

**How God Used Pastor Donald Patterson to Change
the Personality of Holy Word Lutheran Church**

Senior Church History

CH 3031

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Pastor Donald Patterson has had a profound impact on the personal and congregational life of the members of Holy Word Lutheran Church (HWLC) in Austin, Texas. This project is a look at how Pastor Patterson transformed HWLC from a congregation in turmoil to a congregation of loving Christian friends looking to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the World. To complete this project interviews were completed with the following people:

- Craig Knutson (native of South Dakota; raised in various Reformed churches; Elder at the time Pastor Patterson arrived),
- Nelson Poldrack (native of Texas; raised in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod; Elder at the time Pastor Patterson arrived), and
- Pastor Patterson (raised in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS); native of Texas).

The author of this paper is a native Texan, was confirmed in the American Lutheran Church (ALC), married in the LCMS, and was the third member of Elder's Board at the time Pastor Patterson arrived at HWLC. In addition to these interviews, comments will be taken from Rob Guenther's paper "History of Holy Word Lutheran Church" and Elaine Poldrack's paper "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage – A Brief History."

This paper includes an analysis of the issues at HWLC when Pastor Patterson's arrived and a brief look at how Pastor Patterson changed the congregation's outlook on itself and its mission. The interview goes into much more depth. In addition, in the interview Pastor Patterson's shares his insights into how to serve God's people:

1. Don't finalize your opinions about anyone for a year (1 John – some sins are easy to spot, some are not).
2. The Gospel is our power. Be excited about it and model your love for it.
3. If people resist something give them time.
4. People are desperate for love. You are the only Jesus they see.
5. Forgiveness! People will hurt you and you will hurt them so forgive them, admit you are wrong when you are wrong.
6. Talk to your brothers in the ministry.
7. Watch the habits you develop in the first year of ministry because they can plague you the rest of your ministry.
8. Good stewardship of the body is important.

Pastor Patterson's insights will help any lay leader and pastor in their ministry.

In August of 1960, the WELS General Board for Home Mission authorized worshipers in Austin, Texas to officially organize as mission congregation. This group of Christians selected the name Holy Word Lutheran Church for the congregation because it represented the "doctrinal

and confessional position of this congregation.”¹ In March 1, 1970, Pastor James J. Radloff was called to serve HWLC as its first pastor. Pastor Radloff came to Austin from Litchfield, Minnesota. The growth of the congregation was slow at the beginning because of the doctrinal battles with the LCMS. Pastor Radloff spent most of his time nurturing his flock with God’s Word.

The growth was slow, there were results. Pastor adds, “Slowly but steadily we kept at it and the Lord blessed.” ... One of the greatest challenges for Pastor Radloff was the Midwestern/Texan culture clash. ... “Texans don’t always think and do things the ‘way we did it up north.” When we would get WELS transfers from up north, they would sometimes think they had the right, since they were WELS Lutheran longer, to impose Midwest ideas and Midwest church culture on our Texans. It is not easy task to convince stubborn German Lutherans from the Midwest that “their way isn’t the only way.” ... Holy Word at that time was outspokenly Midwestern, right in the big middle of Texas.²

This “culture clash” caused some problems in the congregation, but Pastor Radloff was able to cool them with reminders that they were all really alike; they were sinners who needed Jesus.

Pastor Radloff’s and HWLC were able to do some mission work during his tenure as pastor. They worked in the communities of Killeen, Temple, and South Austin. These efforts resulted in congregations being established in Temple (Trinity Lutheran Church [TLC], 1974) and South Austin (Risen Savior Lutheran Church [RSLC], 1983). Pastor Radloff’s work in Killeen had mixed results, “Mission efforts in Killeen area have continued over almost the entire history of Holy Word. At two points in time, a mission church with a resident pastor has been established but later disbanded due to lack of membership.”³ Pastor Patterson continued the work begun in Killeen. Today Abiding Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church serves WELS members in the Killeen area.

Pastor Silas Krueger was the second pastor to serve at HWLC. Pastor Krueger began the campus ministry program at the University of Texas at Austin. It has had mixed success over the years. The responsibility for this ministry has switch hands between HWLC and RSLC over the years. HWLC is currently utilizing its vicar for this work. Pastor Krueger’s other mission efforts led him to start an Easter Sunday outdoor serve off campus at Pioneer Farms.

Pastor Krueger, “The congregation at Holy Word is distinctively Texan, with all this implies, both positive and negative. I love both the land and the history of Texas, but I feel ... that sometimes the Texas psyche limits the horizon and narrow the perspective of the people in that great state. One of the challenges in ministering there was to get the people to accept new ways of doing

¹ Guenther, Rob. *History of Holy Word Lutheran Church*. Milwaukee: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2003. (p. 3)

² *ibid.*

³ Poldrack, Elaine. *God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage – A Brief History*. Austin, TX: Holy Word Lutheran Church, 1994. (p. 6)

things—things they had never done before. [An] illustration may show what I mean: When I first proposed the sunrise service at the Pioneer Historical Farm, there was absolute silence in the boards and at the council. And the number of volunteers who helped the first year was minimal. (I will always have a soft spot in my heart of people like Lester Wessel who handed out thousands of Flyers, and Nelson Poldrack, who ‘talked it up’ even though he wasn’t personally convinced that this was a good idea. Nelson went along with it because he has such respect for the ministry and is going to support his pastor in whatever he suggests.) When we got over 200 people the first year and about 500 the second year, then the service created its own inertia.⁴

This service at Pioneer Farms is still an active outreach program for HWLC. Each year people experience the membership of HWLC for the first time at this service. Typically HWLC will gain several new members through this experience.

Pastor Bruce Bitter was the third pastor to serve HWLC. He described his three years of service at HWLC as turbulent times, “... the Lord used all of these circumstance including the sin and wickedness, to serve his good and gracious purpose. That truth will of course rebound to the glory of God.”⁵ District President, Pastor Vilas Glaeske, “Not everything was ‘peaches and cream’ for Holy Word. The congregation had its up and downs. But in each trial and challenge the Lord strengthened the flock and readied it for the next phase of its growth.”⁶ Pastor Bitter accepted a call to Manitowoc, WI in May 1992.

What was the spiritual condition of HWLC when Pastor Bitter left the congregation? The paper will address this question through the eyes of the three Elders at HWLC and Pastor Patterson.

Nelson Poldrack described Pastor Bitter’s tenure as an “ugly time.” Different people and factions were trying to take control of the congregation. Nelson never did give an exact reason why he believed this was occurring during the interview, but his comments to the author in the past and theme of his comments in the interview suggest that lack of loving leadership by Pastor Bitter drove some members to try this leadership void. Nelson gave an example of Pastor Bitter’s leadership style, “He didn’t know how to deal with people. Instead of talking to them he wrote a note and put it on the dashboard of a couple of member’s cars. These notes were a criticism of them. There were a lot of blow ups between Pastor and the members.” The reason for all of this in Nelson’s mind was Pastor Bitter didn’t have the heart for the ministry,

He came from a family of pastors so it was understood he was to be a pastor. He was put into that position but maybe he didn’t want to; he didn’t have a choice. He wasn’t a people person.

⁴ Guenther, Rob. (p. 8)

⁵ *ibid.* (p. 9)

⁶ *ibid.*

Someone at the Seminary should have sensed he was cutout to be a pastor. Didn't they recognize he wasn't cutout for the ministry?

Nelson didn't feel the congregation was been fed spiritually, "Pastor used Muppets puppets to preach but some people didn't like it. They didn't walk away with something practical (in the sermon) from him; not a single thing." It wasn't a matter of Pastor teaching false doctrine, "He spoke the truth each week." There were also issues in the Bitter's home life that didn't sit well with the members.

There are things a Pastor's wife shouldn't do that were done by Jill. We paid what Synod suggested. The Bitter's felt they needed more money so they got on the WIC program without consulting the church. They said they didn't want children to starve. Pastor got a job delivering pizzas to *supplement his income*. This said to the congregation "you aren't taking care of me." I can't believe we weren't fair to the Bitters.

The overall issues surrounding Pastor Bitter's ministry led Nelson and another influential member of the congregation to meet with the District President. Nelson believes this initiated Pastor Bitter receiving a call.

Craig Knutson described Pastor Bitter's tenure as "difficult days." The situation almost led Craig to leave the WELS,

I called home to my pastor from Sioux Falls and to the principal from Sioux Falls. I cried with them on the phone. I stood in Mr. Hochmuth's yard once talking to him and crying. I had decided to leave Holy Word and become WELS again when we left Texas. Janet (his wife) talked me out of it.

Like Nelson, Craig felt Pastor Bitter was not suited for the ministry,

Pastor Bitter was not a friendly man. He wasn't unfriendly, but he was not focused on people. He spent a lot of time working on the computer in the church office. Toward the end of his time at Holy Word, but a while before he left, I said to Janet, he should have been a tennis player or an engineer instead of a pastor. He would often walk through a room without acknowledging people were there.

From Craig's perspective the congregation shared some of the blame for the "difficult days" at HWLC.

I was called out to a van in the parking lot and was talked to by a couple of guys, and was told what I knew at the time was a lie. I was struck at being lied to. They didn't know I knew the whole story. That wasn't a turning point for me. While the "bad" side I think always thought I could be reasoned with, I was pretty sure, the whole time, there were two sides. The one side, as near as I could tell, just wanted a church, and wanted to learn about what God says in his Word. The other side wanted to control the property. I never fully understood why they were so focused on control.

