

The Vicar's Previous Preparation in Pastoral Theology

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Purpose

As good a place as any to begin a paper on this subject is to take a look at the Catalog of the Seminary, specifically at its description of the pastoral theology curriculum. The paragraph at the beginning of the course description states:

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.

There follows then a brief description of each of the five pastoral theology courses, two of which are taught in the middler year partially to prepare students for their vicarage, while the other three are senior courses. Since, however, the middler courses are four hour courses and the senior two hour, more hours are actually spent on pastoral theology in the middler year than the senior (a total of 88 hours in the middler year and 66 in the senior year). 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 first.

Scope

Before we get into the subject of just what is studied in the middler year, it might be good, especially for the sake of those who are relatively new to the supervising pastor program, to mention first what is not covered during this year since this has implications, of course, for the year of vicaring. The senior year pastoral theology curriculum includes:

1. "The Shepherd Counsels the Troubled Sheep"
2. "The Shepherd's Concern for Christian Marriage"
3. "The Shepherd Trains Christian Stewards"
4. "The Shepherd's Involvement in Administration"
5. "The Theology and Practice of Evangelism"

In addition the seniors study about the call into the ministry, beginning one's ministry and the shepherd's place in the synodical flock (the benefits and obligations for pastor and congregation of synodical membership).

The above leads to observations such as the following:

1. Since the vicar will have had no training in counseling procedures, the supervising pastor should normally not turn any counseling cases over to him. In fact, in the middler pastoral theology course the student is told that if someone approaches him with the desire for counseling, he should quickly respond (before the person divulges his or her problem) something to this effect: “I think that I should let you know right away that I will really have to share with the pastor what you say to me since I am serving this year simply as his assistant to learn from him and have not had any counseling training myself. I would be happy to go with you to the pastor, etc.” Obviously we are not ruling out here the encounters the vicar may have with teens, for example, where they seek his counsel and advice. Rather we are concerned that the vicar doesn’t get in over his head into counseling situations for which he is not prepared, which would be beneficial neither to the vicar nor to the counselee nor to the pastor who may then have the additional job of untangling a mess created partly by a would-be, but totally untrained, counselor.

What can the supervising pastor do to assist the vicar in this area? One good thing would be to take some time to discuss your counseling techniques with him. Ideally the vicar could sit in on some actual counseling sessions, but the nature of the work may rule that out in most cases. You may find some situations, however, where the person involved would give his or her permission for the vicar to participate as a silent observer. Barring that possibility, you could share certain cases with him (taking care to preserve confidentiality), asking him how he would handle a particular case and then relating the way you proceeded and explaining why you did it the way you did. All of this will be good preparation for the senior course on pastoral counseling.

2. Likewise we would encourage you to let the vicar observe one or more of your pre-marital counseling sessions and that you would explain thoroughly your procedure, the number of sessions, the subject matter you cover, the materials you use, etc. This will be beneficial for the senior course on “The Shepherd’s Concern for Christian Marriage” which includes a section on pre-marital counseling.

It would also be good to give the vicar a chance to see how you conduct a wedding rehearsal and the wedding itself and to learn how one goes about handling in an evangelical way requests for non-WELS service participants (e.g., soloists). It should be noted, by the way, that though not all states today require a man to be ordained before he is permitted to conduct a marriage, the Conference of Presidents, to preserve a uniform practice among us, has resolved that no vicars be permitted to perform a marriage ceremony. This would not rule out having a vicar preach the sermon at a wedding, however. All of the vicars have received a copy of this resolution of the COP; so the matter is not likely to come up.

3. Training in the principles and practices of Christian stewardship is reserved for the senior year. Again, however, prior practical experience in the field will enliven and enrich the class sessions. We would suggest that you take the time with your vicar to explain how you conduct stewardship programs in your congregation. Share with him materials you have found to be helpful. Perhaps let him sit in on the planning sessions of the stewardship committee. All of this is in keeping with the “pass it on” principle enunciated by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2 (“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”).

