

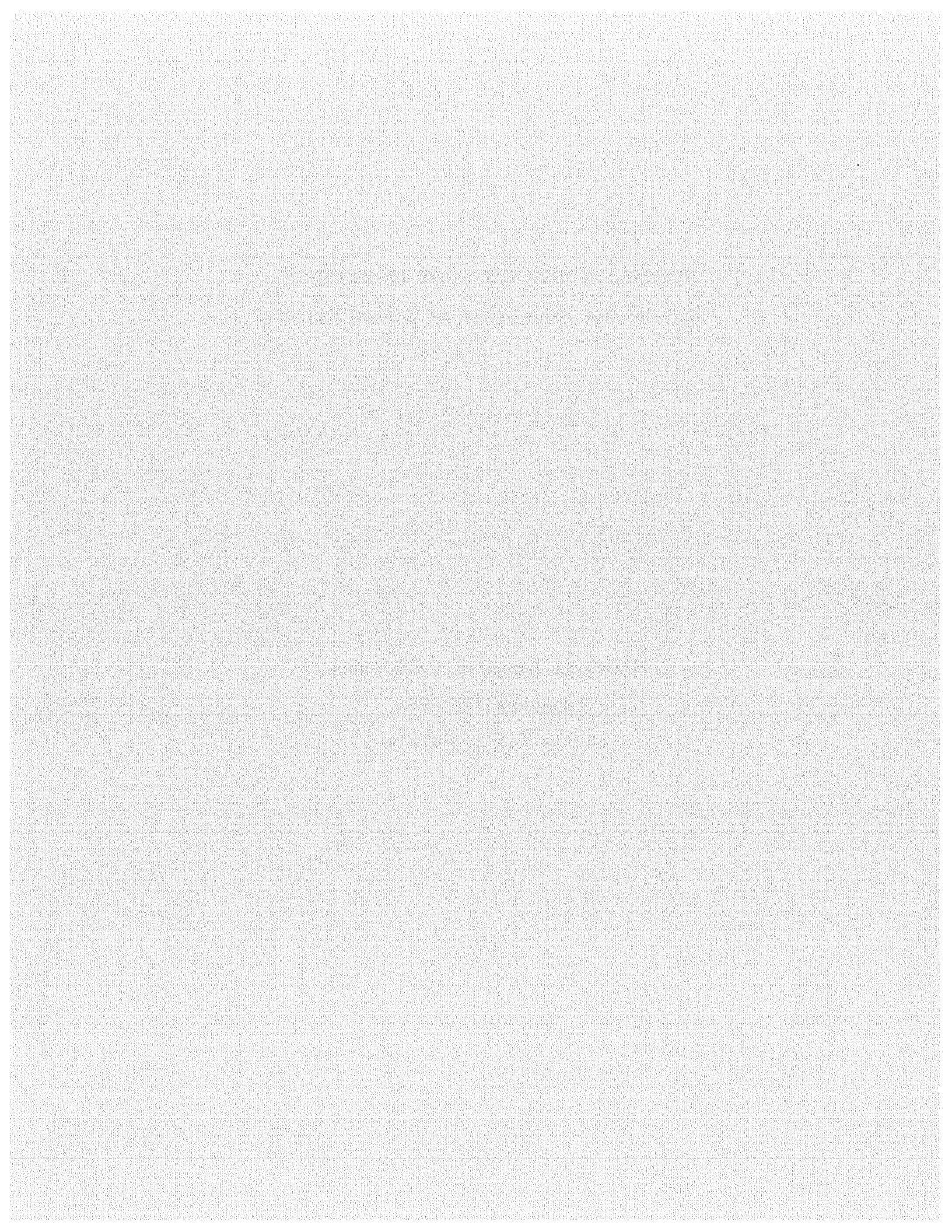
STRUGGLING WITH CONFLICTS OF MINISTRY
"What We Owe Each Other as Fellow Pastors"

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EVALUATE FOR EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

1. A brother in the ministry stops in to chat for awhile. He opens up to share his innermost needs during a time of stress.

- RESPONSE:
- Glance at your watch continually.
 - Tell him it's not that bad.
 - Offer your own horror stories.
 - Rant and rave against his weak faith
 - Listen with open, accepting concern.

2. Mother shares with you over the phone how Pastor So-and-So from a WELS church in a different town wouldn't marry a couple from the home WELS church, and the couple had to go to a different Lutheran Church. They didn't want to go to a family reunion unmarried.

- RESPONSE:
- "Why that Pastor So-and-So, who does he think he is?"
 - "I would have handled that situation differently."
 - "I've heard some other things about that pastor."
 - "I'm sure he discussed all the angles with them."
 - "I'm sure he discussed it with the home pastor and he had his reasons."

3. A woman from your former parish calls to let you know how everything is falling apart. "All this new pastor is interested in is youth work and spending money."

