

Some Concerns for the Public Ministry

By John A. Braun

[Delivered to the Metro-North Pastoral Conference, Trinity (South), Mequon, Wisconsin
May 21, 1984]

Mankind has not suddenly changed and entered a new age of freedom from all problems, although many would like to believe it has happened or is just about to happen. The dawn of such an age of peace, tranquility, prosperity and ease is always just a dawn. It never can materialize this side of eternity. We live in a world filled with sin, corruption and death. There is no escape from these things save in the Savior. We have been blessed with the wonderful knowledge of His forgiveness and of eternal life in heaven where we will find no more death, sorrow or pain. Until then we will have to struggle with an imperfect world. And we will have to do so with limited skills for we remain a part of this world's problem because of our old Adam.

Yet we have ultimate victory over the guilt, death and frustration through Christ. We are to share that victory with others. We desire to share Christ with others as all Christians do, for all have responsibility to make disciples of all nations. In his great mercy God has called us to another task in this sinful world. It is the task of publicly speaking his message of comfort to the people of God and the world. He has called us to be pastors and teachers in his service and empowered us to carry out our respective callings. Without his power we are helpless as Luther suggested in the sacristy prayer which adorns the walls of many studies and sacristies. We would bring all to ruin and destruction by our own efforts. He has promised never to desert us, and therefore we find strength and confidence to be public servants of a gracious and powerful God.

This is not to say that we do not have problems carrying out our responsibilities. Ask any public servant of God! There are problems, sometimes severe problems. Although there is nothing new under the sun, we see things change. I have spent 15 years in the parish ministry. That is by no means a record, but it is enough, I believe, to qualify me as dry behind the ears. I have developed some personal concerns for the public ministry, and I have been permitted to share them with you. I do not wish to point fingers at anyone, for I see these problems within myself as well as others. I hope that by sharing them with you we will come to see the great privilege which is ours in the public ministry and the great obstacles which Satan, the world and our sinful flesh have created to impede the work. The list I share with you is by no means exhaustive nor is it in any particular order of importance. Let's just say that it is a random list of concerns. I invite you to disagree with me and to discuss these matters among yourselves and publicly. My purpose is to generate discussion, self-examination and prayer for the Spirit's power in our work in the Lord's kingdom.

I. Brotherly Love Between Pastors

Each of us has been called to a specific field of labor by the Holy Spirit through our fellow Christians. We serve the people of God who have called us to be pastor, teacher or executive. Each one sees the work before him better than anyone else, and responsibility for the work falls upon each one individually. I cannot do the work of another. I have not been called to do it, and I would not presume to tell anyone how to do his own work. If I try to do someone else's work, I will rightly be chastised and labeled as a busy-body.

God has given each of us different gifts for use in the kingdom as a whole. We need to value each other as brothers in Christ with our own set of personal pluses and minuses. That is a fact of life in the ministry. Some are better preachers than others, some better teachers, some better administrators, and so on. No one can be the "perfect pastor." We simply serve the Lord with the talents he has given by the power He supplies. Each of us needs the other to weave God's design in the fabric of the kingdom. Alone we are one thread easily broken and unbecoming.

There is a brotherhood under the rule of Christ not only among all His saints but also among the workers within that kingdom. The brotherhood of called servants is to be marked by love for one another. The New

Testament indicates that such love among us is not an option but a vital part of our service. Loving one another genuinely means that we risk being vulnerable. We open ourselves up to criticism and judgment. It means admitting that you have made mistakes, specific mistakes, and that you have personal weaknesses in the ministry. It means that we will admit that others have weaknesses and have made mistakes without being judgmental. Not everyone is ready to be that open and vulnerable.

Someone has once described the reality of such love as a group of porcupines huddled together because of the cold. We need to be together, but the closer we get the more difficult it becomes. I know that there is sincere and genuine love for one another. If I had a problem, I know that there are brothers in the ministry to whom I could turn for help. Those brothers, however, are rare. I hope that each of you has found such a person, a brother in the ministry to whom you can turn. I pray that by your attitude and comments you have made yourself available to anyone who needs such an outlet. Do we too often find a “professional shell?” Do we play the game as other professionals do? Are we so busy that we make excuses and fail to find the time for one another? Unfortunately what may occur is a comparison of our work with that of another. We may become quite defensive about our work for a variety of reasons.

