Dad takes out his frustrations on us

It's assumed that I'll attend everything; Sunday is my day of rest, too!

You have to make financial sacrifices

I would love to have a car, but I just have to face the fact that I won't

If you ever do get something nice, people in the congregation wonder why

My mom has become a total workaholic

My parents have no friends

Our entire family works to keep Dad motivated

People are very cruel at times

It's really hard when I know Dad is considering a call; don't want to move

People who do "bad stuff" won't hang out with you

Lots of people outside the church think we're bad

My parents got divorced last year and the congregation turned on him

Don't get paid a lot – we're poor

Dad feels really stressed

Mom very stressed out and wishes Dad wasn't so committed

Members expect us to cut lawns and do other chores for free

When dad quit the parish and became a teacher, he became a totally different person.

"I wish when I need something, I didn't feel so guilty asking my parents for money. It so hurts my parents, the money issue."

"I feel very hurt by the church"

4. Have you ever considered going into full time church work?

Yes – Pastor

DCE – Maybe (3)

Teacher – Maybe (3)

Church Music – Maybe

No – money is an issue

Most – No

"I would never put my family what we've been through"

"My heart is really in missions, but I would not work for the church"

"The Lutheran Church is so keen on tripping each other up and beating up on each other. They're not focused on the unchurched."

E. Former Pastors

Introduce Alan

- Smithville, MO
- Study for BHE on worsening shortage of clergy in LCMS
- **Take notes into computer**
- Confidential
 - Not shared with anyone
 - You will not be identified in any way

1. What was involved in the decision to leave?
2. What was the turning point or critical event that moved you to leave your position?
3. What role was the role of district officials or circuit counselors?
4. What could have been done to keep you in parish ministry?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share about how this situation was handled?
6. Would your wife consent to be interviewed by my wife and research partner, Cheryl Klaas to receive your wife's views of the situation and its impact on her?

Thank you for participating

E. Former Pastor Comments

We interviewed 15 clergy who are no longer pastors in the LCMS. Their names were printed in *The Lutheran Witness* and several official district publications. A letter explaining the study and introducing the researchers was sent to the last known address. The letter listed the last known telephone number. Each former LCMS pastor was invited to participate, promised anonymity, and reassured that they could choose to not participate. Eight former pastors called to provide new telephone numbers. Only one called to decline participation and a second declined participation before starting the interview.

This study benefited from a prior study completed by Dr. William Wachholz, Director of Counseling at Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska. Dr. Wachholz interviewed nine former pastors as part of an advanced degree program. The methodology he used was adopted in this project and his case studies are included in the Findings.

These former LCMS pastors were asked a series of questions about the circumstances surrounding their leaving, the nature of their contact with district officials and circuit counselors, and what might have been done to salvage the situation. The details of the circumstances are such that it would be relatively simple to identify the individual. Consequently, the data provided below is already in summary form.

Creating this summary is a difficult task. We only heard one side of the story. We did not have an "independent" record of the facts. We made every effort to listen "between the lines" detecting when the former pastor may have been less objective in describing the situation, particularly involvement of the district president.

On the one hand, not having an "objective record" is a research problem. On the other hand, the impressions described by these former pastors becomes part of the LCMS ethos of clergy discipline. These impressions, even if incorrect or unfair, have a substantial impact on the attitudes and biases held by currently serving parish pastors. These impressions have a major impact on how current parish pastors perceive how they will be treated should they ever find themselves in a similar circumstance.

The purpose of this research project is to understand the major factors

impacting recruitment and retention of parish pastors. It is clear that an unhealthy large proportion of parish pastors are in need of some form of personal counseling intervention. An important part of the solution to the clergy shortage problem is whether or not depressed clergy will seek assistance from a process they perceive will pass information to the district president. As such, the type of impressions held about the district president and circuit counselor are a major part of the ability to get help to pastors needing help, and increasing clergy retention.

(We apologize to the district presidents for the one-sided nature of the findings listed below. At the same time, we find it necessary to inform the district presidents of the impression about their involvement that shapes the opinions of other clergy who are soon to be in trouble.)

1. Underlying nature of the situation

- 48% Mismatch of pastor and congregation(s) from the beginning
- 25% Behavioral misconduct by pastor
- 17% Synod position on one or more issues (2 – open communion, 1 – LCMS no longer using TLH and KJV, 1 – objected to infant baptism)
- 9% Other

2. Apparent condition in the congregation prior to the situation

- 40% Calm
- 35% Fighting
- 25% Controlled by small group of members

3. Role of district president (from the point of view of the former pastor)

District President had no options

- 23% Out of DPs hands (no options other than removal)

District President was not helpful

- 23% No help at all
- 12% Too busy, never had time, never talked to me

- 12% Never allowed to face accusers
- 12% Easier to remove pastor than discipline the congregation

District President was helpful

- 19% Was supportive

4. Role of circuit counselor (from the point of view of the former pastor)

- 80% No help at all, minimal role
- 20% Excellent, very good, was or tried to be helpful

F. Wives of Former Pastors

Introduce Cheryl

- Smithville, MO
- Study for BHE on worsening shortage of clergy in LCMS
- **Take notes**
 - Confidential
 - Not shared with anyone
 - You will not be identified in any way

1. What was involved in the decision to leave?
2. What was the turning point or critical event that moved you to leave your position?
3. What role was the role of district officials or circuit counselors?
4. What could have been done to keep your husband in ministry?
Would you have wanted him stay in ministry?
5. In what ways did this affect you and your family?

Thank you for participating

F. Wives of Former Pastor Comments

Seven wives of former LCMS pastors were interviewed by telephone. These interviews were conducted after their husbands were interviewed. Permission was given by the wives themselves to be interviewed. Each situation was unique and potentially easily identified. The wives were assured that while their general responses would be reported, their names and specific details would not.

