

The Study of Practical Theology at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

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The passage chosen as our conference theme, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Ti 2:15), serves as a very appropriate superscription to the practical theology portion of the agenda. For one thing, these words are taken from one of the pastoral epistles, which, of all the books in the Scriptures, afford us the greatest wealth of guidance for the practical aspects of the ministry. For another, this particular passage points right to the heart of effective, God-pleasing pastoral activity, activity of which the worker will not have to be ashamed, activity which will pass the test before God. It all comes down to correctly handling the word of truth, knowing when and how to use the law and the gospel in the ministry.

The theological discipline of practical theology is in a sense a catch-all in that it covers everything that systematic, biblical and historical theology don't touch upon. It covers a wide range, from homiletics to house calls, from education to evangelism, from baptisms to burials, from music to marriage. In recognition of the broad range that practical theology covers, this theological discipline is divided into four departments at WLS: Christian education, homiletics, pastoral theology and worship. Since Prof. Gawrisch serves in the homiletics department, he will cover homiletics in a separate paper this morning. This paper will focus on pastoral theology, Christian education and worship.

With that by way of introduction, we turn first to the subject of pastoral theology.

I. Pastoral Theology

The Catalog of WLS describes the pastoral theology curriculum as follows:

The courses in Pastoral Theology present the Scriptural principles and the practical methods according to which a Lutheran pastor will want to lead his congregation, minister to the sick and dying, and counsel the troubled, the distressed, the tempted, and the erring. A thorough study of the Apostle Paul's Pastoral Epistles furnishes much of the material in these courses. Special attention is paid to the vicar and his work in relation to the vicar's supervising pastor and to further studies at the Seminary.

The 1978 Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary lists the following as the objectives of the department:

The student is

1. To recognize and study the scriptural principles that apply to the care of souls;
2. To develop aptitude and skill in applying these scriptural principles to all practical aspects of the pastoral ministry;
3. To learn to carry out his ministry with tact and in an evangelical spirit as a true shepherd of souls.

The Seminary offers six pastoral theology courses. One is taught in the junior year, two in the middle year, partially to prepare students for their vicarage, while the other three are senior courses. Since, however, the middle courses are four hour courses and the senior two hour, more hours are actually spent on pastoral theology in the middle year than the senior. Our basic textbook, except for the course in the pastoral epistles

which uses the Greek New Testament, is *The Shepherd Under Christ*, second edition (1981) which, by the way, is not significantly different from the 1973 edition.

In addition, a substantial set of notes in outline form, 133 pages, entitled, "The Theology and Practice of Evangelism," has been developed for use in the senior year. Next in line for production by the undersigned is a set of notes on church administration, including such areas as congregational structure, pastoral leadership, time management and leadership training. Prof. Armin Schuetze will be on a sabbatical during the 1986-87 school year. The result, God-willing, will be a textbook on pastoral counseling, particularly in the area of marriage, child and family counseling. This, too, will undoubtedly be put to use by the pastoral theology department. We look now at each of the six courses offered by the department.

A. Introduction to Theology and Pastoral Ministry

This course, a one-quarter, two-hour course taught to Juniors. was formerly entitled, "Theological Encyclopedea and Methodology." It is actually an introduction to all four of the theological disciplines but has been given a P.T. number in the WLS Catalog. The course description is given in the Self-Study:

Theology viewed from a confessional Lutheran perspective is contrasted with philosophy and the secular sciences. Requisites for theological study and the ministry of the Word are examined. The entire field of theological studies and individual branches are introduced. Significant bibliographic tools for each branch of study are presented. Familiarization with the special bibliographic tools available in the Seminary library is offered.

The Self-Study lists these as the course objectives:

The beginning theological student is

To gain a heightened regard for and devotion to the ministry;

To acquire an initial familiarity with the four main divisions of theological study and the individual branches in each, as well as the nature and function of each branch;

To become familiar with the most important bibliographic tools and their proper use in each branch of study;

To acquaint himself with the Seminary library and the special bibliographic tools it offers for his work.

A major value of such a course and, we might add, of offering it early in the seminarian's training, is to show the relationships between the various theological disciplines. In our world mission seminaries the bibliographic portion of such a course would of necessity be quite limited because of the relative dearth of bibliographic materials in the language of the people.

