

THE PASTOR AS TEAM LEADER:  
BUILDING A FOCUSED LEADERSHIP TEAM

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MARCH 2014

## **Abstract**

Many ideas exist about how to lead. The pursuit of this paper is to synthesize a variety of leadership concepts into key principles and suggestions that can be applied to the mission of the local congregation.

Through surveys a study was conducted to gauge the attitude of lay leaders toward their service and what they think would enable them serve better. Pastors were also surveyed with the focus being on what they are doing to foster the growth of their leaders.

While no church leadership team is without struggles confessional Lutherans, through their shared faith, are uniquely positioned to find common ground and unity. Leaders within our churches possess a trust in God that knows even when worldly results are not seen the Lord is working good things through the ministry of the team.

Our lay leaders are a gift to the congregations they serve, but we need to study how these gifts can best be used. With an honest appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, strategies to move forward with lay leadership are offered. By viewing the pastor as a team leader we get a picture of a servant who points all his members toward the goal of heaven. This pastor as team leader also coaches his congregational leaders to point others to the same goal.

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## **Introduction**

As pastor at times it might seem easier to live by the phrase “I can just take care of it myself,” but where does that lead? Will taking over tasks originally assigned to lay leaders save you any time? Maybe in the short term it is easier to put together the monthly outreach letter for your evangelism chairman, but what about next month? If the pastor takes every little task and adds it to his calendar, soon personal devotions suffer, family commitments get dropped, and sermon preparation time becomes minimal. All this because instead of leading a team, you as pastor decided it would be best to play all positions yourself.

We have people who love the Lord and want to participate in his ministry, and we would benefit from their assistance. In this paper we will take a look at how we can better serve as team leader to those men who are asked by our congregations to serve in leadership positions. Our study will focus on why we do this, and how the Bible sets up a useful pattern for us to learn from. As we examine how the pastor can better serve as a team leader, we will need to look at how a pastor builds his ministry team. It is also useful to have a basic understanding of what people expect to get out of their leaders. Lastly we will briefly address how we can assist in equipping our congregational leaders to serve in their various roles.

Since every congregation is unique we cannot promote a “one size fits all” approach to building up leadership teams. As a pastor grows with and gets to know his congregation he will know better than any outsider how to apply many of the general principles and suggestions set out by this study.

As we move forward keep in mind Luther’s explanation to the “Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer,” “God’s good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.”<sup>1</sup> Although the Lord’s work could be done without us we thank him that he allows us to play a part in his ministry. So we pray that in all things God’s will be done, especially in the administration of our local congregations and their leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, David P. Kuske (ed.), *Luther’s Catechism (Revised)*, 3rd edition (Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 7.

## Literature Review

There is no shortage of books on the topic of leadership, particularly church leadership. With the focus of this paper being building a leadership team there were several different aspects to church leadership that needed to be studied:

1. Who are these leaders? / How do I identify leaders?
2. How do I build and nurture this leadership team?
3. How do I equip this leadership team for success in their tasks?

With these goals being primary focuses of this paper resources were identified and studied. These materials ended up being drawn from three different areas: business sources, evangelical churches, and Lutheran sources (WELS and LC-MS). Each of these types of sources had their strengths and weaknesses. An examination of the scholarship from these different worlds assists in developing a well-rounded concept of leadership.

Sources from the business world were strong in human relations concepts. In basically every book that was studied there was a strong emphasis on finding some way of getting your leadership team emotionally invested in the task at hand, and if it is not something obvious it must be created. The necessity for creating emotional investment was simple; without emotional investment from leadership there will not be a strong commitment to your cause. Without commitment your chance for success is greatly diminished.<sup>2</sup>

Another unifying concept among many of these resources was the concept of team building, and how accentuating even the small victories achieved while a team is still in its formative stages can do this. One quote that highlights this concept is: “Never underestimate the power of recognition and reward on your team. It is the most powerful motivator you can use both for the individual and for the team as a whole.”<sup>3</sup> Many of the insights into the psychology of team building offered in these types of leadership books are very useful, not only because these