4. As we will see below, we do spend time in the middler year discussing the pastor's personal administration of time, etc. (e.g., scheduling); but we leave the consideration of the organizational structure of the congregation, establishing objectives, goal-setting, planning, etc., for the final year of instruction. How can you help prepare the vicar for this senior year course? If you acquaint him thoroughly with the structure of your congregation and with the procedures that are followed to carry out its work, then we will have a wealth of material from which we can draw in our section on church administration after the year of vicaring. This, as with the above, presupposes that you will be spending quality time with your vicar, time which will return rich dividends, if not to you directly, to the vicar and to the church at large when he becomes a part of the ministerium of the Synod.

One area of work in the parish that is not directly touched upon in either the middler or senior pastoral theology course fits under the category of what we might call clerical work, e.g., preparing Sunday bulletins and newsletters, keeping accurate church records. Much of this work can and in general should be done by secretarial help, if possible, either of the paid or voluntary variety. But the vicar's first call could well take him into a congregation which has not had any secretarial help heretofore. Someone, therefore, has to know how to set up a bulletin, run the mimeograph, etc., and that someone will probably be the pastor until he can train someone else to do it. We request accordingly that the vicar be given a minimal amount of training in this work so he can be equipped to train someone to carry it out in his congregation.

5. Regarding evangelism, we would simply like to say at this point that the main instruction in evangelism falls into the senior year with the course on the theology and practice of evangelism. This year's middler class, however, has received and future middler classes will continue to receive a certain amount of training in some of the practical aspects of evangelism work in the congregation, enough, we would hope, to enable your vicar to give assistance in this work. More about this below.

The Pastoral Epistles

This course, conducted during the second quarter of the middler year, is somewhat of a hybrid. It is listed in the Catalog among the courses of the pastoral theology department, but it has a New Testament title, N.T. 283. We therefore try to do justice to both aspects of the course, i.e., we seek to carry out an exegetical study of the pastoral epistles and combine this study with pertinent applications to the parish ministry.

In the first class period the following "Purpose of the Course" is shared with the class:

- A. Knowledge
 - 1. To come to know thoroughly the content of the pastoral epistles;
 - 2. To grow in skills in the exegetical study of the New Testament;
 - 3. To learn how the message of the pastorals applies to the work of the evangelical Lutheran parish ministry.

B. Attitudes

1. To be strengthened in faith through an intensive study of a specific portion of the Word;
2. To find growing joy in and increased desire for ongoing exegetical study of the New Testament;
3. To grow in appreciation of the many evangelical principles for the ministry laid down in the Pastorals and in zeal to put them into practice in an evangelical manner.

The order of the two middler pastoral theology courses 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. 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. By beginning the study of pastoral theology with an in-depth look at the pastoral epistles we let the Lord through his inspired apostle introduce us to the evangelical principles of ministry which will govern every aspect of one's ministry.

Of primary concern to the group gathered here today is point 3 of both A. and B. of the course's purpose. As you know from your own study of the pastoral epistles, St. Paul as he writes to Timothy and Titus presents to us a wealth of material that is directly applicable to the pastor and his ministry, e.g., the person and qualifications of a pastor, the worship life of the church, choosing and training church leaders, dealing with error and errorists, handling various groups within a congregation and facing conflict and persecution.

The course was taught this past year with the aid of study questions on true text and on applications of the text for which each class member was responsible each day. The result was, in general, lively class discussion and, we pray, a good understanding of the message and a perception of what it means for an evangelical pastor to carry out his ministry in an evangelical way. In the course of our study we sought to make clear the contrast between an evangelical and a legalistic approach to the ministry as well as the difference between being evangelical and being lax.

The remainder of this paper will cover the subject matter discussed during the third quarter of the middler year which in the Catalog is entitled P.T. 258. In material distributed to the class we describe the course as follows: "A practical study in preparation for a year of vicaring of various phases of a pastor's work not covered in other courses." This course description is elaborated in the following statement of course purpose:

A. Knowledge

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 (e.g., visiting the sick, the straying, the unchurched; comforting the bereaved; working with various organizations; serving under a supervising pastor);

3. To grow in the knowledge of the biblical principles that will enable one to serve God's people in a truly evangelical manner.

B. Attitudes

1. 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;
2. To grow in appreciation of what it means to be an *evangelical* Lutheran minister;
3. To grow in desire to be truly evangelical in doctrine and practice.