1. What was involved in the decision to leave?

In discussing the circumstances surrounding their husbands' leaving the Synod, each of the wives' descriptive "scenarios" closely matched those that their husbands had given in their interviews. All but one displayed continuing negative emotions as they described what had happened. The one who seemed to be dealing well the current situation, was a woman who described herself as, "making enough money to support the family, so his decision to leave was easy."

2. What was the turning point or critical event that moved you to leave your position?

The wives were asked to describe from her perspective if there had been a particular turning point, or critical event that had initiated her husbands' decisions. Again, their accounts closely matched those of the men, with the exception of one woman who indicated her husband had never discussed any personal feelings with her prior to receiving our letter inviting him to be interviewed.

3. What role was the role of district officials or circuit counselors?

Two of the wives indicated their husbands had received excellent support from either the circuit counselor or district president during their transition. The other five reported either receiving no contact or negative experiences. They all stated that none of them had received any calls of support or inquiries about how they and their children were doing.

G. Seminary Students

4. What could have been done to keep your husband in ministry?
Would you have wanted him stay in ministry?

All the wives were in agreement that nothing could have been done to prevent their husbands from leaving the Synod, and all but one indicated they would not have wanted to stay in the LCMS. Two of the pastors have launched non-denominational ministries, and one has returned to teaching in a Lutheran school. The rest are either unemployed or working outside any church setting.

5. In what ways did this affect you and your family?

All the wives reported some level of negative effect on them and their children through the circumstances of leaving the Synod. Some issues have been resolved, and others have not. Some are severe.

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- One minute history summary

Take notes

Confidential

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?
2. Who influenced that decision?
3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?
4. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?
5. Why does this shortage exist?

Honorariums

Thanks

G. Seminary Student Comments

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?

(About 5% of first year class at Ft. Wayne are children of parish pastors. About 15% of first year class at St. Louis are children of parish pastors. We could not locate records from earlier years. Seminary graduates from the 1960s and 1970s recall rates of 40% children of clergy.)

God chose me

God choose me, I didn't choose
Christ chose me
Always felt a calling, but chose to do other things
Did not want to, but God kept calling
Tried to avoid it as long as possible

Pastoral role model

My father was a pastor and a good role model
My dad was a pastor who died when I was young
A pastor at home asked me to consider it
Pastor kept encouraging me
Influenced by a pastor in my home congregation
Always had pastors who were good role models
Influenced by secular university campus pastor
Sermon by my home pastor
Watched four pastors and decided "I can do better than that"

Ministering activities

Did some fill-in preaching for sick pastor
Volunteer leader in congregation's youth program
Was youth worker and wanted to be more helpful
While working as camp counselor and watched older counselor convert troubled kid
Helped during traumatic time for friend or relative
Lead Bible studies while in military
Did chancel readings

Took a long time

Thought about it since childhood
Felt called since age nine, but kept running

Thought about it since high school
Thought about and prayed about it, but scared of languages
Prayed hard my senior year of college
Took ten years to come to the conclusion

Tried other things first

Bounced around in college
Tried communication in college
Tried working in political campaigns
Tried working in public service
Headed to the airlines
Could not follow dad into farming
Other secular interests faded
Went into pre-law
Doors kept closing
Lack of choices
Fired from job
Enjoyed being in church more than working in my regular job

Fit with personal interests

Fit my personal skills and interests
Studied church music
Like to study and teach religion
Like to study theology
Like to express my faith
Wanted to be of service to the church
Like to work with people

Great Commission

Excited about the need
Found people in college searching to truth
Watched an altar call at Baptist youth convention and saw power of God at work
Had group of foreigners move in next door who questioned everything

Spiritual search

Lack of career and spiritual direction
Spent five years searching and found LCMS
Interested in exploring truth of Christianity and belief

Other

Happened during Thanksgiving worship at my home congregation while I was in college
Talked about it with my wife (1 married student out of 31 interviewed)
Teacher influenced me to consider
Visit to seminary campus helped influence me to come
Entered teacher education program, but changed at CUS school

2. Who influenced that decision?

44% Pastor at home church
10% Campus pastor
7% Youth counselor

32% Parents (and stepparents)
17% Family or relatives (including godparents)
5% Grandparents

12% Undergraduate professor
7% Elementary and/or high school teacher
5% Admissions people at seminary

7% Parishioners where I attended
2% Seminary field worker
2% Sunday school teacher
2% Classmates
2% Friends or work associates

12% Wife (16% of married students)
2% Fiancée

15% Really, nobody in particular

3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?

8% Myself
24% Nobody

24% Parents
5% Brothers

27% Friends and/or coworkers who knew me
10% Wife

8% College level faculty

4. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

Negative

Extremely difficult
Rowing upstream against culture
Lot of demands
No longer respected person
Used to be able to "tell" people the truth, now there are many sources
Your life will not be your own
Difficult
Do not want to have happen what happened to my father
Laity see pastor as customer service guy
Watched pastor removed in fight over a bathroom
Pastor no longer respected like used to be
All the problems that used to be, plus a whole bunch more
Support for the pastor is low
Less support and respect for pastors
Have to be everything to everybody
Underpaid and overworked
Hard on children
It has really changed
Visible corruption of tele-evangelists in 90's has hurt
Someone will always find fault and be upset
World-views are getting less and less Christian
Self-sacrifice
Get a lot of doors slammed in your face
Can be lonely
Lots of questions and sometime not as many answers
In small towns you are closely watched. Everyone knows your business
People are quick to criticize and slow to be supportive
If you focus on current members you can quickly become depressed
Exploding levels of responsibility and expectations
Very much under a microscope
Hard when dying person rejects Christ
Harder than it used to be
Lack of "success" causes blame on the leader