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<sup>2</sup>One of the biggest proponents of this strategy read in preparation for this paper was Laurie Beth Jones, who in her book *Teach Your Team to Fish*, compared the ministry of Jesus to that of someone starting a small business trying to drum up excitement for a cause. In doing this it should not be a surprise that she completely misrepresents the ministry of Christ, painting him to be a salesman rather than the Savior.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Benfield, *Create a Winning Team: a Practical Guide to Successful Teamworking* (London: Teach Yourself, 2011), 107.

techniques have seen success in the business world but they also reflect the way members within our own churches think about leadership. If we can better understand the approaches that our people take when it comes to leadership we can more easily tweak their thinking on the topic to fit our situations better.

Within the evangelical sources that were studied a shift in focus was noticeable. In this area of literature the focus was less on team building, and more on the individual. It is easy to see how churches that focus on the importance of making a personal decision for Christ would gravitate first to the individual in an effort to create church leaders: “When people make a decision to follow Jesus, at some level they must first know and accept who he is... Of course, we want to acknowledge there are actions, emotions, and affections involved with this decision as well.”<sup>4</sup> While much of this focus seemed to encourage a pietistic outpouring of faith that resulted from one’s personal choice to follow Christ, there was some good information to be gleaned about the importance of encouraging “personal worship”<sup>5</sup>

It is in the Lutheran sources that an actual list of duties and responsibilities is set forth for congregational leaders, or “elders.” The authors of these materials offer scriptural support for establishing leadership in a congregational setting. Timothy J. Mech’s *Pastor’s and Elders: Caring for the Church and One Another* does a good job of addressing the relational aspect of cooperation between pastoral and lay leadership without going into a pietistic ditch. Several essays from the WLS Essay file were very useful in helping to bridge the gap between biblical examples of church leadership to the modern day congregational setting.<sup>6</sup>

As part of this study we will draw from the best suggestions of all these types of leadership sources to put in writing suggestions on how we might better develop focused leadership teams. All of these sources have something worthwhile (some have significantly more

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<sup>4</sup> Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Emerson Coleman. *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 47.

<sup>5</sup> This term, which was frequently used by the authors of *Discipleshift*, could be translated as personal devotions.

<sup>6</sup> One resource that was brief yet very helpful was Wayne Mueller’s “*Elder’s Leadership Training: The Local Congregation and Its Spiritual Care*”

than others) that can be applied to how a confessional Lutheran pastor assists in structuring the leadership of his congregation.

## **I. Biblical Basis**

### Examination of Principles

God's people organize around his Word to be lifted up by the promises of sins forgiven through Christ. For the betterment of the flock we ask some to serve as leaders. The most commonly recognized leaders of God's church are its called workers (pastors, teachers, and staff ministers), but the truth is that within a local congregation there are other types of leaders that assist in tending to the flock. There are many names by which these servants might be called (elders, deacons, leaders). Without their willing service the work of the church would be a burden that would drive many away from full-time called ministry. All of God's people are gifts to their local congregations. Those who have been called to shepherd a flock will want to encourage these people to use their many talents to assist the work of their church homes.

Ministry is a team sport; it has never been God's intention that one or two select people would be the only ones capable of carrying out the work of gathering and tending to God's people. So we might wonder where to look for guidance on how to care for those under the care of the pastor. The truth is the Bible does not prescribe any form of New Testament church governance. God's people (no longer bound by civil and ceremonial laws) organize themselves in ways that they find best enable them to go forward with the task of spreading the gospel. In the following examples we can see how God's people, motivated by love for God and love for fellow believers, have used Christian freedom in determining how to oversee the work of the local church. The administration of God's Word is not something that should lead to personal frustration, but it is something that God's people take joy in being a part of. In these selected verses we will focus on the qualifications of those who are asked to serve in positions of leadership, on the specific situations in which these "leadership teams" were developed, and how they partnered to better minister to God's people.