Sharing our ups and downs in the ministry with some friend in the ministry is not easy. It takes time to develop such a relationship. Piercing the “professional shell” can be difficult. In addition we move about from time to time. You may have found such a loving brother in one place and then, having followed the Lord’s call to another, not been able to find a similar brother. These relationships do not just happen. We need to find a personality cross match. One way to find such a match is attending pastoral conferences with your brothers. Being able to share important and unimportant events with someone else in the ministry is vital to each servant of God . Without it we can become lonely while surrounded by a sea of people. Those who do not attend conferences deny themselves and their brothers the resources of each other. In my opinion it frustrates the practice of genuine brotherly love among us as servants in God’s kingdom.

One cannot assume that every pastor or teacher will get along with every one else to the point of being able to share so intimately. We should have sufficient respect and interest in each other that we are at least able to solve whatever personality difficulties are created between us. I am not so naive to believe that differences will not exist or that everyone will be a “cross match” for everyone else. Yet we must be open to the possibility of serving one another through the associations which may develop. There are special resources which the older, more experienced brother has to offer the younger one. We will do well if we create no generation gap intentionally or unintentionally. We must be open as others reach out for a friend in whom to confide. When we need the friendly ear of a brother, may we find one who is interested, patient and charitable. May each one consider his potential in this matter.

II. CONFSSIONAL INTEGRITY AND CONSISTENCY

We are members of the same church body because we share the same beliefs. We are a confessional union, which is somewhat unusual in our ecclesiastical world today. Each of us has a concern for God’s truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures. We are concerned with what our brothers in Christ preach and teach too. We had better be at least. Without establishing a “Big Brother” mentality to secure uniformity we want to speak with the same mind and spirit on matters clearly revealed in God’s word. Our seminary training has provided the basic principles to be maintained in the public ministry. Once out into the parishes and schools we encounter questions and situations that require accurate knowledge and firm evangelical presentation of the truth. Our independent study and thinking is one of the surest ways to maintain the truth of God among us. We are trained by attitude and precept to be able to make decisions independently and come to the same truth without an indoctrination which controls our minds and opinions. This is good and healthy in my opinion.

It does also create the potential for some errors. The errors come from two directions: the left and the right. We are subject to the same temptations as others who have deserted the truth of God for “liberal” (whatever that means) attitudes at variance with the Scriptures and Confessions. There is room in the ministry

for novel ideas and procedures, but there is no room to allow these novel approaches to conflict with God's truth.

The errors from the right may more easily find a home among us because of our confessional orientation. Often the intrusion of "right wing" politics and causes evolve in our thinking. Here we must separate what is our opinion about national policies or local issues from what God has clearly revealed. We must not say more than God gives us a right to say as his representatives. I love the Apostle Paul's use of the word "ambassadors." Anyone familiar with the diplomatic service knows that an ambassador must faithfully relay the message of his government. To say something more is to court misunderstanding. To say something less is to create confusion. In either case the ambassador is subject to dismissal. Say no more than Christ says, but say no less.

Compromise of the Scriptures cannot be tolerated in a confessional union such as ours. Each pastor or teacher is responsible to his parish or board of control. Each separate pastor must recognize his responsibility for the truth within the fellowship. We are to exercise love for one another, the communion of saints, the truth of God and most importantly God Himself by reproving in an evangelical manner any and every error we encounter. This task is not easy but necessary. Presidents, vice-presidents and circuit pastors are given specific areas of responsibility in this task, but they never operate without the prayers, consensus and support of all of us.

Each of us shares responsibility for the truth. That responsibility is to be handled in an orderly matter through those whom the Lord has entrusted with specific responsibility. The principle is often misunderstood. Either those who have specific responsibility are viewed as being the secret police, that is, the eyes and ears of the emperor, or individuals attempt to circumvent the orderly procedure. Neither serves the truth very well. Reprove individually and, if success does not come, then share the problem with those who should be informed. We are bound together by the Lord in presenting His truth to the world consistently and accurately.