Craig differs from Nelson on Pastor Bitter's effectiveness from the pulpit, "He was knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and you could see how much he loved Jesus and loved talking

about Jesus. I enjoyed his sermons.” However, Craig felt like Nelson that Pastor Bitter needed to leave HWLC.

The author of this paper wasn't involved in the “politics” the congregation to the degree of Nelson and Craig. He was a new member and new to the position of Elder. He didn't have the kind of relationships with members that would get him involved in the struggles Nelson and Craig were dealing with at this time. It was clear to the Author that there were problems. The pastor was not the leader and loving shepherd the congregation needed. However, he was proclaiming a true law and gospel message from the pulpit and his Bible studies were sound. Pastor Bitter was the author's first exposure to a WELS pastor. What the author and his family heard on Sunday mornings is what prompted them to join HWLC. The author analysis of the problems at HWLC led him to believe a culture war was taking place in the congregation. He sensed that many members wanted things to remain the same (Midwestern style?) while others were pushing to open the doors through outreach (Southern style?). This war automatically put people on a side. It was difficult to determine how many sides there were at this time, but it seemed to be more than two. In the author's opinion the congregation was that it lacked leadership and direction so it was fractured. There didn't seem to be any one or group that could lead the congregation out of this situation.

All three Elders agree that HWLC was not looking to change its approach to worship or ministry. Craig, “All in all the hard times at HWLC made a place where outreach wasn't possible. I remember being told by members they wouldn't invite friends to church because they were too afraid of what their friends would see.” Craig was surprised at how open some members were about not wanting change, “A member was standing beside me and he and I were talking. He looked at me and said, ‘You know Craig, if new people come to our church that don't know our hymnal then we don't want them.’” Craig and his family experienced this coldness toward new people. It occurred when they were staying in the parsonage while waiting for their new home to be finished.

When Pastor Bitter accepted the call, and came to town and we were asked to leave Pastor Krueger's house (the parsonage). It was kind of funny. Janet was surprised and I think a little confused. They piled our furniture and stuff up in one side of the garage of the house, and we had to find a place to live until our house was done. I stayed with a coworker, and Janet and the boys went home to the folks for a number of weeks. Then they came back and stayed with me at the coworker until we had a place to move into.

Nelson also thought the congregation was resistant to change.

Charter members, very loyal to Pastor Radloff, when new pastors tried to make changes they would work to prevent the changes. They wanted things to remain the same, human nature, “we’ve always done it this way.” This was especially true for the older people. Krueger tried to get members more involved, take a hold of responsibility for things. It wasn’t just the Pastor’s and teacher’s responsibility. By doing this he rubbed people the wrong way. In Bible classes, he was very intellectual, if he made side remark, he wasn’t trying to embarrass them, but people took it the wrong way.

The author also experienced the coldness of the congregation. He and his family were basically ignored by many of the members of the congregation when they first joined the church. However, the native Texans in the congregation adopted them immediately and made them feel very welcomed. Members naturally migrated to the group where they felt comfortable and welcomed. Ministry at HWLC wasn’t moving forward it was moving backward.

Pastor Bitter received a call to serve at Manitowoc, WI. He called a meeting of the Elders to get their input concerning his call. Each of the Elders, some with tears, advised Pastor Bitter that he had to take the call. The congregation was fractured and it needed a change in leadership. The author felt Pastor Bitter was surprised by the input of all three Elders. The discussion was tense and somewhat confrontational. The author remembers feeling hurt by Pastor Bitter’s demeanor and “dirty” for the advice he had shared with him. It was a miserable situation.

All three Elders agree that the long vacancy after Pastor Bitter’s departure proved to be beneficial for the congregation. Nelson recalls,

We called and called, *but no one accepted our calls*. Ok we’ll take someone from the Seminary. We need to get things straighten out. We’ve got to shape up. We’re tired of turmoil. We need to get back on the path of where we ought to be – where was it? We need to be studying the Word, no conflicts, Bible studies, devotions at home, good attendance on Sunday, stop the bickering and fussing and fighting, and taking sides.

Craig recalls,

The church was still prideful. I was saddened at the time by how closely the voters scrutinized the call list. They went for the man with the biggest credentials. They wanted the best. Calling and being turned down was good for Holy Word. Then, we finally gave up, and went to the Seminary for a pastor from the graduating class. There was much pessimism, as I recall. But, we needed a pastor, and this was our only hope, it would seem.

Finally, the congregation simply had to pull together to survive. The members could no longer remain splintered. They came together with a common hope. They wanted a pastor, no matter who he was and what his gifts were, to love and lead them. Their appreciation for having a shepherd had grown significantly.

Pastor Patterson's assessment of HWLC state at the time of his arrival is somewhat different than the three Elders. He felt the condition of the congregation wasn't as bad as many of the members might have thought,

The average attendance was 110 in church, 25 in Sunday school, and 30 in Bible study. This was a good ratio for the Sunday mornings. There was about half of the congregation that was staying around for an extra hour of education. Using these attendance figures as one of the measuring rods of spiritual health the congregation was doing well. A lot of WELS congregations don't have this kind of ratio.

Pastor Patterson felt the members had been fighting and struggling for so long that they couldn't see all the good that was in the congregation,

The turmoil in the congregation made most of the leaders and some of the members not have a good feeling about what was going on. We were a very troubled group and we need a lot of help. I told my wife they see themselves as the "bad news bears." A kind of rag tag team that's been thrown together. I got to see there was a lot of potential that the leaders didn't see. There was love for God's Word among the leaders. A lot of people just wanted to be led. There had been a lot that the leaders had to work through because of the relationship with the previous pastor had been strained and his relationship with others had caused them to leave the congregation. There was a ten month vacancy between his leaving and my coming as a student graduate. The people were tired of fighting so really they were ripe for someone to come in let's make the peace we have in Christ one of our primary goals. It's not like they had issues that they still needed to work through.

Pastor shared that he had been praying since his Middler year at the Seminary to serve a congregation that loved God's Word and wanted to share it with the world. In spite of its troubles HWLC seemed to Pastor Patterson to be that church. He was excited about serving.

Pastor Patterson's plan for addressing the problems at HWLC centered around four mantras and a focus on developing lay leaders. The mantras were by definition truths that he repeated. As a lay leader during this time the author would have been able to repeat these mantras, but he recalls seeing them in the way Pastor Patterson carried out his ministry. The author personally experienced being trained by Pastor Patterson as a lay leader. This training began the month Pastor Patterson arrived in Austin.

Pastor Patterson's first mantra was, "Make sure that everyone knows they were wonderful in Christ." He repeatedly told the members "you" are great because of Jesus and the fruits of faith that you naturally produce. He wanted to focus every believer on who they are in Christ; a new person. When a believer starts to view themselves in regard to their sins, not looking at gospel, they start to believe that is all we are, sinners. This leads them to start acting like a sinner more and more. By repeating this mantra over and over there was a marked change in the way the members viewed themselves. By the end of the third year we were a totally different group. It took about three years for people to quit quoting what happened in the past.

Pastor Patterson's second mantra was, "The greatest thing that you can do at our church is to listen." People get themselves overcommitted everywhere. Church is one of those places. The American culture is all about doing. So what happens? People start to carry a lot of guilty for not doing things well; not doing things well at church. This guilt pushes them to be mad at others for not doing as much as they are at church. This anger in turn piles on more guilt so that they simply want to pull the plug on everything. They are so disturbed they can't even relax at church. Pastor Patterson relieves their conscience by telling them, "You can have permission to kick back. The greatest thing that you can do at our church is to listen." Pastor Patterson says this situation usually gives him a chance to probe a little deeper. He typically finds their personal devotion life is almost nonexistent. Their experience of forgiveness gives them the zeal to get back into studying God's Word more regularly in their daily lives.

Pastor Patterson's third mantra was, "The Word of God is where it is at, look at where it is at, I'm really excited about it." A preacher can always be excited about Bible study and preaching because it's God's Word. Even when a preacher is tired and even unenthused about his message he can get excited because he has God's Word. It's what changes lives for eternity.

Pastor Patterson's fourth mantra was, "The greatest thing we having going on here is the gospel not forms and building. If you make it your aim to preach and teach well then the congregation get to the same place where forms and buildings aren't the issue." This was important for HWLC when Pastor Patterson arrived and when they built the new sanctuary. People can get too caught up in facilities and forms of worship and lose track of the Gospel; the message that brings peace.

Pastor Patterson works hard at developing lay leaders. "It's the pastor's job to intentionalize developing people. If he is not developing them for the pastoral ministry then he's developing them to be a better disciple and leader in the family and the community" Pastor Patterson heard a proverb once that went something like, "Slow and steady the egg will walk on its own two feet." The idea is that at some point the legs of the chicken will break out of the egg. It seems like it takes a long time, but it won't be long if you will leave it alone. It will walk off on its own. "Slow and steady, you just keep modeling, teaching, proclaiming, encouraging, and zeroing in on conversations." Pastor Patterson trained lay leaders by spending time with them doing ministry. It gave these lay leaders a chance to observe him in action. During these times Pastor Patterson had a chance to talk with these lay leaders about ministry. HWLC is full of men

and women lay leaders. His efforts have also born fruit of the Synod. In 2006 John Stelljes was the first member from HWLC to graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The author is currently a senior at WLS. Zac Gabert is enrolled in the pastor track program at Martin Luther College (MLC). Emily Gabert graduated from MLC with a teaching degree.