- RESPONSE:
- Say you're sorry the work has suffered since you left.
 - Say you are sorry you're stuck with such a man.
 - Say this is out of your field now.
 - Call the pastor up and read the riot act.
 - Kindly let the circuit pastor know what's going on.

4. A family member calls and is very disturbed. One of his friends committed suicide. He is asked to be a pallbearer, but the WELS pastor won't have the funeral. The young man was confirmed years earlier.

- RESPONSE:
- Express dismay that the pastor would be so cruel.
 - Ask whether he spoke to the pastor.
 - Explain the purpose of Christian burial service.
 - Say, "I would have handled it differently."

5. You're a newly-arrived pastor at a congregation. A very proper purse-lipped lady comes to see you to express her great appreciation at having a new pastor. The old one was alright, not too personable, not too gregarious, not too civic-minded, not too youth-oriented, but he was alright. "We are certainly glad to have you here."

- RESPONSE:
- Bask in the glow of her praise.
 - Agree that it's nice to have a young, energetic, enthusiastic person in charge.
 - Rejoice that you already have an ally in the congregation.
 - Get your antennae raised and be ready to watch out.
 - Ask her whether she would mention these things if the previous called servant were present.

6. A brother in the ministry resigns or is terminated.

- RESPONSE:
- Grill the officials who were in charge.
 - Never hit a man when he's down, kick him, it's easier.
 - Pray for the man and healing.
 - Seek to probe for all the reasons.
 - Be ready to help and support if possible.

7. A member of your church mentions that a sister congregation has practices which you have instructed against--bake sales, bazaars, public feed, etc.

- RESPONSE:
- Say that the pastor doesn't care about the truth.

- b. Say the congregation and pastor have their own business to conduct.
- c. Agree that it does create some problems as to how people view our WELS churches.
- d. Call the pastor and read the riot act.
- e. Keep up your own faithful instruction.

8. A brother in the ministry stops attending conferences.

- RESPONSE:
- a. Remark that his true colors are showing.
 - b. Visit the brother.
 - c. Read the riot act to him.
 - d. Be sensitive to his needs and feelings.
 - e. Write him off as unsociable.

9. Your brother workers in the Synod administration develop a new program that seems like wasted time and effort.

- RESPONSE:
- a. Practice the three "C's", criticize, condemn, and complain.
 - b. Investigate the program only superficially.
 - c. Question the motives of the leaders.
 - d. Assume they are doing the Lord's work to the best of their abilities and with the best intentions.
 - e. Let your people know how you "really" feel about "those synod officials."

10. A present member announces "the good old days" of the former pastor were "the glory days," the zenith of the congregation's history.

- RESPONSE:
- a. You've looked over the history, and you know better, so you let the person know the truth.
 - b. You become very irritated and you defend your record.
 - c. You wonder what the person has against you.
 - d. You express thanks that the Lord worked so much through this man so now you have a good foundation to build on.
 - e. You are pleased that God has asked such a weak person as yourself to follow in such footsteps of greatness.

STRUGGLING WITH CONFLICTS OF MINISTRY
 "What We Owe Each Other as Fellow Pastors"
 OUTLINE-AREAS OF SPECIAL CONCERN

- I. Changes in Ministry
 - A. The new fledgling pastor
 - B. The changing of pastors
 - C. The retirement pastor and successor
- II. Actions in Ministry
 - A. Slander and Gossip
 - B. Betrayal
 - C. Fall, Correction, and Restoration
 - D. Para-church organizations
- III. Attitudes in Ministry
 - A. Avoid the three negative "C's"
 - B. Show love and be thankful
 - C. I am called. Ministry is a gift.
 - D. Appreciate your Synod affiliations
 - E. Carry each other's burdens

STRUGGLING WITH CONFLICTS OF MINISTRY

"What We Owe Each Other as Fellow Pastors"

The topic which is set before us today can be treated at great length. Research has uncovered numerous helpful articles about pastors, their jobs, problems in congregations, methods of work, and solutions to problems. Findings from these areas of study can be applied to the inter-personal relationships of pastors as brothers and co-workers in the ministry. There were many fewer articles which addressed the special relationships which brother clergy develop to gain support for their unique ministries. And only a few articles dealt with the ethics of pastoral relationships, but the writer was not able to obtain even these articles due to time restraints.

The present interest concerning the pastoral ministry and the inter-personal relationships of ministers has developed because the Christian parish ministry has taken a beating in our modern age. We hear of crises of ministry, full-time ministries, part-time ministries, lay ministries, specialized ministries. The full-time pastoral ministry seems to be losing its identity, attraction, and respect. Pastors then do not help the situation when they take potshots at each other or when they do not support each other. Quick judgmental words and ill feelings thoughtlessly expressed can undermine the best man's ministry. Contentious stances and hyper-critical evaluations of the neighbor's ministry can cause seeds of mistrust to sprout and take root in the neighbor's church. Eventually pastor stands against pastor, circuit pastors are called in, congregations take sides, and we end up with a royal mess. Could this whole sordid situation be avoided if the evangelical approach were used? I think so. We all have enough conflict in the ministry without increasing it among ourselves by criticizing, condemning, or complaining. The purpose of this paper is to examine certain transition times of a pastor's ministry where conflict may develop between fellow workers. We will also try to identify actions in the ministry which undermine a brother's effectiveness. We will examine some attitudes which hurt our ministry and look at attitudes which build us up for ministry.