Very difficult
 Time demands
 Feel inadequate
 Face our own incompetence and groveling
 Difficult
 Job description is impossible
 Parishioners want you to keep up with everything
 Difficult to know when to press and when to hold back
 Hard that Synod is not walking together
 We are short tempered with each other
 Difficult in some settings
 Challenge because of post-modernism
 More difficult than just teaching and preaching
 Circuit can be a lonely place
 Easy to become consumed
 Pastors are removed at congregation's whim, "The animals are running the zoo."
 Total theological and scriptural illiteracy even among elders
 Hard to speak the truth, rather than being popular and well liked
 Hard to be hated
 Monitory problems in the church cause pastor and vicar to be janitors

Neutral or descriptive

Hard job you cannot do without God
 Highs and lows of people's lives
 Pastor has to wear many hats
 Stand in for Christ
 Have to be willing to deal with all types of people
 24/7/52
 Challenging
 Pastor is Satan's number one enemy
 People are heavily influenced by the world around them
 The world is changing
 Lots of world influence
 Complex
 Balancing act
 Requires lots of communication skills
 Primarily a teaching office
 Have to come to see that not everything is always black and white
 Amazing amount of Biblical illiteracy among church people
 People are more educated these days
 Competing message with MTV and general spirituality

Bring old truths forward in new ways
 Have to earn respect
 Have to be equipped to handle multiple problems
 Completely secular society
 Christianity is now the counter-culture
 Have to oversee lots of money and management issues
 Need to keep current and straight
 Takes incredible skill

Positive

Bringing lots of happiness within a hard job
 Will feel completed
 It is a great privilege to tell a lost world about Jesus
 A person who helps to restore people
 I've never had a "bad pastor"
 Will be a great job
 You are needed
 Will be rewarding and enjoyable
 Dedicated to so many hurting people
 Tremendous opportunity to help people
 Get paid to love the Lord—the easiest of all professions

5. Why does this shortage exist?

Frustrations

Not much emphasis for some time
 Would seem natural for pastors kids, but seems to be a lot fewer
 Economy is good so people stay where they are
 Culture publicizes what is bad about the church
 Respect has been lost
 Culture and lack of respect means there is no real appeal to the position
 Frustration with the job is higher and there are other ways to serve people
 Church is unpopular these days
 Lack of member support
 Little encouragement of pastors
 If everyone is a minister, then we do not need pastors
 Churches are selling out to rock and roll
 No support network within congregation or district
 Hard on the family
 Lots of stress

Workload is great
Lots of pastors have health problems
People are not encouraging people to be pastors
Discouragement of pastors being driven out
Negative image of church in media
Pastors who do not present pastoral office in high regard
Many people are just interested in getting by
Pastors in Winkel are poor examples
Job is terrible, you have to be loony to do it
Not holding excitement for youth
Not many young people in many congregations
Viewing this as a profession, rather than a calling

Lots of congregations with lots of older people
Rivalry between seminaries
Hostility toward one or the other seminary
Cut throat seminary competitions

Other

We are not using lay people effectively enough
We should be closing congregations, not opening new ones
Not sure we have a problem. Of course churches will shrink as LCMS
ages
Hard to sell the intangibles
It would be helpful to shadow a pastor

Money

Many pastors paid at the poverty level
No chance for financial gain
Not the highest paying job
Some may worry about financial issues
This is the only profession where a master's degree gains you admission to
poverty
Many people making a good living and not willing to take poverty level
salary
Do not enter ministry to get rich, but do not expect to be forced into
poverty
Only those who can afford it will become pastors
Why be a pastor for \$20,000 a year
Seminary tuition scholarships help, but have large undergraduate
Concordia debt
Tuition help is nice, but room/board/health insurance are big killers
Some districts are paying part of remaining student loans after some years
of service

Seminary

Every year we lose several students
Many do not want to deal with Hebrew and Greek
Seminary will be the last great hurdle placed in front of me
"Cooperate to graduate." Seminary is just a means to an end.
We just do this to get into the club

Synod

Larger problems in the Synod as a whole
Synod having an identity crisis

H. Wives of Seminary Students

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Family
- One minute history summary

Take notes

Confidential

1. Describe the process that brought you to the seminary.
2. How was the decision made?
3. What had been the effect on your family?
4. What are the sources of influence—support?
5. Was anyone skeptical—less enthused?
6. How are you feeling about this?

Honorariums

Thanks

H. Wives of Seminary Student Comments

1. Describe the process that brought you to the seminary.

Former engineer, toured churches with choir and saw things he didn't like, so decided to be a pastor so he could "be in charge"

Spent 14 years in radio, did not want to be a pastor, but got "fed up" with churches

Worked 6 months after college in agri-business before deciding to be pastor

Spent 20 years in Air Force, 4 children, very much resisted the call for 6 years

Worked 5 years in business management before seminary

Former spacecraft analyst with NASA, became very dissatisfied with life, adult convert (both)

His father was a pastor, came straight from college

Formerly with Dept. of Corrections, then became police officer, 3 children, felt called to ministry after losing baby to SIDS and helping in congregation during assoc. pastor vacancy

Went through a process of self discovery while in junior high; made list of gifts and weaknesses

Spent 5 years in publishing before coming to seminary

Was going to be a teacher, but didn't like the education program he was in; pastor encouraged him to come to seminary

Worked in aerospace industry; last 10 years served as elder, took mission trip to Hungary and "God started hitting him with two by four"

Taught for 8 years, dad is LCMS pastor, he was not going to be a pastor

Spent 3 years working as paint chemist; read the large catechism and decided to go to seminary

Worked for a few years as a computer manufacturer before seminary

Worked for State Farm for 5 years, unhappy in business world, had 3 children, then decided to go to seminary

2. How was the decision made?

By the time he told me, it was a "done deal"

He decided

Always knew it would eventually happen, but was surprised he only worked 6 months after college

He just finally said yes – many people encouraged him

He had all these goals and doors started closing. Nine people told him he should go to seminary and he decided in 2 weeks
He was unhappy even though making a lot of money
You just have to accept it and be supportive
When God calls, you listen
He decided while we were still dating, but waited a while to come to seminary
He announced his decision after spending some “bad years” in teaching; basically it was dumped on me.
I was pregnant when he first talked about it, so we waited one year.