Pastor Patterson is a man whom God has blessed with many spiritual gifts. He has chosen to use these gifts in the full time public ministry. HWLC is blessed to have him as their shepherd. His approach to ministry has worked well at HWLC. The congregation has gone from a group of troubled Christians who looked only at their own personal needs to one which not only looks after its own members but shares the message of Christ with its community. During Pastor Patterson's tenure HWLC has started congregations in Killeen, Georgetown, and Round Rock along with a preaching station in Marble Falls. The congregation's goal is to continue this ministry as long as the Lord will bless their efforts.

Phone/Email Interview: Craig Knutson, 8/2/06

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1. What was the church like when you became a member? (What was the members opinion of themselves; were the people friendly to visitors; was the church outreach minded; did the church nurture of its members; was there a focus on worship; was their a focus on Bible study; what was the mission of the school; what was the financial situation, etc.)

Holy Word as small. The buildings didn't change the whole time we were there, I mean their membership was basically small.

I guess I don't know if I can say what the church thought of itself, or what the members thought of themselves. I'll think about it as I answer the questions here.

The people were quite friendly, as I recall. They fawned over Matt and Jeremy. Matt was 6 weeks old when we moved down there, and it is my recollection that there weren't many, if any, babies in the church at the time. They were happy to have Matt and Jeremy there. There were kids, but I think probably not many babies, again, as I recall. We weren't really visitors though, it was obvious to everyone that we had moved in, were new, but we came there to become new members, and we were WELS from the north, which is where most of the congregation was from, i.e. the north, I think mostly Minnesota and Wisconsin.

I would say the church was definitely not outreach minded. I have used this story a number of times over the years, but once when I was standing between the church and the school, where the coffee pot was setup outside, a member was standing beside me and he and I were talking. I don't remember the context, but he looked at me and said, (and I won't quote this because I doubt this is an exact quote), "You know Craig, if new people come to our church that don't know our hymnal then we don't want them." I don't think this was in those early days, but, it was an older member that was there, and was active, and was influential even at the time he said it, but probably even more so in the early days. Mostly, in my opinion, it was a church for WELS transplants, I think.

I would say, in regard to nurture of its members, that it was probably pretty typical WELS. The teachings were good, were clear; were scriptural. You could learn much about God and what he has to say to us by being in church and in the Bible studies. I loved Holy Word the whole time I was there.

In those early days, (I suspect again because many were transplants themselves), they would hold a dinner like on Thanksgiving and we were invited to come. It was a traditional Thanksgiving meal, and it was great. The people that came, not lots, but several families, were very friendly and the time we spent there at occasions like that, was great. I have very fond memories.

I don't know if there was a focus on much of anything except to try to keep from fighting.

The pastor that was there, at the time, had been there about 4 years, as I recall, and I think was mostly trying to keep the church from fighting off and on. **I think he had been**

threatened to be excommunicated at some time during that 4 years. I remember that based on what we went through later, at the end of Pastor Bitter's time at Holy Word.

The church was anxious for things to be ok. I would imagine all churches do. We had rented the house of the pastor that had left (for some reason I don't remember his name for sure. His wife's name was Marcia. Pastor Krueger [Radloff?]). While we were there, we had purchased the house we were then in for the rest of the time there in Texas, but it wasn't finished. Pastor Bitter accepted the call, and came to town and we were asked to leave Pastor Krueger's house. It was kind of funny. Janet was surprised and I think a little confused. They piled our furniture and stuff up in one side of the garage of the house, and we had to find a place to live until our house was done. I stayed with a coworker, and Janet and the boys went home to the folks for a number of weeks. Then they came back and stayed with me at the coworker until we had a place to move into. I think this showed just how desperate the church was to have a pastor that could help them be ok. I don't know.

I don't know the financial situation. Nothing was said that I could remember, so I suspect it was ok. Probably not rolling in money, but able to pay their bills. The school was for the children of the members. I don't think there was any outreach effort into the community. Mr. Hochmuth would be a good one to ask. He was the principal for a long time.

I don't remember there being many mid week Bible studies. There was of course the Sunday morning Bible study, and it was well attended, as I recall.

2. Was the church any different when I arrived?

I don't really think so much. (I don't remember actually when you came.)

You came when Pastor Bitter was there, right? Then you saw the big blow up, and the hard times we had after that until Pastor Patterson came.

There were some hard people, and in retrospect, some that I think were more interested in the church property there than what the church taught.

I could talk half at length about the bad days. Some of the memories are fading, but some are still pretty fresh. They were hard. I think those days were festering for years, since before I moved to Texas, in Holy Word.

3. What were the issues on both sides of the incident with Pastor Bitter?

Whew. This is a big topic.

I'll just summarize, and if you want to talk more, we can.

I believe since I was new to the church, and was quite young, I was 29 in those days, both "sides" in the church either trusted me, (I didn't have a history with either side), or was hoping to be able to influence me. I was asked to be an elder after the entire board of elders

stepped down. I never thought the board should have done that, but one of the elders was on the “bad” side, (editorializing there on my part), and the other 2 were too nice of men to have him leave the elders and they stay. Although, at the time, and to this day, I think they should have stayed on the board.

I’m not sure I know for sure what all was going on. I don’t remember the quote enough to tell you specifics but at least once, I was called out to a van in the parking lot and was talked to by a couple of guys, and was told what I knew at the time was a lie. I was struck at being lied to. They didn’t know I knew the whole story. That wasn’t a turning point for me. While the “bad” side I think always thought I could be reasoned with, I was pretty sure, the whole time, there were two sides. The one side, as near as I could tell, just wanted a church, and wanted to learn about what God says in his word. The other side wanted to control the property. I never fully understood why they were so focused on control.

Those were difficult days. I called home to my pastor from Sioux Falls and to the principal from Sioux Falls, and cried with them on the phone, and I stood in Mr. Hochmuth’s yard once talking to him and crying. I had decided to leave Holy Word and become WELS again when we left Texas. Janet talked me out of it.

I think the one side wanted complete control of the church, and the other side wanted a church. I know that sounds like I’m making it too simplistic and it probably sounds like I’m placing the blame fully on the one side. I am. I think the whole problem stemmed from the one side.

4. Why did you feel Pastor Bitter needed to take a call?

Whew. A hard question again.

Pastor Bitter was not a friendly man. He wasn’t unfriendly, but he was not focused on people. He spent a lot of time working on the computer in the church office. Toward the end of his time at Holy Word, but awhile before he left, I said to Janet, he should have been a tennis player or an engineer instead of a pastor. He was knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and you could see how much he loved Jesus and loved talking about Jesus. I enjoyed his sermons. But he would often walk through a room without acknowledging people were there.

He ended up too emotionally tied up in the problem. Even though he rode the storm out, the church was hurting after the fight was finally over, and I think, or I recall, that Pastor Bitter kind of internalized the problems, and seemed to think everyone was out to get him.

I am having some trouble remembering time frames, or the chronology of events.

I remember being told by members they wouldn’t invite friends to church because they were too afraid of what their friends would see.

5. What impact did the long vacancy have on the members? (unify, drive apart, uninterested members)

I think the long vacancy was good for the church.

There may be more I could say, but in a nut shell, the church was still prideful. I was saddened at the time by how closely the voters scrutinized the call list. They went for the man with the biggest credentials. They wanted the best. Calling and being turned down was good for Holy Word.

Then, we finally gave up, and went to the Seminary for a pastor from the graduating class.

There was much pessimism, as I recall. But, we needed a pastor, and this was our only hope, it would seem.

The LORD gave us Pastor Patterson.

I think it was a huge object lesson from the LORD.

6. What kind of pastor was Holy Work looking for?

Holy Word, it seems to me, was looking for the best they could find. They looked at credentials, they looked at age. They needed a strong man, they were convinced.

Once, within the last several years that I was there in Texas, (i.e. sometime before I knew we were going to move north for sure), I was sitting in the back of the church, kind of talking to Pastor Patterson. He was there, in the afternoon, with his sons who were practicing soccer there on the playground and beside the church. The 3 older boys were all there practicing. A lady walked in, one of the moms, and was looking at the picture board in the back there by the doors. Pastor started talking to her, just kind of being friendly. I don't remember the conversation, but I learned a lot from it. I watched as she, (as I recall), said a number of things that a person knowledgeable in the Scriptures would wince at. Yet, he in a friendly manner just kept talking to her and agreeing where he could. I sat and watched and thought to myself how important it is to be patient and to be friendly. I don't think I would have "disagreed" with her necessarily, but I might have not been quite so open to talking as if we agreed. This is hard to express. I walked away from that experience with a new look on friendship evangelism. I think from that time, from that experience, (i.e. watching Pastor Patterson interact with that lady), I am less confrontational, although confrontational is a little bit stronger than I mean to imply. I think I try to listen more, and try to find agreement more than I did before. Not giving into false teachings, or giving the impression that all teachings are equal. But, I think, maybe more aware that in order for friendship evangelism to work you kind of need to be "friendly".

This is another example of the kind of pastor that Pastor Patterson is.

I didn't mention, and won't talk at length here, about my disappointment though at how busy Pastor Patterson got. I think it is important that a pastor be careful to remain friendly to the regular church goers as well as the people in trouble and the new people.