As I mentioned, this topic could be treated in volumes. What I am saying is this study is not exhaustive of the topic. However, after investigating upwards of twenty sources for material, I noticed recurring areas of possible contention between pastors. Most of the writings, gleaned from authors from many denominations, tackled these areas of possible contention, and thus the paper took its form. The Scriptural foundation for the Christian ministry was provided in the Exegetical Study, so now we present what we hope is a helpful practical side. This paper is offered with the prayers that we learn to appreciate our own ministry as a gift from God; that we learn to appreciate our brothers' ministries; and that we learn to carry each other or support each other in God's work.

Struggling With Conflicts of Ministry-

I. What We Owe Each Other as Fellow Pastors During Changes in Ministry

Graduation from the seminary and the move to the new call come all too quickly. The candidate feels he has purchased and earned his tools for the ministerial call. The classroom work has gilded the mural of the ministry for him. The excitement and anticipation for the call have built to a feverish pitch. Suddenly the words of the

call are spoken, "This town, This congregation, This state, 1,600 miles away." Graduation comes and goes. Six weeks later he arrives at the new mission with young wife and newborn child. On Sunday evening one week later, ordination and installation take place. A few brothers show up for the occasion, and you thank them for the effort. You really don't expect too many brothers to attend, because the nearest sister congregation is 85 miles away. After a night of fun and fellowship and little sleep, the time for departure comes. The mission board representative gives the candidate a mimeograph machine, a mission manual, a handshake, and he boards his plane for his church 385 miles away. The newly-arrived, ordained, installed candidate watches the plane shrink to a flyspeck on the horizon and wonders, "Now what?" What a change.

Entering the parish ministry signifies great changes in a person's life, and the real world soon fills the pastor's life with busyness and planning. Getting settled takes time. Developing a routine takes time. The honeymoon period seems to go smoothly. It takes a while for the real world to lead the new pastor into doubtful loneliness. During that honeymoon period both the congregation and the fellow pastors are asking quiet questions, questions like the following: "What will the tone and future of his ministry look like? What will he do for his congregation? What kind of interests does he have? Is his head on straight? Is he one of the boys? Is this person strong, weak, stable, flighty, slow to speak, or quick with the mouth?" I don't know how many pastors would admit to thinking these questions about the younger men, but I guess human nature has chased these questions through my mind.

One question always thought but seldom asked is, "How idealistic or how realistic is this person?" Young pastors are noted for their idealism, and well they should be. Idealism helps a person get through the time till reality strikes a blow to the midsection. But how do older brothers view the idealistic ideas of the younger pastor? When the younger man's ideas come out in conversation, their reaction does not depend on the ideas themselves but on how the ideas are presented. If the brothers sense a condescending attitude from the new man, "Have I got something to tell you!" or if the brothers sense a judgmental attitude, "Let me refresh your memory on the right interpretation of that word!" watch out. That new pastor will be lonelier much faster than usual. Brothers can really rub each other the wrong way when experience meets idealism. Problems develop here because of respect. The older pastor would like to receive respect for his years of experience. The younger pastor would like to have the respect of being a fellow called worker in God's church. Brothers should respect each other.

If we move a few years past the ordination, we will see the new pastor has learned something. Some of his ideals have proven to be unreal expectations. As the young pastor enters this period of his ministry, he needs the help and understanding of a wise and experienced brother. He now feels a lot like Jeremiah, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak. I am only a child." (Jer. 1:6) He's had to face the squabble in the Ladies Aid. He had to mediate a fight in a prominent family. Someone just died in the intensive care unit as he bled into his oxygen mask. The young wife insists on divorcing her husband and she has no grounds for it. Two kids are sick at home. Attendance is down. Now the questions swirl through his mind. Listen to what happens: "Unrealized ideals may germinate the seeds of disillusionment. Initiative erodes. The call is questioned. The pastor is tormented by doubts. 'Am I doing

enough? Is this where I really belong? Am I being wasted? It's all crumbling around me." <1> It's time for a good wise brother to hear this pastor out and assure him that his call is from God, and God's call is not based on results. When a young pastor's ideals are challenged by the congregation or by fellow pastors, the young pastor may try to forge ahead in spite of the best advice. In frustration and anger, the young man might feel that he will have to do it all. However, ministry by oneself is practically impossible. Lone Ranger pastors don't get very far. Both older pastors and younger pastors have to watch for the precarious time when reality throws a shroud over idealism.