When examining the ecclesiastical structures of Scripture there exists a temptation to superimpose these rules and regulations on today's church. The purpose of studying these

examples from Exodus and Acts is not to suggest that these exemplify how a congregation is to organize today. Through these sections of the Bible we come across the concept that the purpose of leadership in God's church is to share this awesome responsibility. Without the help of lay leaders the weight of ministry is too much for the shoulders of one man, so God gives us capable members within our churches. It would be foolish to imply that in this sinful world a church structure can be established that will take all the burden off of the shoulders of those who lead. However, as we work together we can share the tough times and take joy in the successes that we are privileged to experience.

### Examples from Exodus

In Exodus chapter three we are presented with a man quivering at the prospect of serving as the leader of God's people. All too often we see a man who should have known better. When we hear Moses questioning why God would choose him, "Who am I?... who should I say sent me?..." God doesn't try to massage Moses' ego. Moses is not pointed to the advantages he had when he grew up in Pharaoh's court. God doesn't point to who Moses is as a source of confidence, but he points to who God is. "I will be with you..." and "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:12,14). God wanted to assure his called leader that confidence and authority to lead God's people does not come from within man, but comes from God. God also wanted to reassure Moses that he would not be alone in this task of leading the congregation of Israel:

"Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob— appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.' The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt..." (Exodus 3:16-18)

God assures Moses that he will not be alone in this task of leading Israel, but God would provide a leadership team who would listen to Moses because he was God's chosen representative. These men were the זְקֵנִים, or "elders," of Israel. The Hebrew term used here sheds some light on who these men were. They were not just warm bodies that were chosen because they were willing to serve as "elders," but this title is one that would have to be earned. Those chosen to be one of the elders, the זְקֵנִים, were of a "special class...of the legally competent citizens of a society...heads



of the family.”<sup>7</sup> God’s intention here is that his called minister be given the best assistance possible gathered from among those who were already recognized as leaders among the nation of Israel.

As the book of Exodus progresses there is another episode of note that relates very well to the discussion of organizing a leadership team. Moses, now firmly fixed in his role as spiritual and civil leader of a people numbering more than two million, found himself surrounded by a crowd of people from morning to evening. All of these people looked to him as leader, but how Moses’ leadership had manifested was not healthy for any involved. Moses’ father-in-law (Jethro) noticed this:

When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?”

Moses answered him, “Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and laws.”

Moses’ father-in-law replied, “What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.” (Exodus 18:14-18)

The style of leadership that Moses had developed would cause burnout. This was not the fault of God. Jehovah did not say to Moses, “You, and you alone must govern even the smallest of spats that are brought before you.” Seeing the toll that this impractical form of leadership was taking on his son-in-law Jethro offered Moses a wise suggestion:

“Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.”

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<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1999), 278.

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. (Exodus 18:19-26)

Moses desired to do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. His motives for working himself to exhaustion everyday serving as judge for Israel were good, but the result was not. The guidance that Moses received from Jethro was wise, and dare I say it, appeared very similar to how many foreign nations of the time would have organized their leadership. This “secular” guidance given by Jethro would serve the nation of Israel very well when put in place by God-fearing men. After these leaders had been taught their duties not only would Moses benefit from these leaders being chosen from among the ranks of the Israelites, but God’s people would benefit from their divinely called leader being able to shift his focus to more important matters.

#### An Example from Acts

Luke describes an account in which the young Jerusalem church had to address a leadership need. Members of the congregation were called upon to serve a specific purpose in the church. As a way to delegate the work of the church seven men were chosen to focus more on the physical needs of the congregation. The account of this delegation of work to laymen is recorded in Acts 6:2-4:

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

The apostles knew that it was their task to care for the spiritual welfare of the growing Jerusalem church, but they also knew that there were physical needs of the believers that needed to be addressed. Gospel ministers are not exempt to issues of life. People have a desperate need for the gospel, but they also need food, clothing, shelter, and many other things. “It was over a practical issue, and not over a matter of theological importance, that disagreement became acute.”<sup>8</sup> By no means were the apostles downplaying the role of waiting on tables and ministering to the

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<sup>8</sup> F.F Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 120.

physical needs of the believers, but they also realistically understood that their ministry needed to be focused on caring for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Administration of spiritual welfare was the area of ministry that they had been trained for.