III. BURNOUT AND STRESS

In recent years much has been written about the effects of stress. I have read articles which went so far as to say that tooth decay was caused by stress because it creates additional acid in the mouth. There is general consensus that stress does play a role in heart disease, high blood pressure and stomach disorders. These are physical problems. Emotional and psychological problems are also evidently related to stress. I believe that the pastor of today encounters greater stress than those of only 10 years ago. In addition it seems that they are not educated about it and poorly prepared to handle it. Ministers' Life Resources, Inc. has developed what it calls "A Survival Kit for Church Professionals" with sections entitled "Clergy Stress" and "Clergy Burnout." There are other sources of information and help, but I am familiar with this one and found it helpful and informative.

A report prepared for Ministers' Life states, "Studies show that ministers most vulnerable to burnout are idealistic and overcommitted; have rigid standards for their role; are social activists; are inclined to avoid conflict by trying to satisfy everybody; are in constant direct contact with the poor, dying, sick and hurting; suffer from role confusion; can't seem to protect their personal boundaries for rest, relationships, and relaxation." I have heard the problem described as "the Elijah syndrome." (Cf. I Kings 19) A paper produced by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled "The Priest and Stress" observes that clergy under stress tend to lose motivation, "They tend to take on more duties but seem to accomplish less. The work they once did with joy has become a burden; zeal and motivation having given way to compulsion. Because of this, they begin to feel guilty." John Gholdston in a different article notes that some stress is created by change in responsibilities, as ministers must devote more time to demanding administrative responsibilities, particularly that of fundraising. When graduates come from our Seminary training they are anxious to preach the gospel. As the years go by more and more time seems to be spent on tasks that are indirectly connected with that glorious task. (Administration, stewardship programs, organizational meetings, etc.)

The key to handling stress is to find a time and place for the pastor to relax. I mean completely relax and unwind. We need opportunities to "derole", some context where we can go away from the pressure and not be the pastor. That doesn't mean that our behavior at such times is unbecoming the gospel or our position. It does

mean finding some place where we can get out of the fishbowl and not talk shop. The first section on brotherly love should accompany this discussion. It is difficult to find laypeople with whom we can be anything but a pastor. The brotherhood can provide the people and opportunities for such an outlet. Again look around you. Don't we all need this outlet? There must be someone with whom you can share such relaxation and rejuvenation. Open up to each other when you find such a friend.

It has often been said that when a pastor is out in the "hinterland" the opportunities for such camaraderie are present. When pastors move to large metropolitan congregations with greater responsibilities, such as Milwaukee, the opportunities vanish. That's too bad because the need is often greater in such situations. Whenever I think of this matter I hear a little voice within me saying, "I don't have time." The Lord directed his Old Testament people to take one day for rest. I have found that if you don't take that time for rest your mind and body will take the time in ways you do not wish. You will become less effective and get less and less actually done. You can only overload your brain cells for so long. They will eventually refuse to receive any more new information.

The opposite concern is taking too much time at rest and relaxation. The old sinful flesh loves to find an excuse not to do anything. It can happen that a pastor or teacher does not work to his potential in order to avoid burnout. What is a fair workload for an individual's talents? This is something each must answer for himself. Some have greater capacity for work than others. I cannot answer that question for anyone but myself. No matter who you are or what your capacities you need to solve the stress connected with your task in his kingdom. I believe we have more pastors who are suffering from too much stress than we may realize. For the most part we have dedicated, committed, caring people. We need them and we need them to continue to be dedicated, committed and caring people. If a solution is not found to allow these people to cope with their stress, eventually they will be unable to carry out the work and will bring great harm to the work of the kingdom.