However, everyone can grow through these maturing experiences. They help us see that we don't have to earn our call or prove our worth for the call. Young pastors don't have to prove their worth to the older pastors. Life in the ministry can be difficult enough without having brothers in the ministry making it tougher. "The critical factor in God's eye is not the chronology; it's CALL." <2> To grow through this transition time, brothers can seek God's will together. They should get to know one another, attend conferences together, develop friendships, and form study clubs. I find it helpful to remember that the teachings among the brethren are the same with the older and the younger pastors. The only thing that changes is our depth of insight for applications. "The quickly spoken words of youth will grow weightier and fuller as we all experience God's faithfulness over the years." <3> And finally, follow this man's advice:

Stop acting as though the Kingdom of God, or even the success of the congregation's program depends on you. It doesn't! Let God worry about success. You worry about being yourself." (my addition: and worry about being faithful!) <4>

Between the fifth and fifteenth years of ministry, the pastor enters a time of stresses, some self-imposed due to family or finances, which can adversely effect his ministry. These stresses may even lead to resignation. The battle scars have begun to develop. He's beginning to feel he knows a little about the ministry. His family is young and growing. He may be facing huge education or medical expenses in the family. Above all, he's learning to be himself. Three words could characterize this phase of the ministry, Irrelevance, Integrity, and Comfortability.

During this extended period of ministry, the pastor is often tempted to think the grass is greener over the other church's fence. No one would hear the pastor say to his fellow pastors, "I'm leaving this congregation for another congregation, because they are larger, they have fewer problems, they are going to treat me better, and they are going to pay me more." But the thoughts are there in his mind as surely as Sunday comes every seven days. In the crisis of irrelevance, the pastor probably feels that the Christian ministry is not needed or even wanted in our world. In some denominations, the parish pastor's role appears to have been reduced to mundane proportions. The pastoral role appears to be that of a fund-raiser, a spiritual cheerleader, a manager, an invocation giver, a member of the library board, a keeper of the dust-bound traditions. And who listens to the pastor when the congregations appear to have lost the sense of the call or the concept of spiritual authority? After the heat of battle is passed, the pastor may feel like his sermons have become statements for debate rather than the truths delivered from God's Word.

These feelings of irrelevance intensify during times of stress and especially after times of stress. That stress can be positive and negative. The ministry is a 24 hour a day calling. The mantle of the call can lie heavily on the shoulders of the pastor. Some feel it more than others, and stress affects different pastors in different ways. Some pastors experience the post-adrenaline blues following some particularly exciting service or festival in the church. During these down times, they might read through the classified ads in the paper and discover there's nothing there they can do without further schooling or extensive training. They can feel locked into the ministry. They can perform this one job in this one denomination. They feel irrelevant. Where's the success, the glory, the money their years of schooling should deserve?

An experienced brother in the ministry can really help here. A wise brother can point out the naturalness of these feelings, not that they are right but that they naturally come. The feelings of irrelevance will come, but a minister has to learn not to judge his success by worldly criteria. The success criteria are all around. The pastor lives and functions in the American world filled with comparison, competition, and cash, and when a pastor tries to judge his spiritual work with worldly criteria, the results can be disastrous. He needs to be reminded that His Savior, Jesus, by worldly standards, was a failure. Jesus had only twelve close followers in his immediate congregation. He lost one through betrayal. The rest deserted Him when He was arrested. He died a cruel death and was buried in a friend's grave. But Jesus thrived--His food was to do the will of His Father. Jesus also knew who He was and what His purpose was. His identity was secure. Share these things with each other when the ministry seems irrelevant.

A second problem facing maturing ministers is the problem of Integrity. The pastor always wrestles with the chasm that appears between matters preached and matters lived. Have you gone into the pulpit on Sunday morning wishing you weren't there? Maybe you are not living up to what God has laid before you and the congregation that morning. I'm sure that all faithful pastors have mulled over questions like the following, "How can I be of serious help to another mortal when I feel my own mortality all too severely?" <5> Or add the following, "How can I become more prayer-like? How can I become a better preacher? A better organizer? A better leader?"

When preachers face the problem of integrity, they also need the caring hearts of brothers who can understand this dilemma, because they have experienced it. One pastor tells how he wrestled with these problems until he found another pastor who would listen:

"I sensed he accepted me as an equal, one pastor talking with another. I poured out the matter I was anxious about, longing for a friend to hear me out, to slide in where I was bleeding. He quickly picked up my frequency and let me know that he was meshing with my hurt." <6>

Christian pastors often experience the pain of their own biographies until a brother leads them to realize, "That's the way it is." We are not called because we are perfect, but we are called because of God's grace, weaknesses, sins, mortality, and all.

A Christian brother can quickly help build a bridge between the problem of integrity and the arrival of comfortability. By comfortability, we don't mean laziness or lackadaisical attitude. We mean knowing who we are, recognizing our own sins and weaknesses, and thanking God for our own gifts and abilities. Each of us has certain abilities and certain limitations. When we try to be more than we

are, we set ourselves up for failure. When we waste our time and abilities we hinder the grace of God's call in our lives. Comfortability could be called self-awareness or self-acceptance. If we follow Paul's definition of self-awareness and we will be at peace in our ministry.