3. What had been the reaction of both your families?

It was hard on me to move closer to my family
Both sides supportive and encouraging
My parents are doing their best to be brave, but we’re away from them for the first time
My daughter had some problems in the beginning, was going to drive back home, we disabled the car and called in the campus counselor.

4. What are the sources of influence—support?

Pastor in home congregation
Campus pastor
A friend of his older brother
Me – without my support he wouldn’t be here
Congregation members
His brother who was at the seminary, and his home pastor
He has 2 brothers here now, and his parents also encouraged
Pastor

5. Was anyone skeptical—less enthused?

My family, and one friend who said Satan had put us up to this
My family was the hardest hurdle
Our friends didn’t think we had thought everything through
My parents

6. How are you feeling about becoming a pastor’s wife?

Negatives

Some families are having trouble with their kids
Skeptical about call process, which seems very unfair. Feels like we’re putting our lives in the hands of the seminary
My pastor advised me to never lose my identity; I felt I would never measure up
It really hit me hard a few days after he decided to come here
It scares me knowing what people perceive the pastor’s wife to be – superwoman, perfect, etc.
If I hadn’t been supportive, he wouldn’t have married me.
I’ve been warned by many pastor’s wives about being too outspoken
I know it’s not possible to be everything people want me to be
I’m having a lot of different emotions, sometimes I’m excited, but I also worry a lot
I think congregations need to realize they can’t pay a pastor 50 cents an hour
It’s going to be very stressful
Seminary has been hard for me; I was forced to work full time and then was openly criticized for not being a stay-at-home mom
Moving is very hard on the kids, especially as they get older
“I just want to get out of here”

Neutral or descriptive

I’m looking forward to a routine, scheduled life in the parish
The main thing will be to help my husband and not be a burden
My feelings change daily, I know have a few skills, but I also know I’ll always have my own career

Positives

At first I thought I would cry every day, that I wouldn’t survive, but I’m really happy
We’re all going through the same thing, so it’s a little easier
I actually thought he should have come here several years ago
I’m excited to be here – it’s a chance for God to work on me
This is a fantastic experience
FW is an amazing community
I know God will work everything out, it’s an adventure that I’m excited about

St. Louis

No day care

Very poor relocation assistance

7. What's your take on the reasons for the clergy shortage?

Some pastors are worked to death, their wives live their own lives and
husbands are consumed

It's very scary to see so many churches going down the wrong path

A lot of second career pastors

Because of the way a lot of churches are going, men are afraid they'll end up in
a church they can't control

Pastors get driven out

Role of pastor is not easy, it's not a career move but a life change

It's scary to think about where you might end up

Pastors are serving 3 churches simultaneously, missing Christmas and
vacations because people die

A lot of people consider how they'll be able to support families

Money is a big issue for a lot of people here

Demographics are changing and churches are abandoning changing
neighborhoods

The seminaries are invisible, it's not talked about enough

The divine call process has been wiped out

Pre-seminary degrees are not required anymore.

Fort Wayne is not the real world, we're living in a fantasy world.

Visiting the campus can be intimidating; the dorm rooms are very cell-like and
cold

Money is a lot of it; we were still paying off loans when we came after being
out of college for 8 years

I can't use my teaching degree; I'm working at McDonald's

"I took four years of my and my kids' lives and chucked them somewhere"

Vicarage experience was very tough; we had to put our kids in public schools
in a large city

8. Anything else we didn't discuss?

Ft. Wayne

The seminary is great to provide a Clothing Coop and Food Bank for us

The re-location service was very helpful,

The campus is very family-friendly;

The teaching here is different, too – more liturgical. I think St. Louis is
more lax.

The worship life is more enriching here, everyone wears collars

We came here for the teaching. I think St. Louis is more off on a worldly
tangent

I. CUS Students in Pre-Seminary Programs

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker?

Take notes

Confidential

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?
2. How was the decision made?
3. Who influenced that decision?
4. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?
5. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.
6. Other comments?

Honorariums

Thanks

I. CUS Students in Pre-Seminary Program Comments

1. How did you choose to become a parish pastor?

Pastor

Pastor encouraged me
Pastor and youth group
During high school, three pastors approached me
Seed planted early on by pastor
Met pastor who talked to me about Christ
Vicar who was a good role model
Confirmation pastor called together potential workers
Campus pastor

Experience with CUS school

Visit to seminary campus
Involved in leading worship while in high school
Went to church career camp at CUS school
Was an atheist until came to CUS school

Interested for a long time

Loved to talk about catechism
Developed strong interest in confirmation
Raised LCMS
Wanted to since age 4

Messed up life

My life went haywire
Led destructive life and needed change
Family problem moved me to consider
Wanted to be science major, but had trouble in college math and science classes

Other

Encouraged by brother-in-law
Leader at church camp

2. How was the decision made?

Gradually

Made slowly, over time
Fought it, but gradually crept in
Fought it, tried everything to justify avoiding
Gradually, then it reached a point where I stopped resisting
At first said, no way, but life pushed me in this direction

Very suddenly at age 4

3. Who influenced that decision?

Pastor

Pastor
My first pastor
My mother's pastor
Pastor where I grew up
Hometown pastor
Vicar during senior high school years
Campus pastor

Parents and relatives

Mother
Sisters
Grandparents
Brother-in-law

Teachers

Eighth grade teacher/principal
Junior high teachers
High school teachers
Professor here at school

Others

Bible study partner
DCE in home congregation
Church camp leader
A friend

4. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?