If you have *The Shepherd Under Christ* and at some point would like to scan briefly the material covered, we study these chapters:

- “The Shepherd” (his character, aptitude to teach, faithfulness, public relations)
- “The Shepherd Visits the Sheep” (pastoral calls in general, the ministry of comfort, special cases, mission calls)
- “The Shepherd Seeks the Straying Sheep” (brotherly admonition, church discipline, excommunication)
- “The Shepherd Reaches Out to the Unchurched” (pastor's role, equipping, organizing)
- “The shepherd Comforts the Bereaved” (conducting funerals, grief counseling)
- “The Shepherd and Organizations” (both in and outside the congregation)
- “The Future Shepherd and His Supervisor”

We might note in passing that two chapters are not covered in either middler or senior pastoral theology, namely, “The Shepherd Feeds the Flock” (the pastor as preacher and liturgist, baptism, the Lord's Supper) and “The Shepherd's Concern for Christian Education” (Christian day school, Sunday School, vacation Bible school, confirmation class, adult Bible study classes, other agencies). This is intentional. The material under “The Shepherd Feeds the Flock” is a part of the liturgics course (although the senior pastoral theology course does cover the practical aspects of the pastor's administration of the sacraments) while the content of “The Shepherd's Concern for Christian Education,” as you might guess, has become the responsibility of the Christian education department. Since the subject of the vicar as liturgist will not come up elsewhere in this seminar, it would appear that this would be the session for any questions and comments pertaining to this aspect of his work.

The Shepherd

Now, to the first subject studied during the third quarter of the middler year, the shepherd, his character, aptitude to teach, faithfulness and his public relations. This follows quite naturally upon the study of the Pastoral Epistles which provide the most detailed list in the Bible of necessary qualifications of a spiritual leader, 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, about the necessary spiritual qualifications, qualifications which for the most part the Lord expects to see in every Christian (“apt to teach” is the one exception) but which should be present in a marked and consistent degree in a Christian

pastor. Emphasis is placed upon 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 vicar's are 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 (should she have a job outside the home?) and about the time the husband should spend with his wife and family. It appears that there is considerably more concern on the part of students today that they have enough time to spend with wife and children than when this essayist was at the Sem 25 years ago. This has both its positive and negative aspects. Negatively, there seems to be a perception on the part of some that the public ministry is something akin to a 9 to 5 job and that what one does outside of "office hours" is his own business. But positively, it is good to see the men concerned about spending quality time with their wives and children. To counteract the 9 to 5 misconception we try to bring out that one's call into tree public ministry is a full-time call involving all of the man all of the time, that there is never really a time when he is "off-duty." But we also bring out that a married vicar 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 take time for 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. We also seek to counteract a feeling of self-pity that the vicar (and later the pastor) has to work so many more hours than most people (not always true!) that he doesn't have enough time for his family, by pointing out the advantage a vicar/pastor has of a flexible time schedule. For example, he will often, perhaps regularly, have the opportunity to eat lunch with his wife and family and to be present when his children are involved in daytime school activities, e.g., sports of various kinds.

In connection with this discussion, we speak of the value of carefully scheduling one's time so that a pastor can do the one (all his churchly duties) without neglecting the other (wife and family). We give specific suggestions for daily and weekly schedule setting, emphasizing the value of the first hours of the morning for study and of the evening hours for making calls. Likewise we point out how procrastination and lack of punctuality squander valuable time, either one's own or that of others. Scheduling also helps, we explain, to lessen somewhat the tension between the time a pastor needs to spend at his desk and the time he needs to spend visiting members and the unchurched. Also in this connection it is only natural to bring up subjects such as the pastor's health, his need for proper rest, exercise, hobbies, vacations, all of which consume time but are seen not as something in competition with the pastor's work but as necessary, within bounds of course, for ongoing and productive work.

The chapter on "The Shepherd" concludes with what is called his "public relations," which has to do with his image both inside the congregation and in the community. Here we talk about the pastor's personal appearance, the kind of clothes he wears, the need for cleanliness, neatness and good manners. This will be one of the subjects for tomorrow morning's roundtable discussion. And we spend some time seeking to show that to talk to people on Main Street, to get to know the newspaper editor, to be friendly to merchants, funeral directors, hospital personnel, even to non-WELS clergy, does not violate the scriptural principles of fellowship but is simply a part of good citizenship and in the process helps to create good-will in the community toward the WELS congregation and its pastor.