In paraphrase Paul said, "I am a sinner saved by grace. I was a chief sinner, but God's grace called me to be an apostle. I am a servant in the name of Christ. I have one central message to proclaim, Jesus Christ, the Crucified Savior. I will not boast of myself, but only of God's grace working in and through many people in many congregations. I am a father, brother, and friend of fellow Christians. I speak with the authority of God." Christian pastors could probably make a sign for their desk which reads: WE ARE INADEQUATE and ALWAYS WILL BE. This is one of the most positive steps we can take in the ministry, for it shows we realize the whole church depends on God's working. God uses us in many circumstances and some of our most effective ministry comes through pain, grief, frustration, and prayer.

One of the great truths of the ministry is that pastors must follow pastors. The greater majority of the congregations in our synod have had more than one pastor. Changing pastorates is one area where brothers in the ministry owe each other consideration. When the moving van pulls up, loads the household equipment, and disappears over the horizon, the pastor's ties to the congregation are not automatically severed. Since the pastor's relationship to his congregation has been described as a marriage relationship, his relocation to another congregation could probably be compared to a divorce procedure. There can be great pains in separation. But we do well to remember that a moving van has also moved the previous pastor of the new parish. His presence and belongings are gone, but not his style of doing things or his mannerisms or his memories.

A pastor can truly count his blessings if "Jim, or Pete, or Ralph" don't deliberately "come back." The new pastor will hear soon enough how "Pastor Bob did this", maybe even once a week for a year or two. Some members do need help to make the shift, but isn't relocation a time to shut the door on the past? The memories and problems can easily be handed over to the new pastor, or perhaps the vacancy pastor. There may be exceptions where the relocated pastor's in-depth knowledge of specific problems may be needed, but such exceptions will be clearly demonstrated. Isn't it more an act of brotherly love to stay out of things?

It's humbling to admit it, but the life and problems which laid claim to the pastor's life can be handed over to someone else. But what is the first reaction of the relocated pastor when he hears the former church wants to blow a lot of money on an unnecessary expense? What if the president of the congregation dies? What if he is asked to perform a friend's wedding? What if he is asked to baptize the baby of partners in the bowling league? A question that should always be asked is, "What will this do to my brother's ministry?"

If old ties are kept intact after the move, bad things can happen unless all the people involved are secure in their positions. Obviously the authority of the successor can be undermined. If the previous pastor comes back for the important events like weddings, baptisms, and funerals, the new pastor and the congregation will draw the conclusion the present pastor is not quite qualified. The new pastor will be confused about his role, the congregation about who to go to, and the former minister about his task. And the people

outside the church will wonder what all the fighting and confusion is about. Such things are bound to happen.

Another way pastorates change is through retirement and replacement. If the retiring pastor retires into his present congregation, a whole seed-bed of confusion and controversy can be sown for everyone involved. I'm sure all present realize the ramifications for the new pastor, the retiring pastor, and the congregation caught in the middle with its loyalties. While countless examples of disharmony could be put down, I'll share just one true incident.:

A pastor retired after years in the parish and stayed in town. When his successor came, board meetings continued on the first Monday of every month at 7:30 PM. It was not until several months had passed that the new minister learned quite by accident that board members were gathering in the former pastor's home that same night at 6:30-. Those meetings; of course, were "just time of fellowship." Would you like to guess which meeting was the real board meeting? <7>

In changing pastorates, brothers in the ministry owe each other respect and consideration. They should follow Paul's advice to the Thessalonians, " Now we ask you, brothers, to respect them who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who adminish you. Hold them in highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other." (I Thess. 5:12-13)

What Brothers Owe Each Other Through II. Actions in Ministry.

We have been talking about the problem areas of changing ministries. It is sad, but true, that brothers in the ministry sometimes cause each other's problems. Hopefully, we imparted some wisdom how brothers can help each other through these changing times. Now we want to address some activities of ministry which can either divide the brotherhood or cement our brotherhood of parish pastors more closely together.

In the pastor's study club, an elder wiser brother made the comment, "The most abused commandment among pastoral brethren is the eighth commandment--you shall not bear false testimony against your neighbor." The man had expressed what all the members had felt and known at one time or another, yet they were reluctant to admit it. Brothers do harm each other by what they say or don't say. Experience has taught us that the spirits of competitiveness and ego-inflation are all too prevalent even in the natures of ministers of the gospel. Maybe this should not surprise us. Most pastors of our fellowship have studied long and hard to ready themselves for the ministry. It's a proven fact that pastors generally have strong personalities and strong opinions. They develop into individualistic personalities. They want to serve, but they are also required to lead or be in charge at some very difficult times in their parishioners' lives. All Satan has to do is add the seeds of sinful pride to the scene, and the fruits of competition, gossip, slander, and intrigue are ripe for the picking. Cliques for the disgruntled, dissatisfied pastors can quickly form. Motives for a brother's actions are called into question. Name dropping and even name calling can occur. The itching ear is perked up for the juicy morsel of gossip. "Did you hear about this? Who's in charge of that situation? Don't you think this should be checked out? I heard the other day..." What could the motives be for slicing each other apart? Could cowardice be the cause? Could there be competition

for recognition? Maybe it's ego-inflatng to say, "I'm glad it happened to him and not me."