Myself

Nobody

I was left to make the decision myself
Really nobody
Nobody
Nobody
No one, I received a lot of encouragement

Others

Mother
Father
Parents
Dad was generally skeptical
Shirt-tail relatives
High school teacher said you will not make any money

5. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

Weak or none

Current pastor we only see once in a while
Lots of turnover
Like him, but not a big role model
Supportive, but not really much involved
Did not find out he was on my school's Board of Regents until I arrived on campus
Church owned school, spoke at graduation, not much more
None
Not much after confirmation
Nice person, but did not relate well with high school kids
Not much bonding with pastor
Nothing
After confirmation, just said hello
Very few coming back after confirmation
Cordial and friendly, but impersonal

Good or Great

Great pastor for 10 years, awesome confirmation
He really encourages youth

Other worker

Youth worker had most contact
DCE had most contact

6. Other comments

Church workers are disillusioned about amount of help they get:

Piles of scholarships in athletics

Little support for church workers

Big money on frivolous activities, not in church worker scholarships

Need to support pre-seminary students earlier

Will have big debt when graduate CUS school

Lost \$3,000 in financial aid when switched to pre-seminary

Did not hear anything from seminaries until CUS, then got bombarded

Recruiters are not truthful—do not give straight answers about differences
between seminaries

Recruiters pussy foot around differences between seminaries

Recruiters gave us platitudes and little concrete help

Not looking for combat, but need specifics

We are exposed to so much conflict so early

J. CUS Students in Church Worker Training Programs Other Than Pre-Seminary

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker?

Take notes

Confidential

1. How did you choose your current career path?
2. Who influenced that decision?
3. Who was skeptical?
4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.
5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?
6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?
7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

Honorariums

Thanks

**J. CUS Students in Church Worker Training Programs Other Than Pre-Seminary
Comments**

1. How did you choose your current career path?
2. Who influenced that decision?

(For this group, they could not separate how they chose their career path from the individuals who influenced the decision.)

Influential pastor
Wife of previous pastor
Pastor father encouraged
Prior pastor and his wife suggested
Influenced by pastor and youth group members

Parents were enthused
My mother encouraged me
Other relatives suggested
Parents were pastors

Lots of people in the church

Youth leader thought I would be good
DCE
Recreation leader in community thought I would be good
Always active in youth group and Lutheran high school activities

Always played at being a teacher
Had a really good high school health teacher
Wrote a lot as a child

Always felt called to be a pastor

Father was a teacher
Mother and sisters teach
Parents are teachers

DCE at home congregation

3. Who was skeptical?

Me

Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody

Friends, because of low expectations they have for themselves
Heard about low income and nobody knows what a DCO is
People kept raising financial issues
Parents
Relatives
Parents, because it costs \$18,000 a year to go here
Concerns about financial security
Home congregation and the pastor

4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

Poor relationship

Confirmed me a year early with another class. I was to be the only student and he told me that he did not like working with kids.
Touch and go
Would not go to him in a crisis
Never sat down and talked to pastor
No relationship
Very unsupportive of youth
Not friendly—older
Uncomfortable
Cold
Confirmation was bad
Confirmation pastor was bad
Pastor was consumed in congregation fighting—no time for youth
Pastor was depressed all the time
Depends upon the day, but mostly did not relate well
Lots of turnover of pastors
Pastor was affectionate and gets along well. We love him, but we do not relate to him

Big friction in the congregation between youth and older members. (Pews full for contemporary service, but they killed it)
Friendly, but always focused on adults

Good relationship

Keeps involved with kids
Good. He has kids our age
He is our friend and is available
Pastor is very busy, but approachable and available
Friendly, good role model
Very active with youth

We have no youth at our congregation

5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?

Just a little
Thought about it for a little while
Don't like idea of talking to 200 people

6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?

A little
Never, first discussion was when I applied for a district scholarship and he had to sign
No
None from or encouraging and supportive pastor

7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

Negative

Our congregation killed four pastors in a row, then the fifth pastor actually died
24/7
Demanding
Lots of tough decisions
More business oriented
Lots of politics

Too much administration
Like to see more care ministry
Hard
Scary
Not lucrative
Dual parish has many problems
Going against the grain of society
Congregations are in shock and have a hard time keeping going
Hard
Right
Amen
Always being criticized
Everyone wants to be pleased
Never hear, "Let's pay our pastor so he can live like we do"
Stressful
Pastor trying to fill in another ministry—horribly stressful
Pastor has no time
Scary to get theology degree and then not be able to do anything else
Lack of support
Pastors burn out
Eight years of school and then placed in a congregation that will not treat you well

Neutral or description

Not sure how smaller congregations can last
People not making moral decisions
Pastor has to be strong

Positive

Calling from God
Better now than when pastors were expected to grow their own food

K. CUS Students Not in Church Worker Programs

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker?

Take notes

Confidential

1. How did you choose your current career path?
2. Who influenced that decision?
3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?
4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.
5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?
6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?
7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

Honorariums

Thanks

K. CUS Students Not in Church Worker Programs Comments

1. How did you choose your current career path?

Have been coaching for a long time
Worked in office and liked the career
Worked with youth and found I like to teach
Worked in pharmacy and liked it
Liked being in plays
On medical mission trip and saw lack of medical care
Had a heart condition and liked the Patch Adams approach
Love people and want to work with them
Good in science and math
Enjoy music
Grew up on farm, so wanted to work out-of-doors
Liked government classes
I'm a fame seeker, so chose acting
Have liked acting since age 3, and like teaching
Got interested in high school
Play a lot of instruments
Good at numbers
Liked the classes in high school

2. Who influenced that decision?

Past people involved in coaching
Dean of students
People involved in theater
Grandfather does this work
Uncle who was optometrist
Dad is in business
Economics teacher
Kids I work with coaching football
High school biology teacher
Parents
Father owns a business
Brother-in-law in law enforcement
Family of talented musicians
Whole family has acted at one time or another

Pastor and youth worker encouraged me
Band director in high school
Teacher

Nobody
Nobody

3. Was anyone skeptical about this decision?

Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody
Nobody

Mother thinks law enforcement is dangerous
Friends discourage me from becoming a teacher—no money
I have learning disabilities and many people, especially in Lutheran schools
said I could not attend college.

4. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

Negative

Strikes fear in lot of younger kids
Appreciate, but not much contact
Falling apart
Youth fell apart after DCE left
Lots of turnover in last six years

Pastor has no time for us
Get along well, but do not see much
Not involved
Get along okay, but he is not interested in us
Got along well, but youth program scattered when he left
Congregation kicked out pastor
He tries, but he has no people skills
Four pastors in four years

Others

With the DCE
DCE is closer to young people
Good with youth pastor
Youth pastor is great
Good with kids same age as his kids

Positive

Great
Easy to talk to
Like him a lot
Good relationship
Really good—we can talk to him

5. Did you ever consider becoming a pastor?

Thought about it during mission trip
Briefly before deciding to become a doctor
Yes, getting information

No, hate school and could not stand ton of schooling, Greek and Hebrew
No
No
No

Never interested
No, not a good public speaker
No—especially when people keep bugging me about it
Considered for while. Then mother married a pastor who is gone all the time

6. Did your pastor ever talk to you about becoming a pastor/church worker?

No
No
No
No
No
No
No

Talked about, but never really encouraged anyone
Only to those already interested
Sometimes single out people
Offered general encouragement

Talked about it frequently
All the time
Did a good job of explaining
Did a good job

7. What is your perception of what it is like being a pastor these days?

Negative

Stressful
Seems lonely
Very busy with church conflicts
Have to be on the straight and narrow—no beers
All kinds of emotional stress
Lots of responsibility and patience
Preparation must be tough
Seems to be at church all the time
People are always analyzing you
Financially stressful
No financial success after years of study
Hard to organize so many people
Have to worry about money all the time
Seems like you would run out of tricks
Have to face accusations of hypocrisy
Many are so repetitive

Must be a tough and lonesome road
In small town everyone knows everything
Like being a rope in a tug-of-war
Our pastor just got kicked out in a flood of rumors
Lots of interruptions
Work all the time
Takes lots of money to be counselor, speaker, businessman, teacher, etc.
Stress
Devoted pastor will not see his family
Getting worse

Neutral or descriptive

Depends upon location

People look to the pastor for support, but then do not support the pastor.

Introduce discussion facilitators

Introduce participants

- Name
- Church
- How long at church
- Pastors/Youth worker at your church?

Take notes

Confidential

1. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.
2. What is it like being a pastor these days?
3. Does the pastor ever talk to you about being a pastor or Lutheran school teacher?

Honorariums

Thanks

1. Describe the relationship of the kids in your church with the pastor.

- 26 had positive comments; lots of interaction with my pastor; can go to him with questions, problems, etc.
- 30 said he is a nice guy; we greet each other on Sunday, but not much contact since Confirmation
- 12 had negative comments; doesn't relate well to kids; doesn't really care about us.

2. What is it like being a pastor these days?

Very busy; a hard job

Lots of studying, sermon preparation

Pastors treated very badly by congregations

Scary to be in front of so many people delivering sermons

Boring to sit in an office all day by yourself

On call 24/7

Lots of family problems

People don't appreciate/respect pastors enough

Tough to please everyone

Perfectionistic

Must always be upbeat

Spotlight is always on

You can't make mistakes

Pastors are underpaid

"It's messed up"

3. Does the pastor ever talk to you about being a pastor or Lutheran school teacher?

Group 1

Never

Never

Never

Never

Never

Group 2

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never

Group 3

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Two said, "Youth pastor once mentioned it"

Group 4

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
One said, "Yes, once when I was acolyting"

Group 5

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
One said, "It's mentioned, but never stressed"

Group 6

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never

Group 7

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
One said, "Talked to me about when I was in elementary school"

Group 8

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
One said, "All the time"

Group 9

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
One said, "My pastor mentioned it to me once"

Group 10

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never

Group 11

Never
Never
Three said, "Pastor has discussed with me"
Two said, "Pastor discussed with whole group"

Group 12

Never
Never
Never
Never
Never
Never

One said, "I went to my pastor to discuss it"

One said, "My pastor mentioned it once"

4. Why do you think young men don't want to be pastors?

Not enough money

Very scary to know you are responsible for the spiritual lives of hundreds of people

Too many other things to do to be totally devoted to ministry

Looks boring; uninteresting; not exciting, not fun.

Emotionally draining

You can't act like a normal person

You have to put your family second to the church

You're chained to the past; no freedom to teach any new ideas

Society doesn't place importance on church

Youth are not connected to church

Don't have enough say in decisions affecting youth

The Synod is one big controversy

"You have to see the pastor and be inspired. My pastor looks like he's not having fun."

M. Seminary DELTO/TEE Officials

Distributed Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) is a program of the LCMS Board for Higher Education (BHE) that is jointly administered by the BHE and an administrator at each seminary. It is intended for people who are serving a group whose mission would be seriously damaged or terminated if the individual left the ministry to enroll in seminary. Most DELTO students lead an ethnic mission group, many have English as their second language, and many have not completed an undergraduate degree.

The curriculum is communicated in self-study materials and monthly on-site instruction by seminary professors in the standard pastor preparation program, excluding Greek and Hebrew. Additional instruction and general guidance are provided by a local pastor who serves as a mentor. The program curriculum takes six years to complete. Students completing the program are certified for ordination, but do not receive the Master of Divinity degree.

Ft. Wayne is operating three sites with a fourth being considered for a year or two years in the future. St. Louis is operating one site with a second under consideration. Instruction is provided by faculty as overload to their normal teaching schedule.

Approximately 41 students are currently enrolled in all DELTO sites at various stages of the six-year curriculum. The present level of DELTO activity will produce an average of seven new pastors per year.

The administrators at both seminaries, together with several interviewed faculty at Ft. Wayne, indicated that it would be impossible to double the current number of people completing the DELTO program without a substantial number of major enhancements. The number of faculty would have to be greatly expanded because existing seminary faculty cannot assume the additional teaching responsibility. Substantial additional financial support would be required for curriculum and materials development along with additional clerical and administrative support.

