

Second Career Students and the Pastoral Ministry

[An Agenda for Discussion]

Preamble

The Admissions Committee of Northwestern College makes important decisions regarding potential candidates for the pastoral ministry. Since a large percentage of students admitted into our pastoral training college have continued their training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and then become pastors in our congregations, admission standards require careful thought. On the one hand, we must maintain reasonable academic standards to insure the professional integrity of our future pastors as well as the educational quality and excellence of Northwestern's curriculum. On the other hand, we must also be sensitive to the need of our church body for more pastors, the desire of some to become pastors in spite of some limitations, and the wide range of talent—intellectual and social—among our current pastors and potential students. We must do this while also considering the qualifications for public servants of the word expressed in Scripture.

To complicate matters, problems in parishes arise from both perceived and real pastoral inadequacies. When those inadequacies frustrate the spread of the gospel or in other ways weaken the congregation's mission, everyone from the individual Christian in the pew to the district president suffers. If questions about sexual misconduct, alcoholism, or abuse of spouse or children surface, congregations are clearly involved and so are synodical officials and training schools. Questions about standards and screening naturally arise. What could have been done to prevent such a tragedy? Was the pastor poorly trained to meet the problems? Was he mismatched with that congregation? Did he have the necessary gifts to be a pastor in the first place? Should he have been allowed into the pastoral training program? Was there any indication during his training that such a problem would develop? What procedures are in place to screen potential candidates for the public ministry?

Since we are dealing with sinful and limited human beings, answers to such questions sometimes lie in the vague territory of Christian judgment. We operate without the ability to foresee the future but in the confidence that the Lord of the Church will guide us through the present uncertainties and unknowns. Our current training for pastors does help us screen those who will eventually be called into our congregations. Because we have the opportunity to know our traditional students for as much as four or five years before they go on to the seminary, generally we have a good handle on their ability to perform the varied tasks of the pastoral ministry. Even with traditional students who are on our campus for several years, however, no guarantee prevents mistakes, and we do not claim to be correct in every case. When we recommend a student to the seminary, we carefully consider a student's intellectual, social, and personal gifts for the pastoral ministry. We also assume that our traditional students will grow and mature throughout their training, some of them demonstrating remarkable maturation between graduation here and entrance into Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Perhaps this occurs because they become aware that the goal of the pastoral ministry is much closer and it is time to put away immature behavior.

Non-traditional or second career students pose a more difficult series of challenges. These older students have matured already before coming on our campus, and some of them are married and have their own children. We had no influence on them during the years when that maturation took place. In some cases their maturation may have taken place in a non-Christian environment and therefore without the influence of the Holy Spirit through the gospel. In such cases, questions about qualifications and talents are more critical. In other words, we have less influence on them when they come because they already have established patterns of behavior. Such older students have a rich and diverse background different from the traditional age students. That diversity is a valuable resource for our pastoral ministry, but it also presents questions about the intellectual, social, spiritual, and personal talents necessary for ministry of the word as a pastor. How shall we assess intellectual potential when a candidate has been away from academic pursuits for several years? Who knows

what social and personal talents he possesses? How thorough should our search into his past be? How do we measure sanctification, dedication and commitment?

These questions have occupied our attention and have become more urgent for three reasons. First, Northwestern has begun an aggressive effort to find those who may be interested in the pastoral ministry but are now engaged in another profession. Second, the number of second career/seminary certification students has already increased. These questions bring with them a battery of corollary questions that involve the curriculum and the kind of preparation second career students have for college work in general and for Northwestern's language intensive program in particular. Since we are presently restudying our curriculum, this constitutes a third reason for discussing these issues.

For the sake of discussion we chose seven categories. They are: 1) academic standards and curriculum, 2) personal and psychological aptitude, 3) family responsibilities, 4) financial obligations and our financial aid, 5) the concept of public ministry and talent for ministry, 6) spiritual health and leadership potential, and 7) physical, medical and health considerations. The following is a distillation of the discussion of these issues by the Admissions Committee, the Non-traditional Student Committee, and the entire faculty. We offer them as a contribution to the discussions about the pastoral ministry but perhaps more importantly as an invitation to others to discuss how these issues will influence the training of future pastors as well as how those future servants of Christ will influence the work the Lord has given us as a synod.