I have a personal example from just a couple of weeks ago. There is a young man in our congregation that started attending last year. He looks to be fairly shy. He seems to be a nice guy, and is a regular attendee of church now. I talked to him often when he first started coming. It was difficult because he didn't have a lot to talk about, so I kind of had to think of things to say to keep the conversation going. But I enjoyed talking to him, and I wanted him to know how important it was to come to church, especially a Bible believing church. A couple of Sundays ago I was in the back of the church looking for any visitors or people I didn't know. It was after second service. We worship in first service, but I came back on that Sunday to see if there was someone I should say hi to. He was there. I saw him in church. He came out, shook hands with the pastor and I said hi to him. Then all of a sudden I saw a couple slip out the door I didn't know. I quick "chased" after them and caught them at the end of the side walk. BUT! After I did I remember this young man, Josh I think his name is, starting to say something else to me, and I just ran off, and then talked to this couple. How yucky is that. I didn't see him the last time I was in church, and I was out at my folks' place this past Sunday. I'm going to talk to him and apologize, even if he didn't notice me doing it. But, this is an area that I think about now a lot. It's a hard area. But, just because a person starts going to church regularly doesn't mean you no longer need to be friendly to them. It might be harder to be friendly, as you get to know them, but they are still need to be greeted and talked to. It's hard, watching for new people and staying friendly to existing people.

7. What kind of pastor did we get?

I think we got a strong man, but what we got was a man strong in God's word, and strong in his trust of God, taking God at his word.

The members of Holy Word were believers, don't get me wrong, but I think, and I thought at the time, we were too focused on worldly skills. Age, ability, experience. Really on experience.

Pastor Patterson came in and started teaching Bible studies.

He reached out to the "bad" side almost from day one. Not exactly, but soon. Not to say, "its ok, come back, we can talk to you", but to say, "Jesus loves you, and we are concerned for your faith".

8. What was Pastor Patterson initial approach to ministry when he got to Holy Word?

I have said for years he was focused on the Bible; I mean after I left Holy Word, when I have talked about this sort of thing in Bible studies or in elders meetings, etc. It seems to me he early in his ministry started teaching midweek Bible studies whether people showed up or not. In the early days, not many did, but he just kept plugging away. At one point we had

like 50 in a Thursday evening Bible study. People knew they could expect there to be a Bible study mid week.

That tapered back off. I think this side of heaven there will probably always be an ebb and flow, but Pastor stayed focused on teaching God's word.

9. How did Pastor Patterson try to change the personality of Holy Word's members? Was he effective? Why or Why not?

I don't think he tried to change the personality of Holy Word.

Instead I think he just taught God's word.

In the years since, I have told people a number of times; I think too many churches try to make people more moral. Their focus is on building moral character.

BUT, I think instead the church's only goal should be to make people lovers of Jesus. Moral character is a byproduct.

Of course, you as a church need to confront sin, and at times each church will have to.

But, I think Pastor just kept hammering away on what God says, on God's promises, on what Jesus did.

I think that is the right approach. Just keep focusing people on Jesus. Keep focusing on God's promises.

That is what caused him to have sermons like the one he had on Jesus' transfiguration. He talked about Moses and Elijah there on the mountain. It was a powerful sermon. But not because he was hitting people between the eyes with what they should be doing, or what they should be thinking, but rather he clearly and powerfully presented God's plan of salvation from the Holy Spirit's account of the transfiguration in Peter.

10. What was the church like when you left? (same questions as in Question 1)

The church was growing, and definitely outreach minded.

Yet, I believe it was because people were thankful for what Jesus had done for them.

It was a joy to be in church. The people were great.

There were problems of course, and I'm sure on many days Pastor wondered how he would be able to keep going on. Pastors are the first, and sometimes the only, ones to see and hear the problems.

He was too busy. That is one thing I think that was not good. He could only focus on getting ready for his sermon for Sunday, and on the different problems that people were having.

11. What do you know about Holy Word today?

Phone Interview: Nelson Poldrack, 6/30/06

Senior Church History

CH 3031

Clint A. Rogas Jr.

Professor James Korthals

1. What was the church like when you became a member? (What was the members opinion of themselves; were the people friendly to visitors; was the church outreach minded; did the church nurture of its members; was there a focus on worship; was their a focus on Bible study; what was the mission of the school; what was the financial situation, etc.)

Attended Calvary in Dallas; were LCMS but left because of the focus on social issues

What was the member's opinion of themselves: 1979, seem so small, after first visit wanted to see if they could find a larger church, visited LCMS but didn't feel right, no one could replace their pastor, Pastor Radloff visited them in their home, talked it up in spite of its size

Were the people friendly to visitors: Don't remember well, didn't feel any animosity but not overwhelming, Mr. Lesticco always greeted everyone, not overwhelmed with welcome, put pastor perused them

Was the church outreach minded: I wasn't a-tuned to it, Nelson was very involved in work, Sunday was the time he spent a church, not very involved, some effort toward South Austin

Did the church nurture of its members: What really stands out to me – Pastor Krueger was a learned man, intrigued by his Bible studies, enjoyed them, Pastor Patterson doesn't have the same intellect but has a love in the heart for souls, they are well attended, as I got older and slowed down I spend more time in the Word and appreciate it more, I was chasing the almighty dollar for too long

Was there a focus on worship: Happy to be there, I never sensed people were doing it out of duty, liked the routine Liturgy, I know it well, the new stuff is hard to navigate, Radloff – less relaxed, tense preaching style, you felt he was tense; Krueger – intellectual; Bitter – family of small children, used Muppets to preach but some people didn't like it, didn't walk away with something practical from him, not a single one, but he spoke the truth each week, his fault – he came from a family of pastors so it was understood he was to be a pastor, he was put into that position but maybe he didn't want to, he didn't have a choice, he didn't seem to have the heart for the ministry;

Patterson – heart, feeling, love for souls, he feels like your friend, made things like forgiveness clear, human nature and satan working on us all the time through thinking about our guilt, he made it clear that we know we are saved, we can fend off satan, never felt as good and safe about my salvation

Was there a focus on Bible study:

What was the mission of the school: outreach was the idea, there kids were past this age, we weren't really involved in school, no big events to draw them to the school, Fiola's put the children into school and later joined the church, Carl came later, Pastor Radloff and his wife ran school, when Carl came, likeable guy, anyone who met him would be comfortable sending kids there

What was the financial situation: there were times when there were really financial woes, cutting back at the school was considered, "Let's not have as many teachers; Carl and Cheryl can handle it" and this let the other members know we were in tough times and they had to respond; Lesticco's were very wealthy, they didn't flaunt it, they stepped it up, maybe even Natan did – he tried undo influence

Pastor Krueger started Sunrise Service – Nelson spoke against it

2. Was the church any different when I arrived?

General discontent, hear things that Pastor Bitter did, it wasn't the kind of thing a Pastor would do; Nelson and another influential member went to the District President about the issues, he seems to have initiate Pastor getting a call

3. What were the issues on both sides of the incident with Pastor Bitter?

He didn't know how to deal with people; instead of talking to them he wrote a note and put it on the dashboard of a couple of member's cars, a criticism of them; there are things a Pastor's wife shouldn't do that were done by Jill, we paid what Synod suggested, the Bitter's felt they needed more, they got on the WIC program without consulting the church, didn't want children to starve; Pastor delivered pizzas – said to congregation you aren't taking care of me; can't believe we weren't fair; there were a lot of blow ups between Pastor and members; Elders went over to Nathan's office, he was stirring things up, Elmer Beese said Nathan was his spiritual leader, Sam Smith, many members joined the Elgin LCMS; in discussion with fellow members they needed to talk to Pastor Glaeske; Holy Word had their minds made up he needed to leave; an ugly time when this was going on;

Thinking of Pastor Krueger, one time he sat on front porch of church looking at the tall grass and cried because the members didn't mow it; Pastor Radloff did the mowing;

Nathan was trying to take charge, the Lestico's were charter members, very loyal to Pastor Radloff, when new pastors tried to make changes they would work to prevent, they wanted things to remain the same, human nature, "we've always done it this way", especially with older people, children adapt better; Krueger tried to get members more involved, take a hold of responsibility for things not just Pastor and teachers, in doing this he rubbed people the wrong way, even in Bible classes people, he was very intellectual, if he made side remark, he wasn't trying to embarrass them, but people took it the wrong way

Bitter – all I remember is that in the pulpit he used Muppet pulpits; it was a hard time; just remember these things

The vacancy – we needed someone who could deal with people, we called and called, Ok we'll take someone from the Seminary, I made some major mistakes, the Lord knows what we need; don't know how much members knew about all of the problems, the folks that were involved did, we need to get things straighten out, we've got to shape up, we're tired of turmoil, get back on the path of where we ought to be – where was it? We need to be studying the Word, no conflicts, Bible studies, devotions at home, good attendance on Sunday, stop the bickering and fussing and fighting, taking sides, We're this group!, Karen Timmerman felt she wasn't accepted, what was in their mind, we should have welcomed everyone, but they didn't

4. Why did you feel Pastor Bitter needed to take a call?

Feel bad now, lecturing a pastor, you need to work with a pastor who can show you how to deal with people, just felt he wasn't a people person, no knack or personality to be friendly or talk with people, all you need to do is sit down and talk not write a letter, nobody like to do this, but when

you see the church is moving backward not forward you have to make a change, God has blessed the changes

5. What impact did the long vacancy have on the members? (unify, drive apart, uninterested members)

Leaders read sermons; I did terrible and after that Art Leerson said you know when we have a vacancy we need a pastor to come in, "If you can't memorize don't bother substituting." Art was honest.