B. The Pastoral Epistles

One-half of the time given to pastoral theology in the middler year is devoted to a study of the pastoral epistles, a four hour course. This course, conducted during the second quarter of the middler year, is somewhat of a hybrid. It is listed in the Seminary Catalog among the courses of the pastoral theology department, but it has a New Testament title. We try to do justice to both aspects of the course as we seek to carry out, on a somewhat limited basis due to time pressures, an exegetical study of the pastoral epistles and combine this study with pertinent applications to the parish ministry.

The pastoral epistles are taught with a four-fold purpose in mind:

1. To come to know thoroughly the content of the pastoral epistles and to be strengthened in faith through such a study;
2. To grow in skills and find growing joy in the exegetical study of the New Testament;
3. To learn how the message of the pastoral epistles applies to the work of the evangelical Lutheran parish ministry;
4. To grow in appreciation of the many evangelical principles for the ministry laid down in the pastoral epistles and in zeal to put these principles into practice in an evangelical manner.

The order of the two middler pastoral theology courses at WLS is significant. First comes this course, a quarter of direct study of the Word, in particular a section of the Word that has much practical bearing on the ministry since it introduces the student to evangelical principles which will govern every aspect of one's ministry. Then, when in the third quarter our chief textbook is not the Bible but a pastoral theology textbook based on the Bible, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, we can be drawing constantly on what God has already taught us through a direct study of his Word.

It does not appear unreasonable, in fact, that a seminary's whole course on pastoral theology could be interwoven with a study of the pastoral epistles. The person and qualifications of the pastor as well as his relationship with his wife and family are covered well in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The call could be dealt with in connection with 2 Timothy 1:3-14 where Paul talks about both Timothy's and his own call into the ministry. Church discipline is dealt with on several occasions, e.g., Hymenaeus and Alexander who made shipwreck of their faith (1 Ti 1:18-20), disciplining of an elder (1 Ti 5:19,20) and rejection of a heretic (Tit 3:10;11). Christian burial would come up naturally while studying Paul's "last will and testament," 2 Timothy, e.g., 4:6-8, where Paul declares that the time for his "departure" has come and speaks of the "crown of righteousness" that awaits him and all who have longed for the appearance of the righteous Judge.

Evangelism also gets its due in the pastoral epistles. Paul, at one of his final hearings in Rome, demonstrates the place that evangelism held in his life. He is grateful in this most trying time that, though everyone else had deserted him, "the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it" (2 Ti 4:17). In the area of church administration Paul reminds us that the most important qualifications to look for in church leaders are spiritual ones (1 Ti 3:8-15), and he cautions us not to be too quick to place a person into a position of leadership (1 Ti 5:22, 24-25). He also spotlights a key purpose of pastoral leadership: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Ti 2:2). A pastor is an equipper of the saints, a trainer of leaders who will in turn be able to train others.

The public administration of the Means of Grace in a proper and orderly fashion, who should do it and in what kind of spirit, is the subject of 1 Timothy 2. Stewardship gets its due in 1 Timothy 6 where Paul gives instructions both to the would-be rich (6:6-10) and those whom God has blessed with riches (6:17-19). The pastoral epistles also lead us to think about marriage, as Paul warns about those who will "forbid people to marry" (1 Ti 4:3). That cannot be God-pleasing, Paul tells Timothy, since "everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Ti 4:4,5).

The pastoral epistles in their entirety serve as a good example of pastoral counseling, as Paul tactfully and evangelically counsels Timothy himself, always in a warm, encouraging tone, e.g., "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Ti 2:1). He also demonstrates the need to counsel each person in the same way Paul counsels Timothy, always taking into consideration his or her situation in life, e.g., Paul's instructions on the way to deal with older men—don't rebuke them harshly; younger men—treat as brothers; older women—treat as mothers; younger women—with absolute purity; widows—depending on their station in life; slaves—different instructions for those with believing and unbelieving masters (1 Ti 5:1-16; 6:1,2). The value of pastoral visitation is personalized as Paul, himself deeply in need of such visitation, tells Timothy how he longs to see him that he might be filled with joy (2 Ti 1:4) and recalls how Onesiphorus' visits were such a blessing to him (2 Ti 1:16-18).