Academic Standards and Curriculum

We believe that a student who pursues the pastoral ministry should be a high school graduate. He must submit a transcript of his high school work. We also believe that he should possess the intellectual gifts necessary to do college level work. An applicant can demonstrate his ability to do college level work by possessing a college degree from another college or university and providing a transcript of his work. If he did not earn a college degree but did take some college courses, a transcript will verify that work. In some cases the work may be vocational and technical college courses, which lack academic rigor. A transcript of the work done at that level may help demonstrate the ability to do college level work, but an applicant should know that most technical college courses are not evaluated as college level equivalents and will not transfer to his academic program at Northwestern. Even on other college campuses, distinctions between pre-college courses and courses which earn college level credit exist. Applicants and their advisors should recognize three general levels of academic effort: 1) high school, 2) vocational and technical college, and 3) college or university. Northwestern's program operates at the third level, and, while the levels are not absolute, grades earned at each level will help both the applicant and the admissions committee evaluate his ability to do college level work. Once the student provides us with all his transcripts, we can begin to assess his ability to do college level work and develop an academic program for him.

Questions will arise when the transcripts reveal marginal work done in college or the applicant has done no college level work at all. First, let's consider the student whose transcripts reveal marginal work in high school or college. If a student is placed on academic probation by another college or university and has not removed the probation, that status will continue at Northwestern. Academic probation raises serious questions about a student's ability to do the work at Northwestern, and we expect that he must show some improvement after one semester on campus. Applicants should remember that "D" grades in college courses on other campuses will not transfer to their program at Northwestern. Of course, it is possible that high school and college grades represent a period of immaturity, rebellion, and indifference. To what extent such a period has prevented a student from acquiring study skills, self-discipline, and essential academic tools necessary to succeed at the college level may be a question that cannot always be adequately answered by a look at transcripts. After several years of growth and maturity a student may have overcome those adolescent problems, but he still must demonstrate the ability to do college level work.

If the applicant has no college experience at all, our advice would be that he test his ability by enrolling in courses at another college or university first. Wherever possible that will be an institution near his current

home so that he can attend without moving his family and without quitting his job. We suggest that he enroll in college level mathematics (including algebra), English composition, and, wherever possible, Latin. Such a strategy will help him decide whether the Lord has given him the talent for the kind of study necessary to achieve the pastoral ministry while causing the least amount of disruption to his family and finances.

This strategy gives the applicant with no college experience at all a test of his ability; it will also provide some help for students who have had marginal grades during a previous college enrollment and for college graduates who have been away from college for several years. Because of our belief that the Scriptures are the word of God, it will be necessary for those conducting a ministry of the word as pastors to be able to work in the original languages of the Scriptures. It is appropriate to ask whether second career students can do the language intensive work at Northwestern College. Therefore we suggest this strategy for some types of students. For the student with marginal grades in his previous college experience(s), attending another college will help him assess his desire and academic talent. For the student who has been away from college for a long time, it can provide a good reintroduction to college study. In our experience, such students often do not fully comprehend what it means to study again while maintaining a family until they are overwhelmed by the work. The goal of becoming a pastor in Christ's church is a noble one (1 Tim 3:1), but a strong desire must be combined with hard work and God given talent to achieve it. This strategy will provide a way to measure whether the Lord has given an applicant the necessary intellectual gifts to succeed.

We wondered if another strategy was available to help the students and the admissions committee assess ability. We discussed using some kind of national test. Traditional students are required to take the ACT. While we have discussed this matter for older students, at the present time we do not have a national test other than the ACT to suggest. In a recent conversation, Carol Aslanian, the Director of the Office of Adult Learning Services for The College Board, suggested that such a test was currently under study but was not yet available. Whether or not such a test or one like it will provide the information we need to help these students remains an unanswered question awaiting more research and study on the part of the admissions committee and faculty at Northwestern.

We discussed the ways that distance learning technology and correspondence courses may help students assess their academic potential without committing them to moving their families to Watertown. The new technology may offer some interesting and important possibilities. Like all innovations and technological advances we need to explore the possibilities and study them carefully to determine if they will provide the panacea first promised. Besides the question of whether or not these specific advances are appropriate for our purposes, one must also consider their cost before any implementation. We see some initial barriers. Besides the hardware for the technology, distance learning will require staff and budget currently unavailable. Initiating some kind of correspondence courses also requires additional staff and budget. Neither can be done with existing manpower and budgets; current staff is already spread thinly to carry out the existing program. While exact initial costs and continued costs for maintenance and manpower may be debated, decision makers must carefully consider the impact of staffing and other on-going costs to budgets already stretched.