Appreciation for having your own pastor. When you are vacant for that long people drifted away. It really makes you appreciate a pastor; having your own. When you get a good one hang on to him. Attendance when down. People go to other churches. The steady members stayed the course, but the less active drifted away. The congregation grew together during this time. When Patterson got there the congregation was very supportive. Patterson's were down to earth.

If we would have gotten another Pastor Bitter then we would have left. I couldn't go through that again.

Don't know about Seminary classes. Someone at the Seminary should have sensed he was cutout to be a pastor. Did he come from another church? Didn't they recognize he wasn't cutout for the ministry? A lot of damage can be done to a lot of souls if the wrong person is put there. From the stand point of his family, how many Bitters, when the leaders know there are a bunch of them serving, it hard for them to say he can't serve. Even if they sensed this they couldn't make the statement.

6. What kind of pastor was Holy Work looking for?

Don't really know. Brief sketch from District President don't tell us much. What I remember about call meetings is, what stands out, let's get this one who has a bunch of kids for the school. Need kids for the school.

Seminary Prof – I didn't look at it as being arrogant, somehow or another we would have to have the District President put in list, how would he match up at Holy Word – personality is still the key! Wanted a healer. I could adjusted to Seminary Prof. Needed someone who could let their hair down from time to time. Some of the professors in colleges are so aloof they can't relate, but I don't think that what we have at the Seminary. Pastor Johnne is great.

7. What kind of pastor did we get?

Very young; nothing wrong with that, outgoing, he and Mary both, friendly and smiling always, the love for souls and people showed right away. Elaine was working for Robert, congregation president, she talked with Pastor briefly, came home excited about him. Immediately got the healer we needed.

8. What was Pastor Patterson initial approach to ministry when he got to Holy Word?

He was immediately delegating things, get the people in the right positions, get things done; he used the Board of Elders as a nominating committee, he has really instructed the Elders to keep in mind about the person does this person fit the position, consider everything you know about that

person, will they fit in, do the job, be diligent in doing job, has from the beginning place people in the right positions, not helter skelter, in past just put people in jobs and they didn't do anything; people need to like what they are doing promotes harmony; Pastor counted on others for information about who could do what, drawing on their experience. Now, he knows people, he really emphasizes roles, when people are nominated that Pastor has info about someone he shares what he can, very discrete, but makes it clear that it's not a good idea. What gives you confidence in Pastor's decisions? I trust him from day one. When you have a minister that preaches the Word with the kind of heart he does, hear it Sunday after Sunday, you say he tells it so there is no question, you develop a trust that would like him take over your bank account.

How does he handle descent? Good, he doesn't let it get out of control. If he knows he is right and someone disagrees he holds his ground. Puts the issue to rest. Most men trust him like I do. If he thinks he's on the right path other always follow. I have not seen things get out of control like they have with all the other pastor including Pastor Radloff. Between an outspoken big contributor and Pastor. He met with Pastor before now felt things had changed – pastor liar. Thing got ugly – when I was President of the congregation, I didn't know how to handle a shouting match. Pastor Patterson has not lost control.

Some grumbling over new Sanctuary cost. I missed the meeting where there was member who questioned things and wanted a full counting. Saying Robert and his man didn't handle things properly. Pastor put it to rest right away.

9. How did Pastor Patterson try to change the personality of Holy Word's members? Was he effective? Why or Why not?

There were times that in the earlier days that there was less mission outreach feeling at Holy Word. A small group mentality – we want to be ourselves – don't want a bunch of new comes here. I didn't let that bother me. We were good friends with Radloffs. A lot of times I heard different newer people indicate this place is a club that doesn't want outsiders. We might not have been as mission minded as we should have been. Vacancies hurt – no continuity. Once Pastor Krueger changed some what – Easter Sunrise Service at Pioneer Farms. At that time I heard we've got our own club we don't want outsiders. Remember nothing during Bitter's time. Pastor Patterson was interested in outreach since day one. It's taken time for this to come into the congregation. What Pastor Krueger started Pastor Patterson picked up and took it on. Pastor Radloff is friendly man, but he seems ill at ease, nervous, or something, can't put my finger on it. Just his nature to be that way. He may have found his place; Granada funding taken, he has made a go of it. It shows he is mission minded. The membership he had during is time could have held him back. Not as cooperative membership. One other thing that is a problem in our Synod, South vs. North, Texan are proud of our state, if we have a northern pastor he won't have as much success as one born in Texas. Pastor Patterson was raised in Texas and knows them. The Word is same, but the initial contact is important. Texan trying to explain love for Texas is impossible without experience.

Business standpoint how would you describe Pastor – admin is not his thing, he forgets things and has to fly by the seat of pants, love for him makes members overlook this; not a great business man. He's in the right job winning souls. Admin and business he would get a lower grade. BUT that's not what we want we want a lover the way he is.

How is Chad working out. There is a lot of counseling that he takes care of – many problems in the church. Before Chad, Pastor spent enormous time on this. I think people accept Chad pretty well. His sermons are getting better. He teaches Bible class. I think people are happy.

10. Describe Holy Word today.

Was there a focus on worship: Trying new things but it's hard for older folks; they will stay at Holy Word because new church has contemporary worship. 86 early service 82 in Bible study – 2nd 171 in second service

Was there a focus on Bible study: Big, big, big; Pastor has back to side wall with tables lined up and there is still standing room only. Ladies Wednesday morning & Tuesday evening, BIC, so on.

What was the mission of the school: Attendance 44, 50+ when Carl was here, it's not a drastic drop, we have had, Ryan Hill took a call, Steven Witte took over and he has taken call to LCMS college in California, don't know what to say, some parent, just from the standpoint of living in Round Rock, traffic on I 35 is always dangerous, especially in the morning during school traffic time, as a parent this would be a concern, but I don't know about other parents, I really think that the younger families are moving to Round Rock, might be the place to have the school. Still some feeling the school is dragging them down financially down, people say that more when attendance is dropping, I really think that if the Round Rock church takes off move the school but all that takes money. Can't just jump in and do it. As outgoing as Pastor Doebler and his wife are they will bring in young families so a school would be good.

What was the financial situation: We have big financial challenges with debt and starting the new church. Many people will move to Christ the Rock. People say we will get through with God's help.

Why be a member – 1st wonderful pastor who preaches Word in truth and purity, a real concern for people souls, one of the best I've shepherds I've ever experienced, best place to guard your soul.

Personal Interview: Pastor Don Patterson, 7/10/06

Senior Church History

CH 3031

Clint A. Rogas Jr.

Professor James Korthals

- 1) What was the church like when you arrived? (did the district president give you any “heads up” before you arrived; what was the members opinion of themselves; were the people friendly to visitors; was the church outreach minded; did the church nurture of its members; was their a focus on worship; was their a focus on Bible study; what was the mission of the school; what was the financial situation, etc.)

Average attendance: church was 110; Sunday school was 25; Bible study was 30. This was a good ratio for the Sunday mornings; about half the congregation was staying around for an extra hour of education. However, the turmoil in the congregation made most of the leaders and some of the members not have a good feel about what was going on; we are a very troubled group and we need a lot of help. But, using these attendance figures as one of the measuring rods of spiritual health the congregation was doing well. A lot of WELS congregations don't have this kind of ratio. I told my wife they see themselves as the “bad news bears.” A kind of rag tag team that been thrown together. I got see there was a lot of potential that the leaders didn't see. There was love for God's Word among the leaders. A lot of people just wanted to be led. There had been a lot that the leaders had to work through because of the relationship with the previous pastor had been strained and his relationship with others had caused them to leave the congregation. There was a 10 month vacancy between his leaving and my coming as a student graduate. The people were tired of fighting so really they were ripe for someone to come in let's make the peace we have in Christ one of our primary goals. It not like they had issues that they still needed to work through.

One of the mantras I had was to make sure that everyone knew they were wonderful in Christ. I told one of my classmates that I kept telling them how great they are because of Jesus and the fruits of faith and after one to two years they started to believe it. My plan was to keep reminding them how great they were in Christ; keep putting a new spin on it. They kept looking at the sin. This is kind of a macrocosm of what we do in our individual lives. We look at ourselves in regard to the sin in our lives instead of the gospel. Soon we started to believe it and started to act like it. By the end of the first year there was a marked change. By the end of the third year we were a totally different group. It was about three years before people quit quoting what use to happen. Quit comparing; that's kind of normal. I think even if I had a bad three years I think three years would have killed this comparison. It was already longer than the previous pastor. Three years is when we started to push forward.

Things the congregation already had was a very strong (school) principal. He was faithful to God's people and God's word. Kind of a silent giant, but he wasn't silent. He wasn't able to make changes, but was able to keep things going. Carl was model of peace. He did evangelism and preached sermons. He read his dad sermons. People use to ask me who was the pastor before you and I said Pastor Carl Hochmuth. He filled two vacancies, almost one year vacancies, about three years apart (between Pastor Krueger and Pastor Bitter and between Pastor Bitter and me). Instead of bring in a vacancy pastor they would get Carl to read his dad's sermons. He also did Bible class. You did have a vacancy pastor for 4-7 weeks during Easter (Pastor Schroeder from Midland).