IV. THE MINISTRY IS TOUCHING PEOPLE WITH GOD'S WORD

A proper definition of the church is people who believe in Jesus. Our task in, God's service involves people. It cannot be severed from people. If there are no people, we do not have a job. In order to do the task we have been called to do we must touch people with God's Word. There will be appropriate time for study and reflection, but all the study and reflection are of limited value unless they are focused upon the people to whom God has called us to serve. There is no such thing as a remote control ministry. A pastor cannot direct someone else to visit the sick, shut-ins or dying, handle the delinquents or conduct funerals for very long without becoming increasingly ineffective. There must be an interaction with people if there is to be proper ministry. (This is not to say that the lay people in our congregations cannot assist in this work.) Outreach means getting out into the "trenches" where the people live. The pastor must understand them and talk their language, if he is to accomplish his purpose of sharing Christ. There is no substitute for personal contact either in outreach or any other aspect of the work.

Sometimes we may get the idea that we are directors or administrators. This is a far cry from pastors. Directors always seem to me like bombers high above the combat, supporting it, but not directly involved with it. The combat soldier gets his hands dirty. He has to face the dangers, and he achieves the success. It does get messy dealing with people: the marital counseling, the intractable councilman, the difficult teacher, the ladies aid, the church finances, among others. It may appear easier to deal with problems long distance or by remote control, but the ministry is bringing the word of God to bear upon the situations faced by real people.

God has called us to touch all kinds of people with His word. We are for the most part white, European, middle class. We are to bring God's word to the world. Our old sinful flesh does not like to forge into strange situations and deal with people of different backgrounds. We find our white, European, middle class parish members supporting us in our ministry. But maybe they are also contributing to our reluctance to serve people of different backgrounds. Black, Hispanic, poor or white upper class need the gospel too. Because of the differences we may be isolating ourselves from them. I fear we have developed a cultural, economic and social

stratification and discrimination, which I hope is unintentional. We are to share God's word with all people. Have we unintentionally isolated ourselves from the black lady who does not bathe as often as we do and who cannot read?

Do we sometimes place barriers between the message we have and the people who need it? I was struck a while ago that the message of Christ which we communicate to the world may be couched in language which is not understood by everyone. We use our own little cliches and special words which are understood by all within the fellowship but by very few outside. My secretary often refers to bulletin printing time as the weekly cliche festival, and there is some justification for the title. The average commercial is geared to someone with 6th grade reading skills. For whom do you prepare your bulletins and outreach material? Speak, write and print the truth in a language that can be understood by people who do not have the educational background we do. It should be understood by those who do not have the same religious presuppositions we do. It must be clear, simple and unmistakable without a lot of high-sounding verbage which may impress but not communicate.

The greatest joy in the ministry is to see the Holy Spirit do his work through the gospel. That means bringing the gospel into contact with other people. To see the gospel bring comfort to the bereaved, peace to the troubled, and joy to the convert is what the work is all about. You also get the difficulties whenever you deal with people, but you cannot have the joys without dealing with people where they are and confronting their troubles with them. You have to spend time in the trenches with the people to be effective.

V. LEGALISM AND LISTENING

One shortcut to spending time with people and sharing the gospel with them in a way that they will understand is to lay down rules that are to be obeyed by all. This will lead to a legalistic approach to life and the problems of people. We must indicate in some way that we understand the people whom God has entrusted to us. It is no surprise that we are tempted to be legalists. The principles of Scripture must be rigidly presented but not as the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day did. We are an evangelical church body. The gospel of Christ's love is the heart and core of our approach to people in every situation.

One failing which I have observed is the failure to listen carefully to God's people. It requires energy to listen, perhaps more energy than to speak. When we do not have the resources of that energy because of the workload, we may be tempted to provide answers and evaluations (which may be completely accurate) without listening carefully. We become officious and unsympathetic by such an approach. A careful study of Jesus at the well of Jacob with the Samaritan woman will reveal an evangelical approach to an individual in need of rebuke and comfort. Jesus could have said that the woman was living in sin and was in danger of damnation at any time during the conversation. Yet he carefully listened to her and helped draw her to that conclusion without any legalistic shortcuts.

If anyone is going to listen to us as we condemn sin in their lives and share the gospel with them, we must always demonstrate a genuine interest in them. Are there times when we never get to the presentation of the gospel because we have turned people off by our legalistic approach to their situation? Listening carefully demonstrates such an interest in the individual, and it will also reveal the point at which the law can be proclaimed to the greatest benefit. More importantly it will reveal where the gospel can be focused for the greatest comfort. It takes time, tact and energy. There is no shortcut that will accomplish the same effects.