Using distance learning technology and correspondence courses to replace on-campus learning requires us to think carefully about our approach to training potential pastors. An even more important consideration than money is the absence of personal contact implicit in these approaches. We believe that our personal contact with students is a vital part of our ministry in nurturing them, teaching them, and evaluating their progress toward the pastoral ministry. Charting a course which would involve new technology or even correspondence courses means discussing how to retain some personal contact. Because we believe personal face to face interaction between students and teachers offers an important avenue to nurture, teach and evaluate, we are unwilling to substitute electronic contact for it. And any use of electronic contact must also afford the opportunity for such personal interaction.

Other issues also surfaced in our discussion. Second career or seminary certification students pose some challenges for the Northwestern curriculum. First, these students come from diverse backgrounds and may not all have a sense of English grammar necessary to understand the grammar of Greek and Hebrew. Second, they will not all have the study skills necessary to achieve success at the college level. Third, they will require

additional time from faculty members to help them succeed, creating potential staff and counseling problems. Fourth, either those who may be able to enroll at the beginning of the second semester will need to be directed to wait until the following fall or we should offer beginning language courses for them during the second semester. Fifth, some courses may need to be added to the curriculum specifically to accommodate these students and bring them to the level of our current students. Sixth, the creation of and use of a summer school on our campus may help older students succeed. In our judgment academic standards should remain high for these students as well as for our traditional students. Seminary certification students should be raised to the level of our current students, not the other way around.

Personal and Psychological Aptitude

Currently a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the need for future pastors to have "people skills." We heartily agree that shepherds of God's people should have the necessary social and communication skills to share the gospel with people and to win their confidence. At the same time placing people skills in opposition to intellectual skills is detrimental. A pastor needs to be a professional—educated and able to articulate the gospel to a wide range of people. In the emphasis on "people skills" we ought to adopt a fuller view which includes the need for a pastor to have a liberal arts education. He needs to be acquainted with the history of the church and the world, the literature of the ages, the ideas of civilization, the sciences, the language of the Scriptures, as well as possessing "people skills." We realize that theological education that teaches only skills and ideas has not fully prepared candidates for the ministry of the word where personal integrity and faith are as important as skills and ideas.

In our assessment of traditional students we have evaluated students beyond their academic progress and wrestled with whether or not an individual was potentially fit for the ministry of the word as a pastor. While grades have often been the focus of a student's decision to continue or not, grades often mask other questions and doubts. It is difficult for a young man to admit to himself that the Lord has not given him the gifts for the pastoral ministry. Grades, personality clashes, disappointment over treatment, frustration with teaching style, or some other reason are easier to use as reasons for discontinuance.

But the heart of the discussion at this point is still the personal and psychological aptitude of a candidate for the pastoral ministry. How do we assess those factors in a student who applies for admission? Currently we require a pastor's recommendation for every student including seminary certification students. Additionally we ask the Non-traditional Student Committee to conduct an interview with our seminary certification students. Our experience has taught us that such an interview is important; it has become a de facto part of the admissions process. We suggest that it become a formal requirement for acceptance. In the past, generally students who were not married did not come for an interview with this committee because the committee focuses more on family and finance issues than the admissions process for unmarried students. In place of that interview, single students meet with the director of admissions. Perhaps a review of the present policy is needed at this time. For single students, regardless of age, we strongly advise them to live in the dormitory rather than living off campus. The dormitory experience provides an opportunity for interaction with other students and dorm staff. This interaction makes it easier for assessment of the student's potential for ministry and opens up the possibility of personal growth for the student by repeated and intimate contact with others of the same faith. Some questions arose about the reliability of interviews especially for second career candidates. In a few cases potential candidates can be expert interviewees and can present a good impression while hiding potential problems. Experience and concern for the congregations eventually calling these candidates dictate caution. In the light of past problems, we discussed the use of some kind of psychological testing for both older students and for our traditional students. While we have encountered no serious problems at this point with homosexual orientation or deviant sexual behavior, perhaps we should be more careful. Additional impetus for this concern comes from the Roman Catholic experience. Jason Berry, author of the book *Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children*, reported that over the past 10 years 400 priests have left the

church amid accusations of sexual misconduct and the Roman Catholic Church has spent \$400,000,000 in settling suits. Certainly enforced celibacy contributes to those problems, but the potential for similar problems among us sounds a note of caution.