Understanding the importance of ministering to the physical needs of the congregation, the apostles wisely directed the congregation to seek out qualified men to tend to these needs. The apostles did not intend that the office instituted by selecting these seven men would be an office mandated for all time. This was a way to delegate the work of their congregation, which was needed at that time and in that place. This fledgling church body saw a specific need that related to the ministry that it was involved in and looked within its membership to accomplish this work in such a way that the gospel ministry would not be impaired.

The scope of the ministry assigned to these seven men chosen in Acts 6 had a primary focus on the physical needs of the Jerusalem church, but this does not mean that their work did not produce spiritual benefits. We are told that God blessed this addition to the ministry of his Word being done in Jerusalem, "...the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). The work done by these seven men among the Jerusalem congregation allowed the Apostles to focus on the work of preaching and teaching.

The ministry of these men was to serve the Jerusalem congregation, and keeping this in mind we can gain some insight as to how these men were chosen:

If these men were to serve as assistants to the apostles in their apostolic work, the selection would have been made by the apostles...But these men were to be the aids of the congregation in the ministrations at tables, and so the congregation was properly told itself to choose them.<sup>9</sup>

These men were appointed to be the aids of the Jerusalem congregation. This is not dissimilar to how congregations today select men who are known to be mature in faith and wisdom are asked to serve as elders in a congregation. The seven were not assistants to the apostles, but they did assist the ministry of the apostles. These evangelists were chosen by their fellow members to

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<sup>9</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 1961 edition (Augsburg Pub. House, n.d.), 243.

minister to the physical needs of the Jerusalem congregation. The seven lovingly ministered to their fellow believers, and through their service the Lord prospered the Church. This partnership between the seven of the Jerusalem church and the apostles allowed the apostles to renew and increase their efforts in preaching and teaching.

There is some disagreement as to how the “Jerusalem seven” would be classified in a modern day church, particularly since they do not appear to fit the mold of how the term “elder” is used in the New Testament<sup>10</sup>:

NT congregations seem to have many elders (Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5). Elders were older, more spiritually mature. Spiritual leadership was more honorable than general leadership (1 Timothy 5:17). Elders had overall spiritual care of congregation (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). High personal qualifications (Titus 1:5-9) and the example of a good life was required (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3). Elders were to watch out for false doctrine (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9) and make sick calls (James 5:14). The elder was very close to what we think of as a pastor today, but not identical (1 Peter 5:1; 1 Timothy 3:1).<sup>11</sup>

The seven chosen in Jerusalem were chosen for the need that had arisen in supervising the daily distribution of food to those in need. Their primary task was not expressly spiritual in nature; however, this would not stop them from participating in the spiritual care of the congregation when needed. Regarding the appointment and work of these seven men in Jerusalem Arthur Clement wrote, “Work of a mundane nature is not the work of the pastoral office. This is the task of the laity (Acts 6:3-4). However... this does not mean that the laity cannot be assigned spiritual tasks in the congregation.”<sup>12</sup> It is important to recognize that pastors serve in many ways, and some may as part of their calls handle work that Pastor Clement would classify as “mundane.” The truth is, “We may not be able to define exactly the type of ministry each one of these offices

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<sup>10</sup> Although the term “elder” is not used in Acts 6 to refer to the seven chosen some have used this term to describe the work done by these men because of the parallels to their work and the work done by elders in our modern setting.

<sup>11</sup> Wayne D. Mueller, “Elders’ Leadership Training: The Local Congregation and Its Spiritual Care” (WELS Board for Parish Services), accessed September 22, 2013, <http://wlsessays.net/node/1531.2>.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur J. Clement, *The Shepherd’s Assistants: a Handbook for Church Elders or Deacons/ Ur J. Clement* (Sun Prairie, WI: A.J. Clement, 1989), 10.

carried out...perhaps a combination of what we today view as pastor and elder.”<sup>13</sup>

A good rule of thumb that can be gleaned from the example that we have in the seven men chosen from the Jerusalem congregation is that the task given to these men was not outside of their skillset. This ensures that they would be able to successfully accomplish all tasks directly related to their service. Matching skills with areas of service guards against someone viewing their position within the church as something done only out of grudging obligation. We seek to enable all people to offer their loving service with joy to their Savior.