VI. LACK OF SPIRITUAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

No matter who you are you have created a behavioral pattern for yourself. Your life has certain habits and patterns. You get up each day at a certain time. You have a day or time in which to prepare for classes and sermons. There is a regular routine. Of course, there is great variation among all of us. Some may get up before the sun on Sunday to work on the sermon. Others may stay in the sack until the last possible minute. There is always the potential for interruptions in our work, but like other professionals we are creatures of habit. There is nothing wrong with these patterns until they become a rut and we are incapable of change or new ideas.

When I graduated from the Seminary, I thought I had all the answers to everything. I assumed that my education was over. A funny thing happened on the way to this point in my life: I discovered a need to learn new things each day. I had to grow and mature as all of us do. In that growing process there are many points along the way where we will be tempted to stop growing. We may even refuse to grow. That is sad! Each day there are many things that we must learn and relearn.

The routines we have established for ourselves should include some potential for spiritual and professional growth. Our thinking will become narrow and limited without growth. Somewhere in your personal life there should be some time for personal study—not just getting ready for the next Bible class or the next sermon, but personal study for yourself. Not too long ago a paper was presented on the personal study of the Confessions and Scripture by pastors. In the more remote past you may remember a paper on the pastor's personal library. These matters, I believe, are important.

Our circle of knowledge should expand beyond the Scriptures and the Confessions. We need to know what is going on in the world. When was the last time you sat down with a book that was not directly connected with preparation for something? Have you taken your wife or children to see a movie? There are some that will be good for you to see. Have you seen a play or attended a concert other than a religious one? Milwaukee affords a rich cultural smorgasbord. Much has been written about the influence of television. Does your view of the world come only through the tube? What magazines do you read other than *The Northwestern Lutheran*? Do you read the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*? I am always surprised by the ideas and thoughts that come to me when I get out and do things that everyday people do.

We have been accused of being a closed fellowship which turns in upon itself too much. It is important for us to be one in doctrine, but it is also important to be able to think for yourself within that fellowship. There may be a tendency to conduct a cloistered life and develop opinions not based upon the Scripture which follow a narrow “party line.” We need to grow in the way that God intended us to grow. I am thankful that I am not the same person I was when I graduated from the Seminary. The Lord has caused me to grow. I wish the same blessing for every pastor and teacher. My understanding of Scriptural truths is deeper and my knowledge is broader. I am not suggesting that I have arrived at some point of perfection or that I am better than any of you. I just know myself better than I know any of you. I am convinced that a lack of spiritual and professional growth will make anyone a less effective pastor or teacher. There is a strong temptation felt by each of us just to coast and fail to grow.

VII. POOR SELF-ESTEEM

Let me begin this section by being honest about my ability to be a pastor and teacher: I am a failure. Yes, that's right. I am incapable of the tasks God has given to me. I feel like Moses who made excuses to God at the burning bush, or Joshua who assumed leadership after Moses or Isaiah who claimed to be a man of unclean lips. I would bring all the work of God's kingdom to a screeching halt if it depended upon my ability. No human being is adequate for the task we have been given.

Like everyone else in the full-time work the Lord has given me certain talents. At the same time I possess certain weaknesses. So do we all, but the talents and weaknesses differ among us. When we compare our talents with the talents which God has given to others we will find our weaknesses glaring at us unmercifully. When we see the problems that our own mistakes have created for us and the kingdom, we carry a heavy burden of guilt. It is easy to yield to the temptation of low self-esteem. The clergy is afflicted by it as well as other professions. Outwardly it may not seem to be a problem, but within your shell of protective public image you may come to the conclusion that the kingdom could get along well without you, perhaps better without you.

This attitude will rob us of energy to do the work that God has called us to do. Many is the time that I have had to cling to the words of the Lord in I Corinthians 15, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (I Cor. 15:58) It is a call to renew our efforts to labor, really labor, in the work of the Lord. It is a reminder of the enormous amounts of energy which are dissipated by low self-esteem.