We briefly discussed the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Instrument (MMPI) and have explored others. Such testing at this point has not been implemented because of three objections: 1) the testing could be used to categorize students and color subsequent evaluation, 2) because we are not accustomed to psychological testing, we have a fear of the unfamiliar, and 3) we anticipate the findings will not always be used discreetly. In discussing the MMPI we recognized that questions of invasion of privacy raised by others in the secular world have clouded its use. If we initiate any psychological testing, it should receive the support of the seminary faculty and the Conference of Presidents. In addition, we wondered if the testing should be done at the entry level here at Northwestern or at the seminary level and whether it should be done for everyone or only when the evidence suggests its use. We find ourselves caught between a strong desire to protect our congregations by identifying potential problems and an equally strong desire to believe potential students without calling into question their reputation.

Besides the issue of psychological testing, we discussed personality and substance abuse testing. The pastoral ministry allows and even requires a wide range of personality traits. The Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory can help students assess their own gifts and aid in counseling students about their future ministries. The college faculty has studied the use of the MBTI but has not felt the need to use any kind of substance abuse testing at this time.

In view of all the potential problems, we wondered if we need to establish a relationship with a psychologist to help us evaluate potential candidates. We discussed the colloquy process currently employed by the synod, noted its growth and development, and wondered if Northwestern, the seminary, the synodical presidium, and the Conference of Presidents could learn from a mutual discussion of these issues. A further note suggested that Dr. Martin Luther College should also be brought into this discussion soon because of its responsibility to recommend teachers to our congregations and schools and its impending staff ministry program.

This section concentrates on the potential for problems. On the one hand, it should because these problems represent grave danger to the church and the spread of the gospel. On the other hand, a large majority of seminary certification students we have had are welcome additions to the Northwestern student body, and we value them for their potential service to the Lord's church. They are dedicated Christians struggling to prepare for the office of pastor in our church body. Their influence on our current student body is healthy and positive. Our goal is to attract more such men and train them for potential service.

As we discuss these matters, we must understand what can and cannot be done at the level of a student's admission. Admissions screening is one step in the process of producing qualified candidates for our congregations. Northwestern College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and the bishop of the vicar year all play a role in determining which students are fit for ministry. The issues require frank and continued discussion in order to provide our congregations with the best possible candidates.

Family Responsibilities

When second career/seminary certification students decide to begin their training for the pastoral ministry, they must consider what the decision will mean to their spouses and children. The keystone of our approach to this issue focuses on a man's God given responsibilities as father and husband. Wife and children are precious gifts of God and must not be jeopardized no matter how laudable the goal. While pursuing the noble task of becoming a pastor, a married student must preserve and protect his family as a great treasure from God. Besides such concern he must also come with the full knowledge and support of his wife. He cannot hope to succeed if his wife has doubts and reservations about the decision to come. She will be called on to sacrifice in many ways during the time her husband prepares himself for the pastoral ministry, to work part-time or full-time in order to help provide the necessary finances, and to encourage her husband to persist in his studies.

The interview between these students and the Non-traditional Student Committee has these family considerations as one of the primary foci. While this is true for married men, it is also true for a student contemplating marriage. Girlfriends and fiancées do influence candidates for the ministry in many ways.

The Apostle Paul indicates that these concerns are important for those who would become leaders in Christ's church when he writes, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)" (1 Tim. 3:4,5). Children then are also important considerations. We feel compelled to help seminary certification students ask how the decision to come to Northwestern will affect their children. How will they handle switching schools? Will the family move again closer to Mequon when the Northwestern training is finished, or will they locate in a place where they can remain in one place for both phases of their training? How will the time and effort necessary for study influence family stability? Will it deprive the children of essential time with parents? If home schooling is involved, additional questions must be faced. One key factor in a family's decision is clearly the age of the children.

As we looked at these family issues, several others occupied our attention. We are not sure of the parenting skills such candidates possess when they apply. Perhaps some effort should be made to help them become better parents. And what about problems that have surfaced from previous relationships? Some of those who desire to become pastors come after a divorce and remarriage. Some have children by a previous marriage, and others, who have straightened out their lives in accordance with God's will, still have children from previous relationships outside of marriage. We routinely speak with the president of the district from which an applicant comes in order to inform him of a divorced candidate as well as the applicant's pastor in order to verify the circumstances. We find these issues very difficult and do not wish to lay down any standard that could be applied legalistically. We prefer to handle each application individually and evangelically. Further consideration of these issues falls under the category, "Spiritual Health and Leadership Potential," later in this paper.