Pastoral Visitation

After a discussion of pastoral calls in general -- the need for them, their purpose, frequency of, developing a system for, necessary cautions (e.g., in visiting women members) and use of the Word in -- a considerable amount of time is spent on the subject of the ministry of comfort, hospital and shut-in calls in particular. It might be noted here that quite a number of the vicars have availed themselves of the opportunity to participate in a visitation program of several institutions in the area -- the Mequon Care Center, Lasata and Hearthside. Those who have done so (these visitations are optional) will be that much more prepared for sick, shut-in and nursing home calls during their year of vicarage.

Since the ministry of comfort is such an important part of the ministry, a considerable amount of time is spent in class discussing the do's and don'ts of hospital visitation. Even more important, 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 basis, and to pray their own prayers rather than to rely on those written by others. This year one of the class assignments was for the students to find devotional texts for ten different situations. The texts of all the students were in turn edited and compiled into a list of devotional texts, thus providing each vicar with a large number of text suggestions for various situations that he may face during the coming year.

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 vicar for the possibility of handling such situations, especially in the pastor's absence, a portion of time is spent discussing the Christian and his or her reaction to grief. The class listens to and discusses the contents of an audio-cassette in which a Christian couple who over a period of some years suffered the loss of three children, by illness or accident, describe their feelings and their reactions to the counsel of Christian friends at the time. From this some helpful hints are gained regarding what not to say as well as what to say and how to say it and on how to handle the denial, anger, guilt and depression which even a Christian may 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 spend some time also discussing the visitation of the mentally ill as well as those with alcohol and drug dependency problems. While it is highly unlikely and normally not advisable that a vicar become involved in such a difficult matter as alcohol or drug counseling, it could be beneficial to him to take part in pastoral visitation of someone hospitalized for an alcohol or drug problem, should you happen to have such a case in your congregation. Or, if you deem that to be inadvisable, he could accompany you on such a call. It's a good eye-opener. Likewise, it could be helpful for the vicar to get a taste of calling on someone hospitalized in a mental institution or the mental ward of a hospital. Whether he should go alone or with you will be a matter to be determined locally. Normally it would appear best for you to accompany him the first time. If you have a mentally retarded person in the congregation who needs instruction in the Word, again the vicar would do well to get a taste of such work, though to give him the full job may result in too much time being spent on one thing.

Should a vicar become involved in church discipline visitation? The difficult cases, no. The supervising pastor can help the vicar, however, by discussing certain situations (e.g., living together before marriage, divorce) and how he handles them. It should be noted here that the students are strongly advised not to try to be one man shows when they get out into the parish

ministry, making unilateral decisions, but to work closely with those individuals in the congregation (church councilmen or elders) to whom the congregation has given the responsibility of assisting the pastor with the spiritual oversight of the congregation. You might want to show how you carry this out in your congregation.

Delinquent calls are one kind of church discipline call that the vicar could make, since some time is spent in the middler year on the purpose and methodology of such calls. The pastor will want to take care, of course, that he picks rather carefully the calls to be made, that he receives a full reporting on them and that he doesn't allow delinquent calling to occupy an inordinate share of the vicar's time, which, of course, is true of every aspect of the vicar's work. The idea is for him to get exposure to as many different aspects of the ministry as possible in the time frame of one year. No single area, therefore, should demand the lion's share of time.

A final kind of call for which the vicar is somewhat prepared is the mission or evangelism call. While, as mentioned above, the major portion of evangelism training is reserved for the senior year, the class studies the chapter in *The Shepherd Under Christ* entitled, "The Shepherd Reaches Out to the Unchurched," in which we discuss briefly the definition of evangelism and the pastor's role both as evangelist himself and as equipper of the saints for the work of evangelism. We also distribute a sheet offering suggestions for beginning a basic evangelism library. In addition each student is required to put to memory an outline for a one-to-one evangelism presentation, including pertinent Bible passages, and to reproduce that outline as a class quiz. We would strongly encourage supervising pastors to give their vicars opportunity to put this preliminary training, too, into practice. Suggestions: Have him participate in a congregational neighborhood religious survey and then make follow-up calls on some of the prospects uncovered; make him responsible for following up on all visitors to the church services; send him along on calls with one of your congregation's evangelism callers and/or take him along with you on one or more of your calls upon the unchurched. Many of our graduates go out into new or relatively new mission congregations where a goodly share of the work involves (or should involve) calling on the unchurched. Graduates who have done little or none of this work prior to their first call may find it difficult to begin doing this on their own. A survey of the 1984-85 vicars showed that only six of them had done any evangelism work during their vicar year. Since outreach is also a vital part of a pastor's work, we would expect that all vicars should have at least some evangelism calling experience.