But gossip still hurts. David expressed his great disappointment when a friend slandered him. "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God." David also prayed against slander in Psalm 140. "Let slanderers not be established in the land." Weaklings whisper rumors and cowards conduct smear campaigns. Inflated egos seek domination. The apostle John had to deal with such a person named Diotrephes. "I wrote to the church--but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church." (III John 9-10) So much trouble develops when brothers hurt each other's reputations.

But gossip and slander must give way to corrective action. Christian brothers will try to give each other the benefit of the doubt. When each pastor realizes that he is subject to fall himself, he will take his brother's word and actions in the kindest possible way. The brothers will do well to follow Jesus' words from Matthew. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-26)

But what hurts personally more than gossip or slander is betrayal. One of the occupational hazards of the ministry is betrayal. Pastors seldom talk about it, share it, or admit it, but it has happened. What pastor hasn't heard the following statements: "The very ones I gave my blood for have turned on me... I thought I was doing what they wanted done; now they tell me I'm not doing anything right...The ones my wife and I had over for the evening meals are the ones who have set up a coalition to get rid of me...The ones I had thought to be trusted are the ones who have been most vicious." A few anonymous letters, written respectfully to the church council, by a concerned group have made many pastors too wary to open up again.

If betrayal from members of the congregation does so much damage, just think what havoc betrayal among the brethren creates. If one pastor opens up to another and gets shot down, do you think that pastor will have any confidence in his brother again? If the same pastor's problems are noised abroad so everyone knows his problem, will he trust anyone again? The end result of betrayal is that the offended brother questions whether anyone can be trusted in the clerical machinery. Paul had experienced betrayal on the part of a craftsman and some friends. He points to this person and gives us an example of how we might handle our betrayals. "Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." (II Tim. 3:12)

There are certain mechanisms a pastor can use to cope with betrayal. First of all, admit to reality. It is not unspiritual to admit to betrayal, rather it is wise and helpful to admit it happens. Then, turn those betrayals over to God. Give the wounds over to Jesus, who understands the hurt and shock of betrayal much more than any human can. Listen to the pains and sufferings Jesus endured after His betrayal: "Many were appalled at him...his appearance was so disfigured...his form marred beyond human likeness...he was despised and rejected... stricken by God, smitten, and afflicted...he was pierced...he was crushed...he was oppressed and afflicted...he was taken away...he was cut off." (Isaiah 53) The Savior knows a hurting brother's innermost needs, because Jesus endured the same things.

Think of betrayal as a general part of life. The Christian pastor will not go about looking for the suspicious characters who would betray him, but neither should a pastor say, "It will never happen to me." Brothers can help each other by sharing their frustrations with each other and by listening to each other. Just hearing a person say, "I know it's difficult, and I know how you feel," goes a long way in healing the wound. The pastor's wife can be a source of strength if she has the maturity to handle the problems. Here the pastor will have to evaluate whether his wife is mature enough or "tight-lipped" enough to help carry the burden. Pastors, desiring a wife who is suitable and supportive for the parish life, should choose their spouses very carefully. He should not choose a wife whose lifestyle and personal achievements throw a cloud of dissension or suspicion over the parish work. Developing meaningful friendships outside the congregation can be a helpful mechanism to cope with the effects of betrayal. Changing the scenery of life for a while can help too. Developing hobbies or participating in hard physical activities will help cope with betrayal. Look on the betrayal from the long range point of view. "Will this matter twenty years from now?" Be faithful and don't give up.

Preventing betrayal is probably easier than putting the people back together again after the betrayal has taken place. Brothers in the ministry probably realize that trust works against betrayal the best. Each congregation is different. Each brother's talents and temperament are different. The Holy Spirit works differently in each brother. Church goals and church programs differ widely, and brothers in the ministry have to trust each other. Don't treat the brothers or their ministries shoddily. Thank God for the ministry of fellow pastors.

What provides the most fuel for gossip and what fans the flames of rumors fastest is the public sin of a pastor. All pastors know they are sinners. Even though some congregations feel the pastor "is sinless, sexless, and beyond the vicissitudes of temptation," most congregations will admit the pastor is a sinner "to some extent." The general public outside the congregation will allow some little inoffensive mistakes. But let the pastor fall into a grievous sin like drunkenness, adultery, or embezzlement, then watch out. The true colors of people's beliefs show. In reality, people judge a sin by the person committing it. The world hasn't changed one bit, has it? Listen to what John Chrysostom, a church leader of 1600 years ago, said:

"The minister's short-comings simply cannot be concealed...
However trifling their offenses, these little things seem
great to others, since everyone measures sin, not by the

size of the offense, but by the standing of the sinner. <8> If the "little sins" on the part of pastors cause such a stir, just imagine what great fallout "The Fall" of a pastor creates. The congregation knows about it. The community knows about it. The fellow pastors find out about it.