These issues confront us with additional questions. Does Northwestern have sufficient counseling staff to help seminary certification students and their families? We need to ask whether we should provide some kind of parenting courses not just for these students but for our traditional age students especially in this age when the nuclear family seems to be in decline. Another issue is the intellectual growth of the wife. Will the intellectual growth of the husband create tension within the marriage and home if the wife does not also grow intellectually? Do we need to provide opportunities for wives to take classes? Should our schedule of classes remain as it is or should we also provide evening classes for students and wives? The financial problems faced by seminary certification students may suggest such an arrangement, allowing them to work during the day. A clearer definition of part-time students can be a part of this consideration. Finally, we need to be sensitive to the older students and their families and find ways to encourage them.

Perhaps an even more important and serious problem is the spiritual growth of husband and wife while at Northwestern. Men will grow through their religion and language study, conversations with students and faculty, chapel devotions, and their own personal study of the Scriptures. Their wives are cut off from some of those same opportunities. What seems to be happening is that the men mature spiritually, but the wives may not be maturing at the same rate. At the present time the married students themselves have recognized this and have asked for a Saturday morning Bible class which includes an opportunity for their wives to study God's truth. Although this class has no official status, it represents a response to a problem. We need to be sensitive to the spiritual growth of the wives of our students. What other responses should we make to help students and their wives prepare for the parsonage and the work of ministry? Is it important for us to undertake a larger mission: training wives of pastors too?

Financial Obligations and Our Financial Aid

Financial issues raised by seminary certification students require thought by the student, by Northwestern, and by the synod. First, these students must thoroughly explore their own financial resources.

Another important focus of the Non-traditional Student Committee interview is the financial health of the applicant. Debts for house, cars, previous education, and other personal expenses in no small measure determine whether or not he should leave his current employment, drop out of the job market, and become a student with its added expenses. Other financial obligations for child support and alimony raise additional concerns besides the obvious financial ones. We discussed the issue of personal finances and credit ratings. While we do not wish to penetrate into the candidates day to day stewardship of money, a poor credit rating demonstrates a lack of responsibility for financial obligations unless some unusual circumstances correct such an assumption. While the Non-traditional Student Committee does explore a potential student's indebtedness and finances, we are of the opinion that a student should supply the admissions committee with a report on his credit and employment history. Such a history will suggest if the applicant has a good reputation with those outside the household of faith (1 Tim 3:7). It may also reveal other problems that may not be evident to us in other ways. Since we are committing synodical money to the training of these students and the future leadership of God's people is at stake, we wish to be as shrewd as snakes but as innocent as doves (Mt 10:16).

A student coming to Northwestern with wife and children must provide his own housing and feed his family. We do not have facilities for families on-campus. Watertown does have government subsidized housing, and most students consider it as one option. We simply do not have the financial resources to provide housing for seminary certification students and their families either in on-campus facilities or in the form of subsidy for housing elsewhere. Nor do we provide meals for students or their families, although they may purchase meals in the cafeteria. In real terms this means that in most cases both a husband and wife must work for the family and marriage to survive. Two income households are common in our society, but when one of them becomes a full-time student, it can create additional stress on the family and marriage. In many cases families will be dependent upon the income of the wife during this time of preparation for the pastoral ministry.

Northwestern College must also respond to these financial issues. The presence of seminary certification students on our campus places pressure on the financial aid we currently administer. Seminary certification students generally can demonstrate greater financial need than our traditional age students and therefore qualify for larger amounts of aid. But that means the aid available to traditional age students shrinks by the amount awarded to older independent students and places more responsibility on the family of a traditional student to pay for their son's education. Our aid is almost completely need based aid. With the 1992 Amendments to the National Education Act of 1965, all students will generally be able to demonstrate greater need, thus putting additional pressure on our financial resources.

So we have some significant questions to consider. Together with the Conference of Presidents we need to make an appeal to the synod—perhaps through the giving counselors—for scholarship funds for seminary certification students and for our traditional students. The need for financial aid will not decrease in the future and unless we can find additional money for student assistance, we can expect students to go elsewhere. As non-traditional students become more and more a part of the pastoral training approach and emphasis, they will be in competition with traditional students for the same financial aid. We sense that the losers in this scenario will be the traditional students who may be deprived of the aid. Some safeguards should be established which prevent traditional students from being at a disadvantage when applying for financial aid.