From among the members of the Jerusalem congregation the apostles requested that men who were “known to be full of the Spirit” be chosen to serve their fellow congregants. This requirement shows that these men served in a spiritual way as they tended the physical needs of the believers. The seven were not to be weak in their faith. Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin is a fine example of the strength of faith that the seven had. The devotion these men had to ministry is something that all Christians would want to emulate, and so they serve well as examples of leadership rising up from within an existing congregation to fill a need.

### Applying the Examples

While a modern church may have men serving as elders or deacons (which is derived from the Greek word *διάκονος* meaning servant), this is in no way a necessary office of the Church. God does not command these positions. We could choose to organize our church bodies in many different ways.

The purpose for which we ask the laity of our congregations to serve in positions of leadership is very similar to why Moses selected God-fearing, trustworthy men from among the tribes of Israel; he did this so that he would not work himself to death. We understand that there are certain aspects to ministry that we would not hand off to laity (e.g. preaching), but we could hand off an opening devotion for the monthly teen group gathering to a congregational leader.

The apostles sought out qualified men, “full of the Spirit,” to assist in the work of the church so the leadership could focus on the teaching and preaching of the Word. Today we may

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<sup>13</sup> Philip E. Zarlino, “Training Leaders in the Church to Serve” (Southern Pastor, Teacher, Delegate Conference at Gethsemane Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lee’s Summit, MO, February 3, 2003), <http://wlsessays.net/node/3010>. 6.

have the practice of selecting elders or deacons to assist the pastor; however, they are still considered laity. Like the apostles we direct our congregations to choose servants from among themselves to assist in the leadership of the church.

The ministry of the congregation's called workers done on behalf of the entire congregation, and so is the ministry done by lay leaders is. The work done by these designated Christians in no way replaces the fruits of faith produced by each individual member, but should help supply order and direction to the work done by the congregation as a larger body. Like the apostles the work assigned to these men would be within their skillsets.

However we choose to implement church leadership structures, be it on a synod or congregational level, we must be sure not to confuse human tradition with the authority given in Scripture. Dr. Luther desired to help Christians to throw off the shackles of human tradition particularly in the area of Church and ministry:

To begin with I freely confess that in this book I will disappoint all who may hope that I will endorse or amend the rite and custom hitherto prevailing of priestly tonsure and anointing. Such religion, or superstition, I will allow them to enjoy, however common, traditional, or vaunted it may be. We are interested in the pure and true course, prescribed in holy Scripture, and are little concerned about usage or what the fathers have said or done in this matter. We have already sufficiently made clear that herein we neither ought, should, nor would be bound by human traditions, however sacred and highly regarded, but clearly exercise our reason and Christian liberty, as it is written, "All things are yours, whether Peter or Paul, but you are Christ's" [1 Cor. 3:22, 23].<sup>14</sup>

Christian freedom gives us the liberty to govern our churches as we see fit. This freedom is not an excuse for poor leadership or poor use of the gifts God has given to us in the members of our congregations. We must put to use the gifts God has given us to better the church. We have been given charge of something that we do not have final authority over. The saving gospel is a gift given to us, one that we are expected to take care of as we minister in various ways as we are apart of the church militant. We do not seek ways in which we can hold power over the heads of each other, but we seek to properly apply the authority of the church:

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 40: Church and Ministry II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 7–8.

The answer for problems in the church, then, is not to have more power, but to exercise proper authority. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18). The source of all authority in the Church is Jesus, not the pastor or elder or other members of the congregation. Jesus is in charge, and he authorizes His people to serve His Church through various vocations.<sup>15</sup>

As we partner with our leadership teams on a congregational level we would do well to ask ourselves, “Am I exercising my authority in such a way that gives complete glory to one that gave me this authority?” By following the examples from Exodus and Acts we can appropriately use our Christian freedom in setting up our forms of leadership to best fit our needs.