In addition the administrator at St. Louis pointed out that characteristics inherent to the program requires major interventions. The administrator listed these problems as including the large number of students that struggle with English, the critical need for educational materials designed specifically for distance learning, and a general awareness that "we need to do better by these people."

N. District Presidents

The officials and faculty at Ft. Wayne assessed the same problems in a different manner. This different assessment of the situation raises an obvious additional problem. They describe the situation as inferior students, being taught using an inferior and inappropriately watered down program, and resulting in "pastors" they would not want pastoring their descendents. Ft. Wayne's summary statement about DELTO is that they would prefer not to be involved in the program, but will continue as long as the convention asks.

The Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program is operated by Concordia Seminary St. Louis through the Hispanic Institute in Chicago. The program began in 1986 with a goal of enrolling a dozen students. After its first three months, the program had 60 students, and over 100 students by the end of its first year.

The TEE program exists on three levels. (The first level is currently under development.) Level One is designed for local parish pastors to conduct local lay training institutes. All materials are prepared in Spanish, with English translation.

Level Two is a regional educational structure consisting of 18 courses taken over a period of three or four years. The courses prepare students for certification as lay ministers, deaconesses, or entry into the clergy ordination preparation program.

Level Three is a national education structure consisting of an additional 18 courses taken over a period of four to six years on the seminary campus. Students study on the St. Louis seminary campus six times a year for intensive, long weekends.

Currently there are about 8,000 people of Hispanic descent within the LCMS. There are about 300 enrolled in TEE curriculum at various levels. That pool of people is generating about six per year achieving ordination into LCMS parish ministry per year. If the Anglo population of LCMS were producing this type of result, the 2.6 million Anglo members of LCMS would have 97,500 in some level of in-depth theological study (in addition to normal Bible class attendance), and producing 4,875 new pastors each year.

What is your district doing about the clergy shortage situation?

- 6 Pray to the Lord of the Harvest
- 12 Licensed Deacon with word and sacrament authorization: Trained, supervised by ordained pastor, continuing education expectations, word and sacrament for specific congregation
- 8 Licensed Deacon without word and sacrament authorized: conducting other pastoral duties
- 1 Asking Synod to examine possibility for Ministry Deacons
- 6 Grouping several congregations with several professional workers ("joint congregations")
- 9 Combining two or more congregations into one ("yoked congregations")
- 4 Nearby larger congregation provide professionals to smaller congregation
- 1 Provide small congregations description twelve alternate models
- 1 Short-term financial grant to congregation with district person on congregation church council
- 2 Closing congregations, sometimes opening a new ministry on that site
- 1 Creating side-by-side ministries in the same congregation to transition ministry change
- 16 General encouragement to recruit workers
- 1 Identifying lay people to move for colloquia
- 4 Financial aid for seminary students and graduates
- 1 Using PALS program to strengthen ministry start experience
- 5 DELTO
- 2 TEE
- 9 Using retirees and CRM people as permanent part-time (one per congregation and two per congregation)
- 3 Intentional interim pastors
- 1 Using candidates coming off CRM status
- 1 Working with clergy on CRM
- 1 Vicar serving congregation under supervision
- 1 Better to close a church than to have a pastor show up only once in a while
- 1 Discouraging congregations from focus on 2nd or 3rd ordained clergy

What is your district thinking about doing?

- 8 Licensed Deacon: Developing program and curriculum
- 2 Creating clergy training extension with seminary or other school
- 1 Encouraging congregation creativity
- 1 Using candidate status people in small parish
- 1 Foundation for seminary education grants
- 1 More use of retirees
- 1 Creation of dual parishes
- 1 Support to identifying lay people with ministry gifts

- 1 Efforts to stop burn-out and other leaving

O. Pastoral Human Care Givers

A large percentage of parish pastors are in advanced stages of career burnout. Most pastors indicate not being aware of or trusting assistance from the district. Most districts describe some form of pastoral human care program.

The project attempted to discover the number of parish pastors currently receiving human care assistance. This proved to be a virtually impossible task. However, the process of attempting to secure the information revealed several issues:

1. Eleven district presidents (31% of all districts) indicate their district has no pastoral human care treatment referral capability other than Concordia Plans. These eleven district presidents are aware of a combined total of 17 pastors receiving human care assistance. (One of the district presidents indicated "there is no clergy burnout in the district.")
2. Twenty-four district presidents described at least one person in the district to whom pastors are referred when they need human care assistance. (One of these district presidents also indicated "there is no clergy burnout in the district.")
3. Fourteen of the districts (40% of all districts) that refer pastors, do so to a professional care agency of some type.
4. Ten of the districts that refer pastors, do so to another clergy person in the district.
5. The telephone number provided by the district president was wrong for 28% of the persons to whom the district president refers pastors.
6. Virtually none of the people to whom pastors are referred were reached on the first attempt. Only a small portion had the contact answered by a human being, and most of those people were not able to schedule a specific time in which the human care person could be reached.
7. Nine of the district presidents providing human care contacts never responded to a message asking them to estimate the number of parish pastors currently receiving treatment by the care provider.
8. Within the sixteen districts where contact was established with at least one human care provider, only 67 parish pastors were identified as receiving treatment.
9. Worker Benefit Plans is currently paying benefits for counseling treatment to about 400 parish pastors. Virtually all of the number estimates provided above are *included* within this estimate of 400 from worker benefits.
10. About 60% of these pastors seeking assistance are in their first five years of ministry.

P. Other Denominations

Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God has a surplus of pastors over the number of congregations. The Assemblies has three tiers of ministry: Credentialed Minister, Licensed to Preach, and Ordination Minister. All have to possess educational requirements and the first two levels need to be in a formal educational program of various types. The vast majority of Assemblies clergy hold degrees from a Bible College or School of Theology.