Again the definition of part-time and full-time student seems to have a bearing on financial issues. Part-time students would lengthen their preparation time, but they may better be able to handle the financial burdens of college and seminary education. Notice that this issue might well be addressed by the seminary too. Thinking of our own class schedules and course offerings in terms of part-time students might suggest evening classes or longer and fewer class periods to allow for more work during the day. But we have limited experience with longer and fewer class periods and no experience at all with evening classes. Both create questions about faculty overloads and staffing. For example, evening classes would lengthen the day for professors, and if additional classes are added to a professor's schedule, it may frustrate thorough preparation. Many colleges and universities offering such courses do so with additional part-time faculty.

Finally, a reasonable question arose in connection with our discussion of financial aid. Does our seminary certification program eliminate some students because of its cost? Does it prevent qualified dedicated

candidates with limited financial resources from pursuing the goal of the ministry of the word as a pastor? We have no answer to this question but only raise it for discussion in the hope that we can come to some answer together.

The Concept of Public Ministry and Talent for Ministry

At first glance this category may seem to be included in "Personal and Psychological Aptitude" or the following category, "Spiritual Health and Leadership Potential." Yet the category persisted because it was the only place where we could discuss the challenge to orthodox Lutheran theology often represented by seminary certification students. In so many cases these older students come with the concept of an inner call to the ministry. Some have asserted that they have heard a voice from God directing them to become Lutheran pastors. However the motivation to choose the vocation of a Lutheran pastor may have blossomed, what we often find is that second career students have some kind of emotional call into ministry at the root of their thinking. They are absolutely certain that they will succeed whether or not they have the gifts. After all, they reason, God has led them to become pastors, how could he not also give them success. When they confront the difficult task of academic work and the tedium of language study, something must give. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the gospel in class, chapel, and conversations with faculty, many of them come to see that the ministry is something entirely different from what they imagined at the beginning.

Such threats to Biblical truth come from fundamentalist distortions, but other threats come from the many distortions of God's truth in the religious world today. Perhaps it is well for us to review Northwestern's role in the training of leaders for Christ's church. The pastor training college of our Synod has been charged with preparing students to enter the Seminary with the skills and background necessary to do the intensive work in the Scriptures required there. For us that means providing sufficient skill with the languages of Greek and Hebrew to work in the Scriptures and sufficient skill in either Latin or German to work in the theological literature of the western church. Along the way we strive to provide a broad exposure to the literature, history, and the sciences of the world in which we live—all from the perspective of God's truth and Christian faith. When second career students come they will have little study of Biblical and theological languages and, in varying degrees, an exposure to the academic world without the perspective of God's truth. Our goal with these students as well as with our traditional students is to help them understand the depths of God's grace, the importance of Scripture as the source of truth for God's people, and the value of service to God's people. We remind them often of God's standard for success—faithfulness to him and his word—as opposed to the world's standards. We strive to add these qualities to their academic records and language skills by proclaiming God's truth and modeling Christian behavior, faithfulness, and ministry in the classroom and outside it.

As teachers of potential pastors, we strive to focus the attention of our students on the essence of ministry—service to fellow believers and service to Christ. Pastors are to lead God's people, prepare them for works of service, and build up the body of Christ. All of that flows from a clear understanding of the Scriptures, the only means God has given us for the task of ministry. We equip our students with the essential language skills to work in the original languages of the Scriptures. Our students going on to the Seminary refine those skills in the more intensive study of the Scripture there and continue to use those skills after being called by God's people. We hope students deepen their love of God's word and study of it while at Northwestern because they will serve God's people with it.

Our emphasis on learning the languages so that pastors can study the Scriptures in the original might be criticized as a formula for inactivity and quiet study as opposed to active witness and aggressive leadership. Yet without guidance of the word no activity will be God pleasing. So we strive to steer our students between the temptation of isolation and detachment which comes from too much study and the temptation of frenetic animation and programs which come from too little study of the word. Some of our incoming students believe that the ministry is preaching, some teaching, some believe the pastor to be a corporate head like a CEO, and some believe that the pastoral ministry is the only way to serve the Lord fully. All these miss the mark. We

desire to turn the attention of our students to the Lord's word, to encourage them to discard their misconceptions of ministry, and to grow in their faith and appreciation for God's grace and truth.