## **II. Understanding the Task**

### Understanding Your Goal

The purpose of this study is to provoke thought, but not just thought, to provoke action. My hope is that the ink spilled here renews an awareness of the influence that pastors have always had by virtue of the office that they hold. Through serving his congregation with God’s Word, the pastor exercises servant leadership. In obedience to Christ’s command we make disciples by teaching and baptizing. We aim to get all our people excited about the Great Commission.

With every Bible class that is prepared, every sermon preached, the devotion given in the living room of a shut-in, every prayer said at the bedside in a hospital, and in so many other ways the pastor leads the people he is called to shepherd with the rod and staff supplied by Scripture. Look back over the examples in the last sentence. What do you notice about all those situations? They are all different, all meant for separate purposes. The Sunday morning sermon is written knowing that among those gathered in the sanctuary there will be people of varying educational levels and ages. So the preacher prays that he is able to craft a message that is faithful to the text that will give understanding of what God is saying to all present. Bible classes may also need to be designed to feed just as diverse a crowd as the sermon. In many cases the pastor as teacher might have a slightly more narrow demographic: the mother’s class, the men’s class, the weekday women’s class, the Bible information class. The list could go on and on. The point to be

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy J Mech, *Pastors and Elders: Caring for the Church and One Another* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2011), 11.

made here is that we always have a purpose in our preparation of how we use the powerful Word of God, and using that same Word to prepare leaders is no different.

The members that serve on your church council do so because they love God. We will speak more in depth about the character and quality of the men that serve along side the pastor to lead the congregation later. For now we will make the assumption that these leaders love God's Word and take advantage of the worship and study opportunities that are available to them. When these leaders are gathered focus on nurturing them as fellow leaders. In his book "Sticky Teams" Larry Osborne relates that in the early years of his ministry when he met with the leaders of his church he would "aim at their hearts," with the devotion he used to begin meetings, at first this sounds like something that is a no brainer, but Osborne goes on to explain what he meant.

But now I aim at their role. Armed with the new goal of equipping our board members for their specific job as church leaders, I began to teach and convey the leadership principles others had poured into me. When we explored the Scriptures, I zeroed in on leadership passages... there I was spending all of my time trying to take the spiritual cream of the crop deeper in their walk with God, while ignoring the one thing they most needed instruction in: how to do the job God had called them to do. Now, I'm not saying that a deeper walk with God is unimportant. All I'm saying is that knowing how to lead is a rather important skill set for a leader, and it's one thing we ought not leave to chance.<sup>16</sup>

Instead of opening with a brief devotion based on the last sermon you preached (which they heard already), why not focus on their role, and lay on their hearts words from Scripture where God zeros in on the role of a Christian leader?

Your goal in preparing and leading these fellow leaders of your congregation is not to pretend like you have all the answers on how the treasurer is supposed to do his job. The pastor's job as team leader is to equip the team with God's Word.

Your goal in creating leaders is to give them confidence that what they are doing is God pleasing. Aim at giving them encouragement related to their role as a leader, and show them that their service is pleasing to God. Because they serve out of love, you do not want them to feel trapped in a job they are not able to do. In fostering an environment that focuses closely on their specific task as leaders your goal is to get them comfortable talking about the challenges that they face. If these members feel they have an open environment to share concerns without

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<sup>16</sup> Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams: Keeping Your Leadership Team and Staff on the Same Page* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 130.



repercussions. Frustrations will be less likely to be vented in forums that might cause disruption in the life of a congregation, and anger towards fellow church leaders and pastor will hopefully be dispelled.

The goal of the pastor as team leader is not to be a Jack-of-all-trades, master of none. We aim to be a faithful teacher of God's Word knowing that in all situations we can apply this healing balm, especially in areas of equipping and encouraging those who help us lead our congregations.