We are servants of God. We need to avoid the comparisons with others and their talents and ministries. We need to think of ourselves as Christ's servants with special gifts which he provides for the benefit of his church. He has chosen each one of us in the role to which he has called us. Not only should we view ourselves as Christ's special servants but we also ought to view each other in that same light. Each one has different talents and gifts. We can be thankful that the Lord has provided so many gifts to his people, for no one person can do everything well. When we view the work of a brother in Christ, we ought to be charitable. Our jaundiced view of things may be inaccurate. No one outside knows all the nuances of a particular situation. I cannot stand in judgment over against another without realizing that I too have made some blunders and possess some glaring deficiencies.

I need to remember regularly that I am but one small part of the body of Christ. There are other parts, some more glorious and important than I am. None of us can conduct a ministry by trying to do what others expect of us or what we think others expect. The Lord values each of us and the work which we do by the power of the Holy Spirit. I am a member of his body with a function and role that is unique. So are all of you: members of the body of Christ with a special and important role. Each one is as different as the snowflakes, and each one contributes his small talent in the great work of the Lord. To him each one of us is important. His blood testifies to our importance in his eyes.

VIII. THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

Peter wrote these words, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." (I Peter 5:1-4) The call of God's people to us to serve them is a privilege beyond anything else in the world. It is a special trust that requires special effort. While on one hand we must fight the old Adam as he deflates our self-esteem, on the other hand we must fight the same enemy as he inflates our self-esteem.

Pastors and teachers are to be honored for their work's sake among God's people. The call into the ministry does not entitle us to a position of honor which we deserve. Instead such honor among others is given to us sinful creatures by his grace alone, as all our blessings are. God asks us to be humble in his service. There is no more destructive flaw in the ministry or in the church than pride. Remember the difficulty the disciples of Jesus had with pride. They argued who was the greatest among them down to the very end in the upper room. It was a heady experience for these 12 men. It is just as heady for all who serve Christ. Remember how the others felt when the mother of James and John asked for a position of honor for her sons - one on the right the other on the left. They were indignant. Had that situation prevailed it would have greatly hampered the labor of these men together in the service of the Lord. Humility, humility, humility! The theme is repeated throughout the gospel accounts for those 12 men and for all Christians.

Jesus reminds us that the greatest among his servants is the one who serves the most as he did. He was Lord of the universe, yet he came to earth to serve and give his life for us unworthy sinners. We all have a tendency to become officious and unsympathetic, insisting on our way when it is not necessary or advisable. We need the admonition to be humble servants of Christ regularly because we still possess our old sinful flesh. Consider briefly Philippians 2:1-11:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should

be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Being a pastor or teacher does not entitle us to be a commander over God's people any more than it assures us a position of preeminence in the kingdom of glory. Leadership is difficult to define but Peter suggests that leadership should be exercised by example not by issuing orders. This approach to leadership is not always easy. It is slower and requires patience. It is much easier to issue orders. Demonstrating quiet and firm leadership by example in Christian living, Christian giving and patiently dealing with problem individuals and situations does work. It just takes a little longer to achieve solutions and correction. That doesn't imply that you announce your example with trumpets either. Slowly and surely the example will win people over in a way that is appropriate for Christ's representatives and edifying.

The history of the church or of a particular congregation does not depend nearly so much upon us as it does upon God's people in the pews. We are to lead them to serve the Lord, motivating them to do as the Lord wills out of a love for God and gratitude for his blessings. There is much that must be done by the laymen and laywomen among God's saints. We ought to view them as partners in the ministry not as adversaries or a necessary evil. There are many dedicated lay people in every congregation without whose leadership, prayers and labor we could not function. In evangelism, stewardship and administration we must give more than just lip service to the universal priesthood of all believers. We must provide evangelical leadership and motivation so that they may advance the kingdom.

The Lord has called us to be shepherds not to be authoritarian administrators. Shepherd implies gentleness and love toward the sheep. As we feed, correct, motivate and lead they will accord us honor -- high honor. Don't let it go to your head. Because of our training and labor we are highly esteemed among those whom we serve. In the framework of the entire world wide church we are small and insignificant tools of God who by the power of the Holy Spirit effect dramatic changes in the individual lives of God's people. One ought never minimize God's work through us, but we ought to keep it in perspective. When the Lord counts the contributions we have made on the last day, I will be near the end of the line but nevertheless in line. We always misunderstand our calling when we view it as a license to issue orders or allow personal pride to develop and dominate our ministry. We are called to be humble shepherds of God's people.