Christians have other opportunities to serve the Lord fully and faithfully without becoming pastors in Christ's church. The healthy ideal that we are all gifts of God to his church and that some are pastors places the need for pastors and their important function in the church in the proper perspective. For us at Northwestern, a clear understanding of ministry and especially the pastoral ministry will help us counsel those students the Lord places into our care. Some, even though they have strong emotional experiences that led them to come, do not have the gifts to be pastors in Christ's church. Christian love directs us to counsel such people out of the system. One of our functions is to find those who do not have the gifts for ministry before they can do damage to congregations which might call them. We accept this task humbly depending on the Lord's guidance; we agonize over every case in prayer and the fear of God. Our standards are not only academic success but also faithfulness to responsibilities, the ability to communicate with people, and personal integrity.

Seminary certification students coming to Northwestern should understand that we desire to prepare them for the pastoral ministry. For them that involves more than just achieving academic grades, and for us it means more than just monitoring their academic performance. We, as faculty and Christian elder brothers, model Christian behavior and help shape Christian character appropriate for the pastoral ministry, which is marked by temperance, self-control, respectability, gentleness, hospitality, congeniality, humility, and whatever else would help the potential pastor acquire a good reputation within church and outside it (1 Tim 3). The students should understand that these characteristics are the goals toward which they should strive. Older students as well as traditional aged students should expect an on going evaluation of grades and character. We are charged with the responsibility of recommending students to the seminary for further training. When students leave Northwestern with our recommendation, they are at an intermediate point along the way toward becoming pastors. After four more years of training, the seminary in turn recommends them to the congregations of the synod.

Spiritual Health and Leadership Potential

A place to begin this section seems to be with the words of Paul that a leader in the church "must not be a recent convert" (1 Tim. 3:6). Considering the amount of training a man receives before he graduates from the seminary and assumes his pastorate, some would suggest that no one who becomes a pastor in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod could possibly be a recent convert. True enough, but in considering the application of this passage one other factor is important to us—the recommendation a pastor gives for a student entering Northwestern. We depend on the pastor's recommendation of a student, but some problems develop with recent converts who also want to become pastors. When a man and his wife finish the course of instructions for membership, the pastor has a fairly good picture of the man and his talents, but the convert has not proven himself yet. It can happen that after the first flush of excitement over his new faith, other characteristics show themselves. We believe it is in the best interests of the church to require that a student enrolling at Northwestern be a member of a WELS congregation for at least one year. This will give the pastor a better opportunity to assess the man's characteristics especially if he has recently become a Lutheran, and it will give the candidate a little more time to assimilate Lutheran doctrine and practice. A pastor might watch to see if he assumes a role of leadership in the local congregation and participates in the life of the congregation. While the focus of this paragraph is on the "recent convert," we think all those coming to our congregations from different fellowships and confessions be members of a WELS church for at least one year before enrolling at Northwestern.

Because the applicant's wife is so important to his success at Northwestern, the seminary, and eventual ministry, her spiritual health is also important. Pastors who make recommendations should also consider the faith of the applicant's wife. Is she a "recent convert" too? Allowing her time to assimilate Lutheran doctrine and practice may be just as important as for her husband. And what if she desires to remain a member of another faith? A pastor facing such a prospect must then address a number of important issues regarding future

service in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We must also address those questions candidly for the sake of the people who belong to our congregations and who may eventually be served by the applicant.

Much of our time was spent directly and indirectly discussing Paul's words, "And 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 Tim 2:2). In addition Paul wrote, "He must also have a good reputation with outsiders" (1 Tim 3:7) and "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless" (Titus 1:7). Clearly these verses imply that not everyone should be a pastor in Christ's church. One approach to this issue forced us to think of those things which would disqualify a man from the pastoral ministry. Homosexuality, abuse of family, alcoholism and other addiction, criminal behavior, inability to teach or communicate, an early life of sin and debauchery, responsibility for child support and alimony, and marital unfaithfulness entered our discussion.

When we wrestled with the question of what disqualifies someone, we recognized that some behaviors did indeed disqualify a man for ministry. But at the same time repentance can change people. Although that is true, we still felt that some sins even after repentance disqualify a person for ministry because those sins would bring disgrace to the office of pastor and the gospel of Christ. Yet there should be some opportunity for a man to reestablish his reputation and "live down his mistake" or overcome a previously bad reputation through a period of exemplary Christian behavior. We hesitate to set down what that means for fear of it becoming a legalistic rule. Often in this connection David and Paul are cited to prove that murderers, adulterers and persecutors may become leaders in Christ's church, but they are not good examples in this connection because both were directly called by God who can see the heart. We cannot presume such vision and are limited to assessing confession and action. In addition one ought remember the trouble in David's house because of his sin.