### Understanding What You Are Asking

It has happened to everyone. You are asked to serve on a team/council/committee/task force, and you get more than you bargained for. Maybe the job that you were sold was only going to demand an hour of your time every other week, or you were told you already had the exact skills that were needed for the team. Imagine that as you walked into the first meeting you knew you were in over your head. People with frustrated looks on their faces were gathered around a table because they knew the meeting was not going to last just an hour; this was going to demand their entire Saturday morning. Then imagine you were told someone else had accepted the job you had been asked to fill, but you would be put in charge of publicity (even though you have no idea what this means).<sup>17</sup> It seems like a nightmare, but this very story was related to me by a member of a WELS church about the only time he ever participated on any type of church committee. Could you blame this man for never again accepting an offer to serve on another team or committee?

The example just given is extreme, but it relates a truth: we need to be upfront about the expectations that we have for the people we ask to serve in any position in the church. People do not like surprises when it comes to accepting a position as a leader, they want to know all the who, what, where, why, and whens of the task that you are asking them to undertake. If you are not upfront with the expectations that you have for your leaders you risk trust being lost.

We cannot alert our leaders to every possible situation that might arise, and they do not expect you to. What you can do is tell them the duties, be honest about the difficulties, and excite them with the joy that through this service to their fellow Christians they are serving their Savior.

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<sup>17</sup> Anecdote told by an anonymous WELS member, permission given to use.

We need to make sure that we alert prospective leaders to the difficulties ahead, not because there will only be challenges (there will be some, no church is perfect), but because some may flinch at the first problem to come their way.<sup>18</sup>

The pastor as team leader also needs to be aware that he is asking his leaders to offer their time. When it comes to time commitments people can be protective of how many hours they are willing to give you. The young college grad with lots of energy may want to serve, but he is just starting his career (which means he is the low man on the totem pole); he might be working long hours trying to advance his career. The working father has full time hours at work and needs time to be a full-time dad. The retiree may seem like he has all the time in the world, but working for many years takes its toll, and he needs time to take care of a number of other things that may have taken a backseat during his career. Concerning retirees, it has been noticed that:

...with older people is that, yes, they might be loyal to me as a leader. But they view youth ministry or their volunteering as exactly that, volunteering. Don't get me wrong, they love students. But what I've noticed is that if you call them to give more of their free time, they won't do it... I'm not quite sure why, but it just seems that they view ministry as more of an event on a night of the week.<sup>19</sup>

The above statement should not be applied to all retired persons. There are retirees who turn volunteer leadership at their church into their new full time job. However, it is true that some do view volunteering at their church as an activity that has its set time for a certain day. If you ask them to volunteer more than that, and they refuse it is not because they do not see themselves as having the correct gifts. These retirees have had the demands to of a job and now they are overprotective of their time.

If you are upfront about time commitments you are more likely to get volunteers form any age group. Just like being upfront about difficulties, if you down play the time commitment and they walk out of a three hour meeting (when they were told it would be an hour), you risk losing their trust. One lay leader expressed his frustration with demands on his time while serving on a church council in this way:

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<sup>18</sup> When asking someone to consider taking a position of leadership, you don't start with the difficulties, but you do need to mention them.

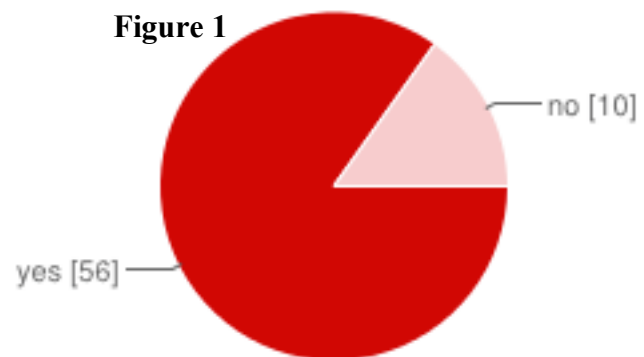
<sup>19</sup> Jonathan McKee and Thomas W. McKee, *The New Breed - Second Edition: Understanding & Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer* (Loveland: Group Publishing. 2012), Kindle Locations 918-919.