IX. A TENSION BETWEEN DOCTRINAL CONCERNS AND THE NEED TO EVANGELIZE

Christ's command to His disciples was to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. This is the concern of every Christian. He also said that we were to teach them all things whatsoever he had commanded us. He wants faithful proclamation of his truth to the world in which we live. We must exercise faithful scholarship to know the truth from the Scriptures and develop firmness in that truth. Our efforts must be to protect the truth from the intrusion of any error. We must never compromise the message of Christ in an effort to "evangelize." Such an arrangement would not be making disciples for Christ of all nations. It would rather be making members and statistics for our own glorification and would finally be nothing more than serving our own bellies (Rom. 16:17,18). It is simply evident that we must know the truth and be firmly committed to it if we are going to proclaim it. The Lord did not present an either/or proposition for us. He presented a both/and task. We must proclaim the truth! Unfortunately we sometimes have trouble doing both at the same time. Some seem to think that if they have done one or the other they have done what they were asked to do. When we have the truth, do we sometimes expect the truth to proclaim itself? I remember a discussion with my first church council in a small town. The question was whether or not to place an ad in the yellow pages of the local

telephone directory. One of the comments made in that meeting was that we didn't want members who depended upon the yellow pages to know that we were in town. They wanted to sit on their heritage and God's truth. The congregation had been through some difficult doctrinal battles and these dedicated Christians had sided with God's truth, but their efforts to protect the truth had caused them to think that they had done what they were asked to do. They failed to see that even in a small town there was a need to proclaim the truth of God if not by the yellow pages then in some other way. The congregation has grown since then even in circumstances where one would not expect them to grow.

Instructing the unchurched is one of the most important functions of any pastor or congregation. It bothers me when I do not get as many as I think I should be getting. It bothers me when I look at the statistics for our Synod's congregations and find that we average just over 3 per congregation. The reason we exist is to proclaim Christ, not just to the far reaches of the world and country through our mission work but also to the people of our immediate environment. That is getting in the trenches and getting our hands dirty with the work. We can never be content to be doctrinally sound and doing mission work somewhere "over there." As important as it is, it is just as important to do the "community mission work" where we are. To say that we won't grow because of our conservatism, ethnic and social orientation or because our communities are not growing is to stifle efforts at outreach and more importantly to stunt creative thought and planning for outreach. There must be a way to reach out in every community no matter how much of a waste of time it seems to our logic. If we are serious about making disciples of all nations we must start in our own backyards wherever they are. Think of what the Jehovah's Witnesses do or the Mormons. We must be eternally optimistic about our chances for evangelism. The truth the Spirit has given to us must be proclaimed. It cannot be hoarded. We do the Lord a disservice if we do not maintain His truth and proclaim it aggressively.

This thought has always been driven home to me by some sobering realities. Our Synod is growing at a steady rate of less than 1% per year. (Last year it was .5%) Some have suggested that we should not grow any faster lest we be inundated with people who lack commitment to God. That is foolishness and exhibits little faith in the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit. The growth rate of our Synod is not keeping up with the population rate. If we continue to grow at this rate we will steadily become less and less of a factor in the world's Christian community. Our voice will become softer and softer as we raise it in defense of the truth and in reaching out with the truth. This is not meant to discount the power of God in sustaining us and keeping our collective voice strong in this world. The Holy Spirit can do many things. We have a task to perform, a great task, a wonderful task. We must never excuse ourselves from doing it. It must be done, and we have been called and challenged to do it.