Elders read sermons also during this time. How do you feel about this? Fine as long as they equipped, encouraged, and there is someone to watch over their doctrine and practice it's a

great thing. I think they get to handle the Word of God more and people get to see the Word of God is something that anyone can proclaim as long as they do it well. Still have elders do this as well as teach Bible studies.

Overall opinion: a lot of potential with a lot of hurt. There has been worse hurts in congregations, but when you're hurting it doesn't help to say that. When I would ask what are you bothered by or what happened: their answer would make me think it was just a lack of wisdom that made people hurt one another; it wasn't scandalous things; it was hurt feelings that were getting blow out of proportion.

What was your sense of what the problem was? Best I could say was insecurity of the present pastor based on view of lingering opinions of the two pastors before him. The people who felt like they needed to support these lingering views were hurt when the current pastor dealt with them in a very clumsy and awkward way. He would try to maintain his ministry and do it better by first asking the pastor who had taken a synod position to move out of town. He got in trouble with some of the leaders were hurt by their old pastor being asked to move away. Because of their lack of maturity some of these lay leaders tried to get a meeting together to excommunicate the their pastor over this request for this other pastor to move way so he wouldn't stay around and cause problems for his ministry. So this resulted in threats that people would leave or no longer support the ministry financially. I would rather not focus on these mistakes. These were just immature decisions by a leader trying to handle problems in a very tense situation. These things came back to haunt him. You don't communicate best in tense situations by writings things, but to talk to each other; not passing things back and forth and quoting each other; holding up things. You are better trying to talk things out, doing a lot of listening, try to understand, and patiently tell the things that are on your heart. Relationship skills are important. Doctrine was pure, but relation skills were weak. There are more expectations in the South for a friendly relationship with your pastor; everyone wants this no matter where you are from, but its even higher expectation in the South. Someone who is not ready for this requirement they can resent it or they can fail without even knowing it if they aren't outgoing. When things were going poorly people will focus on this like a microscope so this pastor had some people gossiping: he walked right past me without talking to me; he wasn't friendly; he did this and he did that. When people are hurt then the problems are magnified. When I heard all of that I would say you pastors are fallible he is forgiven and that behind us. Let's look to the future. Jesus washes it all away. I was a broken record. We did some of this on our every member visits. Every new pastor should have every member visits. Every pastor should have them as often as they can. Just listen without judging because you weren't there and you didn't hear it all. Use gospel based generalizations to help people heal. That was then. I feel terrible that happened to you. You can't verify. You can't investigate it. It says in Proverbs, It is the glory of kings to search out a matter, but it's the glory of God to cover over it. That was my motto verse internally. If I want to glorify God I not going to search it out, but cover it over with the gospel. Forget about the past. We have a lot to do to reach out with the love of Christ. As they saw I wouldn't go to the past, I modeled for them how they didn't have to dwell on the past and they didn't have to fix it. Now that's real easy to do when you didn't live through it. It's really hard to do when you lived through it. Now that I've been here 14 years and lived through some of my own hurts when I walk by someone who's hurt me in those 14 years it's a lot bigger job to talk to myself about that

was in the past, their forgiven, let's get on with Jesus. It's easy when you are the new guy and did live through it. But it's real important to do that.

It took four months to complete every member visits. We did the visits three nights a week trying to make two visits a night. Each of the three elders had a one night commitment each week. This gave me an opportunity to train leaders. The elders got a chance to see me in action. They got to watch without feeling a need to perform. That laid the ground work for me to ask you to make some calls. We made some more together, but it wasn't long before you said, "I can do that. I can do that ...". So I had you guys making calls. I think what a lot of pastors don't realize about making leaders is that they try to make a classroom about making calls. They don't do the eastern thing of come and see, come and follow me and I will show how to do it. What happens is it very theoretical and very frightening. It's very hard anyway. It's still hard for me when I go. There is a little tenseness when I go to make a call that wasn't planned or just drop in on some body; we've all got that *fear/tenseness*. It's real frightening for a lay person who has never done it and feels he is unqualified anyway. They don't know the words or what they are going to what they are going to walk in on. So you got to see it, got to see it, and we got to talk about it so you were more comfortable with it. The other thing it did was the all the drive time we had between calls gave me a chance to talk to you about ministry, life, and how your family was doing. So really I was making a call on you and you didn't know it. I was evaluating you, thinking about you, praying about you, and wondering if this was for you. It was that first summer that we talked about you going into the ministry. Then every now and then you would bring it up or I would. You would say I not ready, I'm not sure, or maybe I never will be. As life happens you work it through, commit to the Lord, and watch you grow and change. It's the pastor's job to intentionalize developing people. If he is not developing them for the pastoral ministry then he's developing them to be a better disciple; a better leader in the family and the community. So even though none of us does this consistently and perfectly because we are all sinners, we all need to keep talking about how you keep the mindset that I'm always on the go looking for men, women, and young people who could be leaders in the church and community. What am I doing about the people who I observe are ready for that? *I was comfortable with you*. Gospel orientated, gospel based relationship. Trust built between us. A growing experience. Something to do that is real not just busy work. I recently heard something on TV about Ethiopian Jews in Northern Africa. They had a proverb, not Scriptural, but I made it my motto: slow and steady the egg will walk on its own two feet. The idea is that the legs of the chicken break out of the egg, looks like it's taking a long time, but it won't be long if you will leave it alone that on its own it will walk off. I think sometimes we have the idea that discipleship is a pressure cooker. We have a seminar and everyone should get into it. It just doesn't happen that way for you, me or anyone else. Slow and steady, you just keep modeling, teaching, proclaiming, encouraging, and zeroing in on conversations. Probably a well placed question is more valuable than a short lecture. So have you thought about ministry lately? How is it going at work? Is there anything in your management at work that will help you with leadership in the church? Sometimes elders want to quit. I asked why you weren't a good elder. You told me that you felt that you were not a good elder, you traveled a lot, you weren't doing a good job at work, you were not being a great husband, you were not a great church member, and you felt guilty. You didn't use the word "guilty". You felt embarrassed to be put in the position of a leader in the church and I would have expectations for you that you wouldn't be able

to fulfill because you had so many at work. You trying to balance all of that and you weren't doing a very good job so you felt guilt. One way to relieve the guilt was to no longer have the responsibility so I absolved you of the guilt and rebuked you for bad priorities. I told you I wasn't going to let you quit because I thought it was a stupid decision because you had a lot of gifts and that you just had balancing issues and you need to learn how to balance it. I told you, God loves you and is with you. I told you I can't stop you from quitting if you want to, but I really didn't think you would be as happy with yourself. What you really needed to do is the best you could. You needed focus on your marriage and God and incorporate that into what you were doing. It wasn't rocket science. I think it is important for a pastor that they don't give up for people that soon. It's easy to do that; to be tentative, and say well if that's what you want to do that's ok because they are hurting. You really didn't have a good reason to quit. I couldn't put my blessing on it, but I could resolve you of your guilt. We are all forgiven.

Same approach with others. People get themselves overcommitted everywhere. Church is one of those places. I always tell people what of the best things you can do in church is just listen. The Bible study that tells us that is the story of Mary and Martha. People get so busy with their job, their family, and their church life because they're doers and American culture is all about doing then they get a lot of guilty for not doing it well and they get mad at others for not doing as much. Because they are carrying all then burden. Then they get to feeling guilty because they are mad so they want to pull the plug on they are not so disturbed when they are at church. I just want to come and listen. Sometimes when I hear this I will say, you can have permission to kick back you do. Then I go to my mantra, "The greatest thing that you can do at our church is listen." But I'll say, "How is your personal devotion life?" Most of the time if they are honest there is almost nothing happening. So really the issue is not some much that they are having to do so much and others aren't, the real issue is they have forgotten to feed their soul. So when they come to church it's still about what they are doing. So probably what they need to do when they come to church, unless I'm teaching Sunday school, I'm not going to talk about the things I did at church this week, but I'm going to set aside this sacred hour.

I don't know if you remember this, but we had a few church members who were upset about the church and the school. They thought that since they were out of control in their own priorities they thought their best time to handle them was in church on Sunday. So they would grab our leaders right after church and talk with them right on through Bible class on into the second service. I told the leaders that Sunday morning is sacred. You tell those who are distributed that my Sunday morning is for me and my family to worship and hear God's Word. If you want to talk with about church problems you talk to me at a time other than Sunday morning. So you can imagine when the church leaders come to Sunday morning there are their cars in the parking lot, I'm going to have to deal with all that stuff again and you loose your joy around that sacred time on Sunday morning. So again it's trying to communicate understanding and feeling to everyone in the church of taking in God's Word, being a Mary, is the most important thing you can do. Don't let anyone take that away. It is how a church can go from no activity to a lot of activity, it's exciting for a while, you ride the wave for a while then you come down the wave and you don't know what hit you. Part of it is you quit feeding on the wonderful truths of God's Word and you get lost in the doing. We pastors have bad problems with this to. Our attitude tanks when

we don't fill ourselves up. *I remember that happening. We were going. We were fighting a small worship area that had no place to visit.*

- 2) What impact do you think long vacancy have on the members? (unify, drive apart, uninterested members)

(Ten month vacancy) In some ways it separates the men from the boys. The boys who scream don't really stay around for the vacancy because they don't fulfill their promises and obligations. It seemed like when they were being carried and pushed by a shepherd they were as faithful as everyone else, but *without shepherd their* true colors start to show. In a lot of ways it allows the cream to rise to the top. People's reliability and faithfulness to their tasks rises to the top. That's a truism not from Scripture so there is sometimes where the toughest old coot stays who may not be the most spiritually mature who might have driven other off who might have said since there is no pastor here I'm not going to be a victim so stronger spiritual people go away to another place. It does separate the men from the boys, but you have to be careful not to make snap judgments about who is who. You need to listen and pray about it.