How do we treat a brother who has fallen? Too often when a brother falls, we stand aside to watch, to listen for the collapse, to watch the supports crumble, and then shake our heads in disbelief. Perhaps there was a time, like in the old western movies following a cowboy-Indian battle, when we "either shot our wounded or left them to die in agony." Willingness to help someone should not be construed as signs of approval or weakness. In Christian love, we want for our brother what we want for our members. We seek the best interests of our brother and God's church when we seek repentance, forgiveness, and restoration, if possible. The public sin of a brother will not necessarily exclude him from the public ministry.

The history of God's church has numerous examples of God's people who fell into sin, were forgiven, and still carried out their service to God. Abraham, in disbelief, disobeyed God. Two times, Abraham lied publicly about Sarah not being his wife, yet God made him the father of the chosen people. Moses was a murderer, who led God's people out of Egypt. David was an adulterer and murderer who still ruled God's people as king. Mark, a quitter, was brought back into the ministry and was allowed to author the second book of the New Testament. Peter blasphemed and denied Christ, but only a month and a half later, he preached the beautiful Pentecost sermon. Peter caused divisions in the church when he separated himself from the Gentile believers and Paul had to publicly correct him. "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was in the wrong...I said to Peter in front of them all..."(Gal. 2:11) Through repentance, forgiveness, and restoration, we will follow God's guidelines of II Corinthians 2: "Forgive him...comfort him, confirm your love toward him, lest Satan should get the advantage." (II Cor. 2:7-11) We will gain the brother, and we may salvage a ministry in God's church.

Paul had an interesting ending to his word on forgiving, comforting, and confirming the brother in love. "Lest Satan should get the advantage." This warning has a pointed, two-pronged application. If a brother refuses to forgive and restore a repentant pastor, he may be led to despair. Satan has the advantage. However, if brothers refuse forgiveness and restoration to a fallen brother, they may also be showing a spirit of pride and self-confidence. Satan gains the advantage in their lives. Paul told how to practice forgiveness and restoration properly in his letter to the Galatians; "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself or you may also be tempted. Carry each others burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load." (Gal. 6:1-5) Finally, let's imitate the example of Christ toward a fallen brother. Let's remember how much Christ has done for us:

Christ bears with us in our weakness. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. As we walk in his steps, we should maintain the same attitude toward the brother that He exemplifies. This should include a genuine sensitivity to needs and a loving desire to assist him towards cleansing,

forgiveness, and restoration. We are to sympathize with one another under the trials and troubles we face and be ready to afford each other the comfort and assistance that the circumstances require." <9>

Thank the Lord for evangelical circuit pastors.

One other area where pastors from all denominations experience conflict is the area of para-church organizations. Obviously each pastor may have special interests outside the specific call of his congregation. Some may become more involved with these outside interests than others. Conflicts develop when the less-involved pastors criticize the more involved pastors for their activities outside the parish. Then the more involved pastors sometimes judge the less-involved for their lack of zeal for God's work. The following situation comes from a Lutheran pastor in Colorado, and I think it portrays the problems we face in this area:

Despite supporting pro-life rallies and preaching against abortion, some brothers are not satisfied. They tell me that abortion is the single most important issue of the day, and if I don't condemn it at every opportunity, I'm selling out. I support their cause, but I try to explain that God calls different people to different roles. As a pastor, I need to attend pro-life rallies, but being pro-life also means ministering to nursery workers, troubled junior highers, searching college students, harried young parents, and suffering older folks. Zealots can't understand that...until their junior higher is the one with the problems.<10>

This is but one example where conflicts develop.

Some criticism falls on pastors when they don't get on the bandwagon for certain causes. That cause might be Lutherans for Life, anti-pornography marches, anti-drug crusades, high school associations, OWLS. Criticism also falls on those pastors who are actively involved in these organizations. What should we do? Let's develop a spirit of mutual consideration and respect. Look for the gifts and abilities of others. Let the pastor with certain strengths in certain areas do what he feels called to do. Be committed to the church of your calling and urge the brothers to be committed to the church of his calling. Then think, "If there is only one ability we think we might have, and that is the ability to judge--BURY IT!

What We Owe Our Brothers in the Ministry Through

III Attitudes in Ministry

We can already see from actions in the ministry that attitudes play a vital role. From the start I would like to address three attitudes most detrimental to our ministry, to our family life, especially to our congregational life, and even to our relationships outside the congregation. Let's call these the three negative "C's", and they stand for "Don't Criticize, Condemn, or Complain." If pastors ever get the chance to take the Dale Carnegie course on human relations, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," they will learn about the three "C's". This course on human relations is a humanistic course, but it can serve a useful purpose. It presents neat little memory aids and short guidelines which can exemplify Christ-like behavior. It's very scriptural for pastors to develop the attitude of the three negative "C's", Don't criticize, Condemn, or Complain.