Certainly God's moral law becomes an important standard for the behavior of Christian men desiring to become pastors. A pastor is judged by a higher standard than other Christians because he is to "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). A candidate for the pastoral ministry should seek to set his life at that higher standard, although there will be learning and failure along the way. Youthful mistakes and failures can be overcome, but they also have the potential of disqualifying a student for ministry. At some point before he is admitted to the training for the pastoral ministry, one desiring the role of pastor should have established a reputation which can bear scrutiny.

Passages like 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 add other qualifications to those already discussed. Those qualifications expressed in Timothy and Titus go beyond the moral law and suggest that character is also important. We might create a list of contemporary categories based on those and other Scripture references, attempting to screen out those who are unqualified and allow those who are qualified to begin training for the pastoral ministry. But we sense danger that such a list could also develop into a legalistic approach no matter how much we would strive against it. We hope it is sufficient to say that the candidate must be blameless and free of sins which would bring disgrace to the office of the ministry and to the gospel of Christ.

The problems confronted in this category of our discussion suggest that Northwestern and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary continue to train pastoral candidates not only academically but also spiritually and morally. Sins committed by students that bring disgrace upon the gospel and the ministry must be evangelically confronted and not dismissed or ignored. Some mistakes and failures will lead to dismissal; others will not. Each case should be evaluated on its own merits using the Scriptural principles as guidelines. Perhaps greater leniency can be accorded traditional age students because they are still in the process of learning and forming the patterns of their adult life. Because older students have already passed through that maturing process, it seems to us that there is less chance for real reformation as well as less time to reestablish a damaged reputation.

Physical, Medical, and Health Considerations

We now require a physical examination after a student has been accepted. We desire to retain that requirement for seminary certification students as well. This category has received less attention than the others because we found no controversy. While we raised questions about a person's height and weight, finally the

physique of a person has little to do with his ability. On the other hand, physical appearance does influence the way an audience receives the message and the messenger. But the seminary student body's practice of wearing coats and ties has gone a long way to teaching this lesson. The fact remains that being excessively overweight, short or tall will have an effect on the audience of a pastor, but it should not disqualify him from serving.

We also discussed physical handicaps but choose not to record any requirements here. The principle we suggest is simple and in compliance with federal regulations: if the handicap prevents an individual from performing the duties of a pastor, he must be directed to serve the Lord in another way. Because each individual will be different, an assessment of his ability to handle the activity required by a pastor serving a parish should be done individually and evangelically. Perhaps more important is an individual's ability to handle stress, but aside from the student's response to classroom deadlines and the stress of daily assignments, we know of no way to assess an individual's capacity for stress. Here too we believe that such things will come out in the course of a pastoral candidate's training and can be addressed with the candidate individually and evangelically.

This implies an on-going evaluation for ministry, which we referred to above. Such evaluation should be conducted in love and with sensitivity; it should never be legalistic but always evangelical. At the same time perhaps the seminary certification student as well as the traditional age student should be aware of the process. As brothers in Christ we should treat each other with respect, conduct the evaluation openly with the student through a counseling system such as we have now, and provide students with some avenue of appeal.

Conclusion

Serving the Lord as a pastor is a privilege. Paul tells us that it is the Lord who has given these men as gifts to his church, "It was he who gave some...to be pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11). Those who now serve as pastors should thank the Lord of the church for his grace in calling them to serve the people he has purchased with his blood and daily strive to do their best with the Lord's help. Those who aspire to become pastors should recognize the wonderful opportunity and great responsibility of serving the Lord's church as ministers of the word. Not everyone can be a pastor and not every Christian should be a pastor. Christ reminds us of that through the qualifications he has revealed for us in the Scriptures.

Our desire is to find ways to discover those whom the Lord will give us to be future pastors and encourage such gifted adult learners to prepare themselves for service in the church as pastors. In order to do this we must wrestle with the tensions at work in this area. We want to train as many pastors as possible, but at the same time we want to do whatever we can to protect congregations of God's people from potential problems with their called pastor. The sad cases of conflict between pastor and congregation or of a pastor's failure in office remind us that these issues require our prayerful and thoughtful consideration. We pray for the Lord's continued guidance and strength remembering that he gives the gift of pastors to his church. He is the head of the church; we are his humble servants dependent upon his power and guidance.

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11/19/92 Faculty Action: The Northwestern College faculty endorsed this document in principle with the understanding that it would be revised and that it did not imply any policy changes at this time.

12/02/92 Revisions-JB