The other thing it does is that people see the need faster that they need to get involved; people who haven't been involved in the past. People get a lot of experience during a vacancy: teach Bible study; teach Sunday school; make calls; try to hold things together; they have conversations with others; make phone calls to get people back even if they don't physically call on them. People just do more. Vacancies are cleansing that way. It makes people appreciate having a pastor because just like you can in a marriage you can take your partner for granted always picking at little things because you things done for your sake. You can do the same thing to your pastor. You kind of knit picking at him; he's not this and he's not that. You wish he was ... Then a vacancy makes you think having a pastor, even that pastor, is a lot better than having no pastor at all. So a long vacancy makes them long for someone and when they come they are so happy they've come. This makes them more forgiving in a social sense not a spiritual sense. They are more forgiving of his inequities. This usually moves them to update the parsonage too. A pastor can be there for ten years and they don't do anything. The pastor doesn't complain because he is afraid too, but when the pastor leaves they go in the parsonage. They *see it* and think what will the *new pastor* think of us. They remodel the whole thing. Get things spruced up. It's an unfortunate reality.

What I saw at Holy Word was people who were tired of fighting, ready for healing, had a pretty good attendance ration of Bible study to worship but didn't know this was a good sign, had quite a few upwardly mobile young couples people in their late 20's to early thirties that had never been trained in church leadership, and the loudest complainers (who complained just for complaining sake) had already left.

- 3) What is your picture of the ideal church on earth given we are still sinners?

The vision of the church always morphs as you go along. We are all having new experiences that affect this picture. I decided at 20 at East Texas State to be a pastor. I had dreams about how I would do big things for God that were visible and would really change. I would have a congregation, what Flip Wilson would call a church of what's happening now. It hit me, I

can remember where it was I was standing when it hit me, that I had been studying Jesus and the gospels and how Jesus spoke the Word of God as the Savior of the world in a context of Jewish worship that he didn't try to change. So I gave up my mission to create a form that would be better because it would be so powerful. In other words, move to contemporary worship, not wearing the robe, things that were more ... As a young man I thought there were a lot of out dated things in our church that needed to go, I wasn't even though I wasn't theologically trained but I had my opinions of how we weren't really reaching people. But it hit me, what really reaches people in ever setting is some who will teach truth to the soul where they are living. So I remember saying to God, "I get it and I will go, this is when I a still a member of LCMS resisting my parents encouragement to join the WELS and I didn't yet join the WELS, me saying to the Lord I will go where ever you send me in whatever setting and giving up he battle for form. I came in saying the power is not in the form, not contemporary, not robes, not the church building, you don't have to not have a church building, all these kinds of movements you see in Christianity where people are always saying if we get a better methodology over the gospel. So that's the main thing. I studied at Bethany for a couple of years. I can remember sitting at my desk and praying to God about making me the kind of pastor you want me to be not the kind of man I wanted to be; divest myself of the vision I wanted of myself. I can remember very vividly reading through the New Testament that the themes of theology taught by Jesus and the disciples revolved around a handful of truths. All of them come out of the theology of forgiveness which gives you a new identity. The Means of Grace gives you a static identity in your baptism and an ongoing reminder in reclaiming your identity in the Lord's Supper. I wrote them down at the time; teach peace, it's like the fruits of the spirit, Galatians 5, sanctification, or the things to add to your faith in 2 Peter. I would look at those lists and notice there is only a handful. You look at James and Titus and the things Paul says the grace of God teaches us to ... only a handful. I remember thinking all I need to do is preach the text that is in front of me and those basic truths will come out. Teach it as exciting as it really is and make it exciting for the people and make it understandable for the people in whatever setting I find myself. It became a mantra for me, "The Word of God is where it is at, look at where it is at, I'm really excited about it." One of my intentional behaviors when I came to Holy Word was whenever I taught a Bible class or sermon I was excited about what I have to tell you. If I wasn't excited about it then I dealt with myself until I got excited about it. I would repent of that and would say God forgive me. Your Word is wonderful even I don't think it is wonderful. There were mornings when I would say to my wife, "The last thing I want to do today is get up and preach. I feel terrible, I'm physically exhausted, obviously I'm going to go do it Mary, but I don't feel like going to do that." I would try not to let that go on to the people because the sheep came to the Lord's house and they need to hear the Word. It just needs to happen.

The other thing is when you are preaching a sermon the most important thing is YOU NEED TO PREACH THE TEXT NOT LAW AND GOSPEL. I know that almost sounds heretical, but God's Word is law and gospel. It has it all there, it may not all be in that passage, but if you want to sound redundant and what to make people yawn because of your style and methodology then try to preach the law and gospel in the same way using a different text every week. They will know intuitively without their head really telling them that you are contriving. When people know you are contriving out of that text what happens is that they

will start to turn it off and harden their heart to what you are saying because they are not really seeing. The Holy Spirit as he inspired *this text* is really getting to them because you are getting into the way. One of things about preaching which is really important to me is that you really PREACH THE TEXT. Example: Sermon series on Titus 2, Paul says teach older men to do this ... teach younger men to do this ... teach servants to do this ... teach slaves to do this ... right down the list. Now the question is this, "In the context is that passage law for a mirror or law for a guide? It is law for a guide" If I harp on that as law for a mirror then that's not what the Holy Spirit is doing. So last Sunday when I preached that text I said, I just explained what it said, (side bar: They need you to teach God's Word and much as they need you to preach it. We have it in our circles that preaching and teaching are two very different things. We need to be careful not to let them cross over. That's poppycock. You've got explain it in such a way that when they leave they can say that this I have a wonderful God, this is a wonderful text, and I understand what it means. Not what a wonderful pastor or wow did he just preached law and gospel. Although I don't mind people saying that I say it about preachers when I'm happy with what they say, but they need to say what a wonderful God, what a wonderful text, and I understand it.) I said about Titus 2:1-10 at the end of the sermon, I preached through the end this is what older people ... younger people this is what God wants, I started with the gospel introduction – the gospel frees us from all our sins so now God is going to teach us how to live and I said have you ever had your kids in a summer camp? If they are on a "select" team it often mandatory that they with their coach to a summer camp. Now how did they get on the team? They got on the team before when they selected them. Now all during summer camp he is telling them don't kick the ball this way, kick the ball that way, space yourself this way, if you don't do this you will be killed in the game. Then in the tournament in the camp he is yelling at them saying remember what I taught you, don't ... get back ... do you think the kids comes off the field and says he is condemning me? No. What we Christians do when we hear the law in Titus 2 we can feel all this condemnation because we're thinking I failed there and pastor shown me there I'm never going to get it and whatever ... but the Holy Spirit intended these passages to be condemnation. Does the law condemn us? Always, but not in the mouth of the Spirit who is a coach. Now there are passages where he condemns us intentionally, but in this text he is your coach. So I told everybody do not take this text and let yourself be condemn that would be the devil dealing the Word of God. Instead, let it be your coach. You are forgiven. You are loved. But hey if you are an older woman be an example for younger women. You have a few years to be an impact. If you're an older guy ... if your ... That to me is preaching the text. You've got to get into the spirit of the text and teach it the way the Spirit did. You get excited when you do it. You don't have to search for variety as much because the text takes care of that for the listener. Except in Titus every ten verses he does it over and over again. You get law as a guide as a guide again. That's one of the tragedies of preaching and entire book. You teach now the new concept. I will remind them about law for a guide. The new concept is that he is saying be obedient to rulers, slander no one ... *How is this different to what we learn at the Seminary?* This style has a different priority. Law and gospel is a priority, but it doesn't mitigate or fight against the text. Every text has law and gospel in it or around it because all the texts are in the Bible. Your example: convict them, forgive them, now guide them. Since the text isn't about conviction I don't make it a very heavy thing. Here is the only conviction in that text, I said we know that by ourselves we can earn heaven; we know that