We could do worse than revolve the whole course in pastoral theology around these three beautiful letters, which, to a degree is what we have done these past two years. If pertinent pastoral theology applications suggest themselves to the students as we work our way through the letters, we stop and explore them since we are of the conviction that the best time to apply the Scriptures—and pastoral theology is simply an application of the Scriptures to the activities of the pastoral ministry—is right in connection with the study of them. We have found it helpful to distribute study/discussion questions to the class to help focus daily preparation. We believe that this has helped to produce some of our lively class discussions.

C. Middler Pastoral Theology

The second half of the middler pastoral theology course, another four hour course, is conducted in the third quarter of the middler year. In this quarter we cover those pastoral activities treated in *The Shepherd Under Christ* with which the student will most likely be involved in his vicaring year.

The course is introduced with this statement of purpose:

1. To review the qualifications which the Lord sets forth for those who are to be entrusted with the public ministry;
2. To become acquainted with the practical aspects of a number of phases of that ministry, especially those that will likely be encountered during the year of vicaring;
3. To grow in knowledge of the biblical principles that will enable one to serve God's people in a truly evangelical manner;
4. To grow in a Spirit-produced desire to serve the Lord of the Church in the various facets of the public ministry we will study;
5. To grow in appreciation of what it means to be an evangelical Lutheran minister and in desire and ability to be truly evangelical in doctrine and practice.

Students are given daily assignments in *The Shepherd Under Christ* and in the course of their reading answer study questions based on the text. Class sessions are built around a discussion of these study questions. We look now at the various aspects of the pastoral ministry covered in this course.

1. The Shepherd

A study of the shepherd, his character, aptitude to teach, faithfulness and his public relations follows quite naturally upon the study of the pastoral epistles. In general, in this section we try to impress upon the student the high calling that is his to be preparing to serve his Lord in the public ministry. We talk about the need for an unimpeachable character and about the faithfulness required in a man to whom the Lord has given a trust. Consideration is also given to what might disqualify a man from the public ministry. Since a goodly number of the middlers are or before their vicarage will be married men, some with families, we take the time to talk about wife and children, especially about the wife's place in her husband's ministry and in the work of the congregation.

We bring out that a married church worker has been given a responsibility by the Lord to love his wife and to raise his children with Christian instruction and discipline and that he therefore must spend a sufficient amount of time with them. In a certain respect this, too, is a part of his public ministry since the pastor serves as an example for the flock also as a Christian husband and father. But at the same time we emphasize to the students that their calling as a pastor should not suffer because of an overemphasis on time spent with the family.

In connection with this discussion, we speak of the value of carefully scheduling one's time so that a pastor can do the one, i.e., all his ministerial duties, without neglecting the other, i.e., his wife and family. We give some specific suggestions for daily and weekly scheduling. We emphasize the value of the morning hours

for studying and point out how procrastination and lack of punctuality squander valuable time. Also in this connection it is only natural to bring up such subjects as the pastor's health, his need for proper rest, exercise, hobbies and vacations, all of which consume time but are necessary, within bounds of course, for ongoing and productive work.

Under the heading of "public relations" we cover such subjects as the pastor's personal appearance, the kind of clothes he wears, and the need for cleanliness, neatness and good manners, all of which will have an effect on his relationship with people both inside and outside of the congregation.

2. Pastoral Calling

The subject of pastoral calling is broken down into two parts. First we talk about pastoral calls in general, the need for them, their purpose, developing a system for them, exercising necessary cautions, e.g., in visiting women members, and the use of the Word in calls.

Then we talk about particular kinds of calls. Since the ministry of comfort is such an important part of the ministry, a considerable amount of time is spent discussing hospital and shut-in calls. The students are made aware of the great joy and peace and hope they will be bringing into the lives of God's people by bringing to them the soul and body comforting gospel. Because it is ultimately God's word of promise that strengthens, comforts and gives hope, students are encouraged to use God's Word on every sick and shut-in call and to do so on the basis of careful preparation. They are encouraged to prepare their own devotions, not to be read but rather to be presented on a simple conversational level, and to pray their own prayers rather than to rely on those written by others.

A special aspect of the ministry of comfort is calling on the bereaved, both before and for a period of time after the funeral. To prepare the future pastor for this part of his ministry, time is spent discussing the Christian and his or her reaction to grief so that he will be more prepared to handle the denial, anger, guilt and depression which even a Christian may feel and display at a time of bereavement. Again we point to the Word, rightly handled, as the means of dealing with all these negative emotions.