There are so many things to do in the pastoral ministry that it is difficult to do them all. I have found it impossible to do everything I was suppose to do on more than one occasion. Scheduling information classes for those who have not the slightest background in the Scriptures and are somewhat weak in their commitment is a full-time task. When shut-ins, delinquents, preaching and other teaching duties consume large blocks of time, there is often little if any time to pound the pavement looking for more work in instructing adults. I have wondered out loud whether our established congregations are understaffed as a general rule. The shortage in manpower over the past years has perhaps created an attitude that is counter productive for outreach. We hesitate to ask for additional manpower because it is needed somewhere else more urgently. So we end up struggling to do the work by ourselves working long and difficult hours but accomplishing little more than a holding action.

In large metropolitan parishes we need to open the eyes of our people to see the fields white unto the harvest. The laborers are few. The people are there. We must expend our efforts at training our laypeople to witness and motivating them to contribute not only to the mission work of the Synod (which is vital) but also to their own local mission work by calling additional manpower for outreach. We have the potential to add manpower to many existing congregations with an eye to outreach. Some congregations are beginning to do it. I think more should be advised to do it.

X. INFLUENCES OF THE WORLD

Christian pastors never have been immune to the influences of the world in which they found themselves. We are no different. In a world where money, sex and prestige motivate people to make all kinds of compromises with their principles it is not surprising that pastors are influenced by these things as well. As we work long and difficult hours alcohol may become a problem for any one of us. These influences among others intrude upon our work and our families. Unfortunately they also can wedge their way into our relationship with Jesus and the people we serve.

Clergy marriages and families experience the tension of these influences. There is so much emphasis upon worldly things that many have wondered about the Christian family and specifically the pastor's family. Efforts have been made in more than one arena to support the family in a variety of ways. In the busy life of a pastor there is pressure to neglect the family God has provided and become a less than adequate husband and father. My wife has had to be father and mother to my children on more than one occasion. She is the greatest blessing the Lord has given to me in this life. I know of many others whom the Holy Spirit has blessed with the talents necessary to be the loving help appropriate for her pastor/husband. We ought never to minimize their importance to our families, our ministry, the church and the entire work of the Lord's kingdom. Jesus said that he who is greatest is the servant of all. Our wives in that view are truly great in the Lord's eyes. It would not surprise me to stand in the line of commendation behind many a pastor's wife including my own. It is important that we take time for them and our children. Such precious blessings should not be neglected.

I am concerned about those who enter the ministry with mates that are less than adequate for the pressures and demands that will be made upon them. I know you can advise a young man all you want about choosing the right woman as a spouse. But sometimes we can do nothing more than pray that our young candidates for the ministry will be guided by the Lord in this important choice. For those who have marital problems in the ministry we need to extend an understanding hand and a firm but evangelical voice. The qualifications for the ministry list the ability to govern one's own house. The world's influences creates havoc in the homes of our people. Can we expect anything different for the pastor or teacher?

There are so many temptations which eat away at our efforts. Our sinful flesh looks at the world and wonders. When we put in 60-80 hour weeks, we can become resentful of the wages we receive. We can become so concerned with our salaries and our inability to acquire the things that everyone else has that we grow discontented and unhappy. The dissatisfaction spills over into our relationship with the people we serve. Our emphasis can seem to them at times to be more worldly than spiritual. (Please understand I am not supporting low salaries. On the other hand no salary we would ever receive would be comparable to the compensation professionals with the same amount of training receive. No salary would be adequate for the work we do which is comforting immortal souls with the gospel of Christ.) Complaining about the treatment we receive only invites similar treatment. Complaining about salaries injects an unsavory concern into the work. Paul said quite candidly that he had learned to be content with whatever he received. Remember that the Lord still blesses us with money even in the ministry.

The corporate world of business is obsessed with the desire for the most important job with the highest visibility and salary. That influence is not absent in the ministry either. We are tempted to view one role and task in the kingdom as more important. Instead of working together we may begin to compete with one another and vie for what is viewed as a more "important" position.

Because of the influences of the world we are beginning to see a number of resignations from the public ministry. I believe that we will continue to see them. All of us have weaknesses in the ministry. Satan knows where and how to exploit our weaknesses. He knows just what temptation to present in order to distract us from our work. He has done great harm to the Lord's church. Let us renew our own prayers for the Lord's strength in this work. We need to strengthen the new man continually against the assaults of the world, our flesh and Satan through regular use of the word and Sacrament.