Church 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 the context of the Matthew 18 passage clearly indicates. It is also made clear that church discipline is not the responsibility of the pastor alone but that of the entire congregation. Here again it is not expected that the vicar will become personally involved in this process apart, perhaps, from making one or more initial calls on a delinquent member. But it will serve him well for the future to see how a congregation deals in an evangelical manner with seeking to restore a wandering sheep.

It has been called to our attention that there is one statement in the chapter on church discipline which is open to misunderstanding. The statement reads as follows:

Where admonition has taken place because of doctrinal deviation, only those are to be excommunicated who persistently adhere to an error which subverts the foundation of faith (denial of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, salvation by grace, vicarious atonement, resurrection). In other cases separation is called for (Tit 3:10), i.e., the declaration that the persistent errorist is no longer a confessional brother, but not that he is to be regarded as a heathen man and a publican (*The Shepherd Under Christ*, p. 175).

That statement, taken alone, could give the impression that one could never be excommunicated for a doctrinal error other than one which by its very nature overthrows saving faith. That this is not the intent of the above statement is seen from the words on the following page:

It is impenitence which is the ground for excommunication, not the sin which first called forth admonition We cannot, therefore, make a distinction between sins which can lead to excommunication or those which will not. Impenitence is a refusal to obey God and calls for action by the church no matter what the sin may be of which the sinner refuses to repent (p. 176).

The point is this: There could be a situation in which a member remains convinced, even after much admonition and instruction, that a particular doctrinal position to which he is holding, a position different from the one held by the WELS, is the proper scriptural position. He feels that, since his is the correct position, he should not leave the congregation (or Synod) but rather lead it to his way of thinking which he considers to be the correct one. In such a situation, since there is no longer unity of doctrine, separation is called for, but not of the type which would identify the individual as “a heathen man and a publican,” as long as it is not a doctrinal error which by its very nature overthrows saving faith. Rather, a passage such as Romans 16:17 would apply on the basis of which fellowship is terminated without such a declaration. Such, by the way, has long been the practice within the Synod. If, on the other hand, the individual persists in denying that which he knows the Scriptures say, this is impenitence. And ultimately impenitence, no matter how “major” or “minor” the false doctrine or the ungodly action, condemns.

Since the above section in *The Shepherd Under Christ* has raised some questions, we make it a point to discuss it thoroughly in class that the students might understand what is and what isn't being said. Undoubtedly when a new edition of *The Shepherd Under Christ* appears, this section will be clarified.

Funerals

In the chapter “The Shepherd Comforts the Bereaved” the student is prepared for conducting funerals. Since many questions of practice arise in connection with funerals, e.g., burial of non-members, doubtful cases among members (suicide, etc.), the place of other 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 at the end of the chapter which sum up “the principles governing sound Lutheran burial practice”: “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). We are assuming that the vicar, except under unusual circumstances, will not be expected to make the difficult decisions sometimes required in connection with the death of members and non-member relatives and friends of members. But we do hope that you share with him how you arrive at decisions in this area (i.e., the principles involved) as well as show him how a pastor can handle even difficult decisions in a loving, evangelical way.

In this section of our study we also spend some time discussing the funeral sermon, its purpose and general content (not a eulogy but a proclamation of the gospel). This may overlap somewhat with the homiletics department; but our purpose is to look not so much at the structure of the sermon as to its place in the ministry of comfort at the death of a Christian.

Organizations

In an attempt to gain a little more time in the senior year for a study of evangelism and church administration and in recognition of the fact that vicars generally are involved in the organizational life of the congregation, the study of organizations, both inside and outside of the congregation, was switched this past school year from the senior to the middler year. Our study of organizations within the congregation includes such subjects as the need to establish purposes and objectives for congregational organizations, the role the pastor should play in them, the need for advance planning of topics and the role of the pastor’s wife in the organizational life of the congregation.