We also spend some time talking about "special ministry" visitations, e.g., visitation of the mentally ill and mentally retarded as well as those with alcohol and drug dependency problems and those who have been imprisoned. In the senior year field trips plus the guest lecture of a psychiatrist review and augment these special ministry aspects of the pastor's calling.

3. Christian discipline

The steps involved in following Matthew 18:15-18 are thoroughly discussed and applied to various hypothetical situations within the congregation. It is emphasized that the process of church discipline is not meant to be punitive but remedial, as is clearly indicated by the context of the Matthew 18 passage which stresses concern for the individual. It is also made clear that church discipline is not the responsibility of the pastor alone, not even of the pastor and Board of Elders alone, in fact, but that of the entire congregation. We are our brother's keeper.

4. Christian burial

Since many questions of practice arise in connection with funerals, e.g., burial of non-members, suicides, the place of outside organizations such as the military in a funeral service, several class periods are set aside to discuss the subject of the evangelical Lutheran pastor as officiant at funerals. Eventually we boil our discussion down to two sentences found at the end of the chapter, "The Shepherd Comforts the Bereaved," in *The Shepherd Under Christ*: "We grant Christian burial to members of our congregations unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. We shall not grant Christian burial to those who are not members of our congregation unless there is a compelling reason to do so" (p. 308).

In this section of our study we also spend some time discussing the funeral service itself as well as the funeral sermon, its purpose and general content. We bring out that a tone of joy can well be present at the funeral of a Christian and that this joyful note will become apparent through the hymns, prayers, Scripture lessons and sermon. A funeral sermon, we make clear, is not meant to be a eulogy but a proclamation of the gospel, which is above all that which provides comfort to the survivors at the death of a Christian.

5. Administration of the Means of Grace

The pastor's role as preacher and as liturgist is handled separately, in the homiletics and worship courses respectively. The pastoral theology course handles the pastor's administration of the sacraments, in particular the many practical aspects involved in carrying out this part of a pastor's calling. A deeper study of the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper is carried out in the senior course in dogmatics.

Regarding baptism such questions are covered as: What makes a baptism a valid baptism? Who can perform a baptism? Who should be baptized? Is re-baptism ever called for? How much instruction is required before baptism of older children and adults? Should baptism ever be refused?

It is also brought out that certain customs connected with baptism, e.g. the use of sponsors and the kind of baptismal rite used, are adiaphora and therefore not necessary for a valid baptism, which requires only water and the Word.

In discussing the Lord's Supper we ask: Who may be admitted to the Lord's Supper? In the process of doing this we discuss close communion and announcement for communion. We also discuss the frequency of communion, the pastor as communicant and the communion service itself, the elements, the consecration, distribution and reception. Again care is taken to bring home the point that adiaphora, e.g., personal announcement prior to communion, the use of common or individual cups, method of disposal of unused wafers and wine, need to be treated as adiaphora.

In the course of teaching about the administration of the sacraments students are reminded of the fact that both baptism and the Lord's Supper are 100% Gospel. In the midst of all the necessary "do's" and "don'ts" connected with administering the sacraments they will not want to forget to emphasize this lest God's people are led to think that reception of the sacraments is a meritorious act on their part, earned by "following all the rules." In both baptism and the Lord's Supper our gracious God is the Giver. He comes to us, not vice versa, and not because we have fulfilled a set of conditions but simply because he is gracious and loves us. He offers forgiveness, new spiritual life and salvation, the same blessings found in the spoken and written gospel, but here also in the visible dress of water and of bread and wine.

Pastors, we emphasize, will want to make sure they offer the sacraments as they are intended to be offered—without condition and with joy and confidence that God gives what he promises. These are not church rites, thus subject to church rules. These are God's actions, thus subject only to what God says in his Word. The gospel is good news. The sacraments, being the gospel, are also nothing else than the good news of forgiveness, life and salvation personalized.

D. Senior Pastoral Theology "A"

The study of congregational evangelism and church administration makes up one of the three senior pastoral theology courses, each of which is conducted two hours a week for one quarter.