The central philosophy of ministry is, "It is not our business to decide who God calls. It is the church's role to recognize what God has done."

The level of ministry camaraderie within the clergy at all three tier levels is one of paying no attention to "level" except two days a year when in annual official meetings where only Ordained Ministers may vote on official church business. There is no evidence of "elitism" or "second class" clergy within this group of people who are united in their desire to reach the lost with the saving message of salvation.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Church-wide office personnel indicate that the ELCA does not have a shortage of clergy. Judicatory personnel report that some judicatories have a modest shortage, but most are temporarily in balance. They feel a shortage is coming.

The ELCA has official provisions for a Licensed Lay Minister to serve congregations that have been unable to receive pastoral coverage for an extended period of time. No records are available on the extent to which this provision is used church-wide. The impression is that some synods make modest use and other make little use of this classification.

Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church is described as not having a shortage of clergy. The problem being experienced is that many available clergy decline to conduct ministry in very small towns. To be a pastor in the Episcopal Church involves possessing an undergraduate degree plus an advanced degree from an accredited seminary.

The Episcopal Church is dealing with vacancies in small, isolated locations with a classification called Lay Vicar. A Lay Vicar participates in formal training. The Lay Vicar performs all ministerial functions except administration of the Holy Eucharist, which is conducted by a visiting priest.

Lay Vicars are "embraced by the priests of the Episcopal Church for being willing to serve in these small locations."

Presbyterian Church in the USA

The Presbyterian Church is experiencing a shortage in the number of parish clergy. The situation is especially challenging in rural Presbyteries (clusters of 60-120 congregations), where as many as 50% of congregations do not have their own pastor.

The Presbyterian Church is responding to this challenge by creating a deacon program. The program involves two years of instruction on six weekends per year plus self-study. The Presbytery or the Synod (a cluster of Presbyteries) manages the training program. Seminary faculties provide the instruction under contract with Presbytery or Synod. The training is not as a seminary program.

Persons who complete the program are full clergy in the Presbyterian Church USA with full voting rights and equal participation with theology deputed clergy on committees of the church. There is no evidence of "elitism" or "second class" clergy within this group of people who are united in their desire to reach the lost with the saving message of salvation.

Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic Church has a severe shortage of parish priests. They are building a corps of Permanent Deacons. These Deacons are not ordained priests. They are authorized some liturgical ministries; including preaching, baptism, and distribution of communion using elements that have been blessed by a priest.

There is a Deacon Formation Program consisting of a structured curriculum that takes several years to complete. The training program is administered by the Archdiocese. There is a national office providing overall curriculum leadership, but not centralizing the training or "licensing" process.

Southern Baptists

The Southern Baptists do not indicate a major problem with the number of parish pastors. Even though the Southern Baptists have a large number of theological seminaries, it is not necessary to graduate with a theological degree from one of those institutions to be the pastor of a Southern Baptist congregation.

There is no evidence of a “dual clergy” attitude within the clergy of the Southern Baptist churches. All clergy, regardless of their academic background, treat each other as people of God leading the spiritual development of a local group of believers. There is no evidence of “elitism” or “second class” clergy within this group of people who are united in their desire to reach the lost with the saving message of salvation.

United Church of Christ

The UCC currently has a balance between the number of clergy and congregations. This is expected to be temporary (only lasting ten more years) because of an extremely large proportion of boomer and building generation clergy rapidly approaching retirement. Like the LCMS, USS has a long tradition 4/3 training requirements to become a parish pastor.

UCC is beginning to make extensive use of a licensed deacon approach, particularly in ethnic settings. UCC is also adapting what are acceptable worship practices to the background of the nationalities into which it is seeking to make inroads. In addition, UCC is beginning to use licensed deacons in rural communities to meet the ministry needs of the small remaining group of UCC background people.

There is an extremely positive and connectional level of acceptance by traditional 4/3 clergy of the licensed deacons. The relationship is described as amazing in how well they get along. Licensed deacons have full standing, rights and privileges with 4/3 clergy in ministerial gatherings—but only as long as the individual is delivering ministry to a local group of people. There is no evidence of “elitism” or “second class” clergy within this group of people who are united in their desire to reach the lost with the saving message of salvation.

The basic philosophy within UCC about the licensed deacons is, “If we (UCC) are going to relate to multi-racial and multi-cultural settings, we will have to become adaptive.”

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church is experiencing a modest shortage of parish pastors in the northeast and no shortage in other parts of the country. Clergy in the UMC have all completed an undergraduate degree plus a degree from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Seminaries

An individual can receive certification from their area bishop to serve a specific congregation as a Local Pastor. Local Pastors function under the supervision of an ordained clergy person. They are permitted to preach and administer sacraments. There is a modest level of “classism” exhibited by the ordained pastors over the local pastors.

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

WELS has a slight under supply of parish pastors due to a very large increase in the number of international and national mission starts during the past decade. Enrollments at the seminary are up sufficiently to meet the supply shortage within a decade.

WELS has been operating two programs that have markedly decreased the number of pastors leaving parish ministry prior to normal age retirement. Parish Ministry Enhancement One (PME1) involves the synod paid return of all pastors to the seminary campus for one week at the end of their first year of ministry. WELS has discovered that these pastors are now ready to receive real world training in practical details of leading a congregation. This approach is summarized by a pastor’s observation that “you can not teach a seminarian about running congregation until after the third voter’s meeting.”

The second program, called PME15, involves the synod paying for a several day retreat for all pastors and their wives at a non-Midwest, comfortable location. The pastors themselves deal with four topics: marriage enrichment, financial planning, professional growth, and ministry nuance (informal discussions of what they have found works so that others can work smarter, not harder). The wives participate in their own sessions on topics important to their role as wife of a parish pastor.

WELS has also instituted a Care Committee for Called Workers at the district and local congregation level. These committees develop ways to support the parish pastor in the ministry.