we are saved by grace and we are at peace so love to hear it when we hear God's advice. Then at the end I came in with my coach's example because I had already preached so much law they had forgotten about that. See I didn't go have you ever done this, have you ever done that, oh you're lost; although, I might do that in a different sermon. This text didn't warrant that *approach*. Every text has law and gospel around it because it is in the Bible, right next to it, or in it. Our job is to keep ... this is another statement that might almost sound heretical for preaching, we have a law and gospel ministry that doesn't mean that every single time we preach that it's got to pass a quantitative law and gospel litmus test. Preach early on or those who get in a rut what they do have a law and gospel litmus test so that it is almost contrived almost like a waltz so that they dance the same dance over and over again. This is not textual preaching. It's not an either/or, both have a priority. What you are going to hear me say tomorrow is that exegetics is the queen of our theology not dogmatics. Law and gospel is a dogmatic statement. *I always felt you preaching was like a Bible study, but not a Bible study*. That's because in preaching you are proclaiming, where in a Bible study you might be trying to look up this Bible passages or that one, asking questions, getting input, all that anthological learning. In a sermon you really are proclaiming, but I'm trying to say what I've already said, God's Word is exciting all by itself, who am I to act bored with it, so my goal when I study for a sermon, the very very first thing is what is this section saying in its context. The second thing is to communicate it to my audience because I know who they are in a way that they will understand it in its context and the Spirit will take care of the rest. Then make sure you preach law and gospel in every sermon. Do you see how that is a priority? We are not God's Word; God's Word is God's Word. It takes the pressure off of you. I heard a great sermon introduction the other day. It's what I call a historical introduction. The pastor said, "Today I'm going to preach to you from the book of Job. Most people know the story of Job. Just in case you've forgotten I going to tell you the basic story of Job. Job was a man who once had every thing you could have wanted as a man. God let the devil take it away and Job didn't know why or how. He didn't know that's what was going on. Why me? That was a question that perplexed Job. Have you ever asked why me? That was it. It wasn't fancy. It wasn't a big illustration. You could tell he didn't agonize over it, but did he feed his people well? You bet. He got it started; got us going. When he asked the question why me I said yep I've done that. You can hook people, but I don't always try to do this. Let's say you've had a very busy week and you are fried. You've got brain lock. You're empty and you don't know what to do. WAIT!!!! WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY? TEACH TO YOUR PEOPLE. LET THE SPIRIT TAKE CARE OF THE REST. So what if you don't have anything else to say. Does that passage have anything else to say? Do you not have a degree in theology? Can you not read the passage in its context? Can you stand up and say what really exciting about this text is that Thomas learned that all he had to do was listen to Jesus and not try to figure out all on his head. When he said to the Lord, "We don't know where are you going so how can we know the way." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Jesus meant that there is no other way to know the Father except to understand the Father's love through Christ. You can't work your way into his graces. You are going to embarrass him. He sent his Son to die for you and here you are here trying to work your way to heaven. What are you doing? You are just preaching the text. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is what gives you life to live and eternal life ... What if that's all you did because you were brain fried and tried? You preached the text. You gave

them God's Word. You preached the text didn't you. Quit beating yourself up about it. That's what I say to young preachers. If you get that much down and you pray about it God will give you examples and illustrations and help you organize which ones are more important than others.

What is the importance of prayer? I tell you a story from Seminary. Wayne Mueller told this story at Sem – we had this wormy little pastor, he really wasn't a great preacher or leader but his congregation kept growing and growing. I kept wondering why it was growing. We asked him one time, "What's your secret?" He said, "I don't know. I pray at least 2 hours for my people and the gospel ministry I have." Then Wayne was emphasizing Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." He told us to pray and be persistent. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" ... he name off several other passages. The point I want to stress is that we don't pray enough by nature because we are fallen. One of those things that became a part of our life when we fell at the tree; let me go do it. We want to do ... do it ... like a little child. In fact there are things that do not happen in our ministries because we don't pray that they will happen. And God is not cruel, not unloving, but God the Holy Spirit is a coach and his teaching us about goodness, trust, and love. He is teaching us the preacher that he really is God and we are not. What he really wants is us to ask that's why James 4 says, "You have not because we don't ask." There are a lot of pastors who fight and push in their meetings for things to happen in their church. At the very base, it not about money, it's about ministry. At the very base it worldliness when in James 4 he says, "You fight and devour one another, you quarrel. You have not because you ask not." There are pastors who haven't figured out that if they would just ask God it would happen. The finished quote from Wayne, "If you don't pray you don't know if it would have happened without your effort. But if you do pray and it doesn't happen you know you ask God and it wasn't meant to be." So I tell you what I did before I got the call to Holy Word. I prayed and said to the Lord, "You know who I am. You know where I've been and where I've come from. You know what I am like. You do not have to do this, but as you child put me in a place that is really for a guy like me. Make me really to be the person they need." I started this Middler year. We did the same thing at Round Rock. The first man, his mind set and the mind set of the people are almost a mirror image of one another. God may say no to a prayer like that, but if you don't pray it you don't know if you were suppose to get it. There is so much that happens like that. The pastor who came to Round Rock prayed Lord you know me, put me in a place that ready for a person like me. Make me ready for them. Started this my Middler year. God can say no, but if you don't ask you want know if it is possible for it to happen. Steve Witte – started a prayer institute. Mean From Grace – now your in by grace there are things he's promised, ask for the grace he's promised.

ASK!

I don't pray each week through the week through the directory. I pray throughout the week. I can't be with everyone each week so I pray for them. There are people who I've actually refused to meet with them any more and prayed which had quicker results. Ask God to brings other in to help.

- 4) What was your initial approach to ministry when he got to Holy Word (how did you know where to being; what was your focus; please talk as much as you can about training men and women and Bible study)?

1 Pe 4 – testing people before they serve: make sure their **reputation** of the person is know by what we can know – seen, heard about them, what other members say about these men. The reputation is what God wants.

What I look for: a person's wife and family have a respect for him (1 Tim list), loves God's Word without being told to (like to come to Bible study; like to hear God's Words), if you have standing committees if someone doesn't have evangelism skills don't put them there. It is better to have a vacancy than a bad experience or service.

I veto the elders choice sometimes without giving them all the info. I've enjoyed support in this area. You can't turn the church over to bad men.

Mantra: The greatest thing we having going on here is the gospel not forms and building. A man could be right, but it's not about this so if the congregations make the wrong choice it's ok. Hyper Democratic – we are always worried about votes, and the stuff instead of being saying let's talk and do.

If you make it your aim to preach and teach well then the congregation get to the same place where forms and buildings aren't the issue.

On ideas you fly the balloon and see what they say. If they don't want to move on they if I like it I will bring it up again. If it is not the gospel and the MOG then there is no reason to win even if it bankrupts the church. What makes it hard is you have to go through it too.

Remind them you can't make me mad and please don't let me make you mad over this building. Model it.

You can't read hearts but actions.

1st : don't finalize your opinions about anyone for a year (1 John – some sins are easy to spot, some are not)

2nd : Gospel is our power, be excited about it, model the your love for it

3rd : If people resist something give them time

4th : people are desperate for love, you are the only Jesus they see, people will say and do dumb things to you

5th : forgiveness, people hurt you and you will hurt them, forgive them, admit you are wrong when you are wrong, I'm Asking You For Forgiveness, tell people you are sorry, Jesus is their perfect Savior not you

6th : talk to your brothers in the ministry

7th : watch the habits you develop in the first year, they can plague you the rest of your ministry, train yourself to say no to yourself liking staying up to late

8th : get good exercise, stewardship of the body; the greatest thing I have for them is the law and gospel not my example, speak the truth even if you aren't doing it right

5) Has your ministry changed? If so, how?

Big enough now, with Chad, there are so many issues that it's hard for me to reach the fringe and new members; I can't really follow up on people, train others to think like a pastor to seek people out, train others to train other people

Email and internet is new, a new expectations with it, the only way to talk sometimes
On the radio

Seven vicars now, they come to me for advice, the former people, still want a piece of me and this can be a distraction – still good, the body of Christ is bigger than Holy Word, WFLCFS, Granda, District Officer keeps me active
Kids are older and they demand more, active outside the home, wife is working to help the kids with new advents, money is an issue

- 6) I know you helped change the personality of Holy Word's members. How did you do it? (This is key! Your insights could help me and others as we encourage members to fulfill the Great Commission.)

- 7) How does culture effect ministry?

First of all every culture has common denominators with ours. All people sin, all people think about their sins, all people have the natural knowledge of God and all people know deep down they need redemption. All people know deep down that they truth is not predicated on ones culture or mastery of the language or mastery of cultural awareness.

That being said, when we truly understand a way a culture thinks we can get at telling the truth from their perspective and not just our own. That way the gospel gets behind the walls.

Southerners think that good people are friendly and that people with a good message will be friendly no matter what. So if we are cold and unresponsive in the way we treat people they won't very easily listen to us.

Northerners tend to think that smooth talking southerners are up to something or that they are unintelligent. Clinton has helped some to tune out southerners.

Too many people try to recreate their former culture where they are hence "new" Ulm.

But it is better to learn to understand the natives and to speak like them. Leave the Packers behind as root for the local teams.

At least learn to appreciate their love for their teams too.

All for the gospel.

- 8) How do we recruit more Texans to be WELS pastors?

The gospel itself is the best recruitment tool. It changes our hearts and makes us rich and peaceful within. We know God's love and hope and we want others to have it too. It is love - the love of Christ that compels us (2 Cor 5)

To recruit for ministry is to give people in the congregation the opportunity to use their gifts and talents to reach out to others.

Then it is call all men and women to see the whitened harvest around them – to share conversion stories with them and to give them an opportunity to be a part of them.

Then we should ask all healthy men with good minds and lot of years left to consider that the best use of their lives is to serve in ministry for the one who saved all.

I look for those who love the word, who are tasting ministry and who realize that secular success is shallow. Then I ask if they have considered the ministry

I also try to show how awesome it is be privileged to be in the ministry.

I minimize the southern northern thing because as a southern boy in the south we aren't dealing with regional pride until they decide to go off to school.

Then they start to think about it especially when they move up north for school.

While here they just have Jesus, church, his word, his ministry and his call – the Holy Spirit does all the work and we just guide and direct.

Every pastor should be trying to identify men whom he could recruit for ministry all the time every week.

9) What was the church like today (same questions as 1)?