The evangelism portion of this course follows this outline:

1. The Biblical Basis for Evangelism
Evangelism's definition, content, source, purpose, power and intended audience
2. The Contemporary Scene in Evangelism
The need for evangelism; false messages; the distinctive biblical, evangelical Lutheran message

3. The Doctrine of the Universal Priesthood and Evangelism
The biblical basis for this doctrine and its relationship to the Great Commission as well as to the doctrine of the public ministry
4. Developing a Congregational Evangelism Consciousness
The development of this consciousness in the congregation assembled for worship, education and fellowship and in the congregation dispersed for service
5. Communicating the Gospel to the Unchurched
Learning from Jesus how to evangelize; the pros and cons of utilizing prepared evangelism presentations; study of a sampling of such presentations
6. Developing an Evangelism Calling Program
Choosing and training callers; making the call; follow-up calls; building a “prospect list”; record keeping; developing an ongoing congregational program
7. Organizing for Evangelism
Developing evangelism purposes, objectives, goals, strategies, policies
8. Assimilating the New Member
The need for effective new member assimilation and strategy to carry it out

In the church administration portion of this pastoral theology course, after covering certain biblical principles of administration, we discuss two basic areas:

1. The structure and workings of the congregation, e.g., its constitution and bylaws; organizational chart; the church council and its responsibilities; boards and committees and their responsibilities; position descriptions; types of membership; voting rights; types of reception into membership; types of termination of membership
2. Pastoral leadership, e.g., styles of leadership; difference between a leader and a manager; how one becomes a leader; traits of effective leaders; the value of delegation, overcoming barriers to delegation, and how to delegate; recruiting volunteer workers—discovering and putting spiritual gifts to work, motivating to service, training volunteers, recognizing faithful service; principles of communication; conflict resolution

Throughout this study the assumption is made that a pastor is both a shepherd, who feeds, leads and protects a flock (1 Pe 5:2ff), and a coach, who is called to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-16).

E. Senior Pastoral Theology “B”

During this quarter the students delve into the subject of marriage and are introduced to basic principles of Christian counseling.

Using *The Shepherd Under Christ* as the basic text, the class discusses

1. the institution of marriage;
2. impediments to marriage;
3. establishing the marriage bond;
4. the marriage service;
5. the dissolution of a marriage; and
6. premarital counseling.

The definition given to pastoral counseling in *The Shepherd Under Christ* sets the tone for what follows:

Pastoral counseling is that pastoral care (Seelsorge) of individuals as they face their problems, troubles, griefs, burdens, fears and illnesses, which involves not simply giving advice, but assisting them to find help from the Word of God.

The Word, properly applied, is what sets the pastoral counselor apart from other counselors. Thus he needs both to have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and to trust in their power to remove guilt and transform and direct lives. The pastoral counselor, it is brought out, will not reject offhand the insights and methodologies of secular counselors, but he will measure their worth by the standard of the Word.

The course on pastoral counseling, besides covering the basic tools and necessary attitudes of the pastoral counselor, also acquaints the students with the needs of the counselee, e.g., the need for a listener, for confession, for understanding and for growth. Also such practical aspects of counseling are dealt with as how to establish contact and what to do in a counseling session, with a special emphasis on marriage and family counseling.

F. Senior Pastoral Theology “C”

The third section of senior pastoral theology covers a number of areas, those connected with the call into the ministry, organizations both within and outside the congregation, and Christian stewardship.

After a review of the doctrine of the call, which covers such ground as the need for a call, legitimate calling practices, transmitting a call, accepting or declining a call, and termination of a call, discussion is directed to the beginning of one's ministry, to ordination and installation, as well as to all the activities connected with beginning one's ministry in a particular congregation. Attention is also given to the pastor and congregation's connection with the Synod, pointing out both the benefits and obligations of synodical membership.

Regarding organizations, the pastor will want to recognize that the organizational life of a congregation is an *adiaphoron* and therefore not make membership or attendance a matter of conscience. Care needs to be taken to establish scripturally valid objectives for congregational organizations, e.g., growth in Christian knowledge and opportunities for Christian fellowship and service.

Organizations outside of the congregation, it is brought out, fall into two categories, those with anti-Christian or unscriptural principles, policies or programs that are an intrinsic part of the organization, e.g., most lodges, and those organizations which in themselves have no inherent false principles and purposes that make membership impossible, e.g., professional and business service organizations, which may have some erring policies and programs that members need to be alerted to. Pastoral practice will vary depending upon the category of organization. In the event of a member's association with an anti-Christian organization, the pastor will be patient, firm and evangelical in his dealings with the member, utilizing the gospel not the law to motivate change.