Since most vicars are involved in congregational youth work, each year the synodical Committee on Youth meets with the middler class for a full Friday morning in the spring plus optional Friday evening and, Saturday morning sessions (which, by the way, were attended this year by nearly everyone in the class). These training sessions help to prepare the vicar for working with high school youth. We would suggest, however, that for the good of your congregation’s youth the best way to utilize a vicar in the youth program is not as youth leader but as one who works with the youth counselors of the congregation. They can provide the continuity that any program needs if it is to be successful while the vicar can provide enthusiasm, new ideas perhaps and assistance in leading Bible studies.

In teaching about organizations outside of the congregation which members may desire to join, two categories of organizations are distinguished, “such organizations that have anti-Christian or unscriptural principles, policies, or programs as an intrinsic part of the organization” (e.g., most lodges, Boy Scouts) and “such organizations which in themselves have no inherent principles and purposes that make membership impossible” (Shepherd Under Christ, p. 344). Examples of the latter would include most, if not all, service and veterans’ organizations. Some of these organizations may have certain undesirable features that need to be warned against, it is explained, but membership cannot be categorically ruled out, particularly if a member can divorce himself from the objectionable elements.

We spend some time discussing what a pastor will do if he finds that a member has joined an organization that has anti-Christian or unscriptural elements as an intrinsic part of it, emphasizing the need for patience (one at first may well be dealing with a weak brother) as well as firmness. Here, we explain, is one place where a pastor needs to deal in a truly evangelical manner, the antonym of legalistic but not the synonym of lax. To deal legalistically, of course, would be to use the law to motivate and change behavior, while to be lax would be simply to let things ride in the hope that they might get better themselves, which seldom happens. To deal

evangelically involves the use of the law, we explain, but in its primary use, that is, to reveal sin, while only the gospel of forgiveness in Jesus can serve as a true motivation and source of strength for now doing what is right in God's eyes.

At times individuals desiring to become members of the congregation are members of objectionable organizations. It is brought out in our discussion why they should first disassociate themselves from such organizations and then be formally received into the congregational fellowship.

Again, we would not expect that the vicar become involved in church discipline cases involving lodge members. If, however, such a situation is currently being handled within the congregation, it would be good to share with your vicar how an evangelical Lutheran pastor seeks to handle a congregational "lodge problem" in an evangelical way.

Back to the Basics

In re-reading this essay from the beginning to this point it has occurred to me that before concluding it we should add here something that you know already but that we want you to know that we also know: None of you are perfect parish pastors just as none of us are perfect profs (we weren't perfect parish pastors either). This has implications, of course, for the vicar program. You won't always give the best advice. Your vicar won't always see you at your evangelical best. In a year's time your vicar will begin to know you "warts and all." And that's not all bad, that our vicars and students see us, too, as *simul iustus et peccator*, saint and sinner wrapped up into one. We won't want to be too proud to say, "I was wrong," or "I really don't know how to handle this situation," or, "What you just saw was just the opposite of what it means to be an evangelical Lutheran pastor." The sin that remains within us is a great leveler of supervises and supervisee and, I would hope, would lead to the wholesome practice of bishop and vicar taking time together on a regular basis to do what leaders of God's people so desperately need to take time to do, to pray together and study the Word together.

When all is said and done, I have a strong feeling that who you are will leave a more lasting impression on your vicar than the things you teach him this year. So much will be thrown at him in a year's time. He will remember a part of it, to be sure; but much will slip his mind and he'll have to learn how to do some things all over again. But to know his bishop as a man of God who clearly needed the Lord's presence in his life every bit as much as the vicar did; a man of God who daily went to the well and drank deeply from the Water of Life; a man of God who without ceasing lifted up his hands in prayer and supplication both for his own needs and the needs of his flock; a man of God who, though he wasn't perfect, truly sought to love his wife and family in the same way he encouraged the husbands of his congregation to love; a man of God who with the publican was not ashamed to confess, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and who then, sins forgiven, would arise in peace to joyfully and vigorously serve the Lord who in Jesus had had mercy on him, the sinner -- to know his bishop as such a man of God will produce an indelible impression on the vicar's life. It will encourage him to continue in the calling he is pursuing and will serve as a beautiful role model for him as he in a short time begins his lifetime of service in the public ministry. To this help us, heavenly Father.

David J. Valleskey