Paul advised the Philippians, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure..." He also wrote to the Galatians, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other." (Phil.

2:16, Gal. 5:15) Constant criticizing, callous condemning, and continual complaining construct walls between pastors and throw a shroud of gloom over the whole ministry. Pastors can share their problems without criticizing, condemning, and complaining. Never will the pastor intentionally try to use these three "C's" against his congregation:

A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men. <11> (Bonhoeffer-quoted from Life Together)

When we view our congregations or our brothers through the shades of contempt, they both know it and record it for future reference. Our chances for real service to them are greatly reduced. As for the three negative "C's", repeat them in your study five times a day for the rest of your ministry. Don't Criticize, Condemn, or Complain!

What builds healthy relationships for the ministry is love and thankfulness. I Corinthians 13 is not just for weddings. Paul's description of love could apply more to brothers in the ministry than to married folks because of its context. Paul sandwiches the discourse on love between instruction concerning spiritual gifts, the unity of believers as Christ's Body, and the use of spiritual gifts like prophecy and tongues. Jesus' special command to His disciples was that they love one another. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know you are my disciples if you love one another." (Jn. 13:35) Love moves brothers to help and support each other. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Practicing Christian love will build healthy relationships between brothers. In love, praise one another's strengths and support each other where there is weakness. Take pride in the great diversity of gifts God has bestowed on the many brothers in the ministry. Be thankful for the concern, candor, and constructive criticism which may come your way. Assume anything derogatory or uncomplimentary you say can be repeated and just might be. Above all, be slow to step in to other people's problems. In love try to remember the highs and lows of your ministry, so you can be there for others.

Follow up love with an attitude of thankfulness. Being thankful in counting blessings is the most effective means for pulling us out of the valleys of despair. Be thankful for the congregation God has entrusted to your care. Be thankful for the faithful, giving, attending members. Be thankful for the Holy Spirit working in their lives through law and gospel. Be thankful that they take good care of you as their shepherd of the flock.

Be thankful for your ministry and the grace of God's call. Paul repeatedly mentioned that God had placed him into service. Paul was called to be an apostle and a servant of Christ. The ministry is a gift, not just a profession. It must be a gift where a pastor is joined so closely to a congregation. How else could we describe the situation where a man from South Dakota studies for the ministry, is called to a congregation in Washington he's never heard about nor ever seen; then he receives a call to a congregation in a small town in Wisconsin which he has never heard of and they have never heard of him, but then the Lord joins them together, and they work together for the Lord's kingdom? This is a gift. What else is it except a gift when God uses frail, earthen vessels to carry eternal treasures

to His people. Remembering three heart-felt convictions will give proper perspective to any pastor who has trouble.

1. I serve by divine appointment...I do not need a Macedonian call to prove that I am in the place of God's choosing.
2. I serve only for God's pleasure; not my own or anyone else's.
3. I will study Christ's reaction to His ministry. He was the servant of the Lord who questioned His purpose, yet God blessed His work. <12>

Be thankful for the Call and Ministry.

Furthermore be thankful for Synodical membership. Synodical membership can help brothers develop a close relationship with each other. "If a pastor remembers that his relationship to the Synod is not merely that of membership in an organization but is a fellowship of Christians united by faith in Christ, he will avoid doing anything that may be disruptive of synodical unity, that places a strain on the fellowship, that could lead to strife and division." <13> To experience the blessings of synodical membership, the pastors will do well to attend conferences regularly, receive holy communion whenever possible, attend conventions regularly, and participate in study clubs when available. Then the brothers can share their concerns, their help, and their comfort. Be thankful for your WELS, and "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Col. 4:6)

As we close, let us never underestimate the complexities of the struggles in the ministry. But let us never underestimate the joys either. When brothers work together to overcome the areas of conflict in ministry, the joys will come. Pastors have to live with their own failings and weaknesses, but they also serve in God's church as a gift of His grace. They are called to care for peoples' souls from conversion to grave. They deal with a multitude of spiritual problems and try to use law and gospel properly. They meet real life head on and prepare people for eternity. Pastors should not be surprised when conflicts come. They should be surprised if there is no struggle. If there were not conflict, that would mean pastor and people are all in heaven. Pastors owe each other love and respect, the benefit of the doubt, acceptance, and thankfulness.

What has been written here is nothing new. Neither has every possible area for potential conflict been touched and tackled. Whether the points covered would fit into each of our biographies, the Lord knows. The paper is presented with the heart-felt prayer that we examine ourselves and our relationships to our brothers in the ministry. May we always appreciate God's gift of the ministry, both our own and our brother's.

END NOTES

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