Stewardship leadership training begins with a study of the concept of the Christian as an *oikonomos* and the need to be a faithful *oikonomos*. Care is taken to use law and gospel correctly in producing faithful stewards, the gospel to motivate and the law to guide. Attention is given to scriptural principles of giving, e.g., voluntary, not coerced; love-, not duty-motivated; firstfruits, not leftovers; planned and proportionate, not unplanned and haphazard. Pledging, properly utilized, is seen as an *adiaphoron*. Some guidelines are given for conducting stewardship programs.

In summary, a chief goal of all the pastoral theology courses is to help the students to recognize the difference between biblical principles, which are unchanging, and the application of those principles, which will not always be the same in every place and time and circumstance. The pastor who recognizes and puts into practice this distinction is well on his way to becoming a truly evangelical pastor in these practical areas of pastoral theology.

II. Christian Education

The interest of WLS in Christian education, catechetics in particular, is seen in that the subject matter in all of "I." above is covered in 154 class periods, while 132 class periods are devoted to Christian education (The other two areas of practical theology, by the way, homiletics and worship, are covered in 220 and 110 class periods respectively). The fact that considerably less time will be spent in discussing this section and the one that follows than was spent in discussing pastoral theology is not intended to make it appear that Christian education and worship are of less importance. It simply means that this essayist is not personally involved in teaching these two areas and therefore had to rely only on printed material describing the courses.

During the junior year students study some of the fundamentals of Christian education on the basis of a set of course notes of that name written by Prof. David Kuske, with emphasis on the following:

- Principles of learning for all ages;
- Principles of educational psychology pertinent to Christian education;
- The seven laws of teaching;
- The use of various techniques: telling, questioning, discussion;
- The use of different kinds of questions

During the first quarter of the middler year students prepare a catechism lesson and teach it in class. During the second quarter they do practice student teaching in area WELS Christian day schools.

During the third quarter they learn how to prepare Sunday school and youth Bible class lessons.

The senior year, first and second quarters, is spent on the remaining areas of a congregation's program of Christian education: the pre-school program, conducting Sunday school teachers' meetings, administration of the Sunday school and vacation Bible school, pastor-teacher relationships, working with the mentally retarded and learning disabled child, the youth group, adult and family life education, the Bible information class, the work of the congregation's Board of Education, and the use of audio-visuals in a program of education—all of which are covered in Prof. Kuske's course. "Fundamentals of Christian Education."

III. Worship

Students participate in courses in Christian worship each year of their attendance at the Seminary. The curriculum is described as follows in the latest Catalog of the Seminary:

As the church believes, so it worships. A church's worship life reflects its faith. Because it accepts the truth of this axiom, the Seminary wishes its students to have a firm foundation in the theology, history and practice of corporate worship. To accomplish this goal three courses are offered. The first focuses on several important forms of worship—the historical liturgy, the church year and architecture—and analyzes their function. The second looks specifically at the music of worship and the pastor's role in supporting and promoting a congregation's ministry of music. The third offers opportunities for discussion of a wide range of practical worship-related topics and for the practice of worship forms used in chapel services.

After planning and conducting a service before their classmates, students are encouraged to lead the service in a congregational setting.

A Final Word

Practical theology is "where the rubber hits the road" in the training of our future pastors. Students come to the Seminary not simply for their own spiritual benefit but that they might become a blessing to others. It is

when they use the Word they have been taught to preach, to teach, to evangelize, to counsel, to equip that the purpose for their training is fulfilled.

This has led some to conclude that there ought to be more courses in practical theology at WLS. In this connection it is good to remember that practical theology is called “practical” not in the sense that the other theological disciplines are impractical. Rather, this title calls attention to the fact that through the various branches of this theological discipline we put into practice the principles and truths learned in the other disciplines. Thus there is a very close link between practical theology on the one hand and systematic, biblical and historical theology on the other. And there needs to be a proper balance. That WLS recognizes the need for practical courses is seen in the fact that graduates of the Seminary will have received about sixty quarter hour credits (about 660 class periods) in subjects that fall under the heading of practical theology. Yet a Seminary curriculum that becomes more “practical” at the expense of weakening the solid foundation of the other theological disciplines is not serving well either the Church or the Lord of the Church. Too much “how to” without the “what” and the “why” behind it creates an unhealthy imbalance that cannot but, in the long run, be detrimental to the welfare of the Church.

May the Lord give us the wisdom to achieve and continually maintain a healthy balance—to his glory.