Pastoral leadership needs to be more sensitive to the work schedules of their lay leaders. We already put in 50-60 hours per week at home, need to balance family, and desire to serve our Lord. Also starting meetings with an hour Bible study or Synod produced material to improve leadership is very DIScouraging [sic]. Starting meetings at 8:00PM is Discouraging [sic] to those who work at 6:00AM. We understand the intent of Gospel motivation. We are already motivated to serve; out of love for Christ, we are there serving. Now please, in a respectful way, get out of our way and let us serve. Don't try to be our boss. We will work with you shoulder to shoulder like a team. We don't like you out front and us forced to follow behind you and play catch up.<sup>20</sup>

Notice that this leader is not expressing frustration over Bible studies, but the fact that they are lengthy. When he has already put in a long day at work he now feels trapped by a lengthy Bible study and meeting. We do not want to exasperate our people with God's Word. We want their time in the Scriptures to be a joy, not some necessary obstacle that must be suffered through before the "real work" can be done.

Because of this perceived imposition some will avoid giving any more time to improve leadership skills. Even when a program is offered that will better train a leader for service, making his service more enjoyable, some will refuse. In figure 1 (to the right) 10 out of 67 lay leaders surveyed (1 did not respond to this question)<sup>21</sup>, said

they would not participate in a program designed to better train them to serve as a leader in their congregation. The refusal of 15% of those surveyed may seem small, but think of the impact that the one refusal would make on a council made up of 10 people. What if the member who refuses to participate lets his displeasure of being asked for more time known to a larger audience (even if this was to take place instead of a regular meeting)? There are right and wrong times to deploy programs to reinvigorate your leadership. We must always be conscious of how much time we ask of our leaders because they are volunteers.



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<sup>20</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

Pastor as team leader needs to be aware that his congregational leaders are volunteers. The term volunteer does not mean they are interchangeable parts. Our volunteer leaders are very skilled, so it should not surprise us that their skills are noticed and used in other areas of their lives. As team leader the pastor seeks to build up a team that does not just consist of his starting lineup, but a team that has capable team members on the sidelines waiting to take the field as recognized leaders of their local church.

The volunteer aspect of this is very closely related to the time aspect, but it also goes into treatment. You are the leader of these leaders; you are not their boss. No one likes a micro-manager; so do not breathe down their necks as they carry out the ministry that has been delegated to them. The pastor cannot do everything, so why try to do everything when you have willing capable leaders that want to work side-by-side with you in your shared goal of carrying out the great commission given by Christ to his entire Church. This is why the example of the Jerusalem congregation from the book of Acts was given consideration. The apostles gave the seven the job of caring for the physical needs of the church, not so they could stand over their shoulders and criticize instead of waiting on tables themselves. The Twelve did this in order to devote their time to the special ministry for which they had been prepared. If your volunteer leaders need assistance help them and equip them, but let them take ownership of this ministry that they have been asked to undertake.

When it comes to recruiting these volunteers one-on-one recruiting is best. “It is the only kind of recruiting that will get good results when you are recruiting people to a ministry that is ongoing and takes a commitment from them.”<sup>22</sup> It might even be effective to offer a brief “taste” of what you are asking these prospective leaders to do:

When you find potential volunteers, ask them on a first date. Give them a chance to dialogue a little and take a peek at some of the exciting aspects of your organization. This date might be a tour of your facility, an opportunity to experience getting their hands dirty for your cause, or maybe even a lunch where you share your heart for what you do. Regardless of what this date looks like, prospective volunteers get a “taste” of what you do. And by the time you do “pop the question,” you can be pretty confident they’ll say yes.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John Hendee, *Recruiting, Training, and Developing Volunteer Adult Workers* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1988), 26.

<sup>23</sup> McKee, *The New Breed*, Kindle Locations 488-491.

By taking such a special interest in them your prospective leaders will see that you do value them.

The purpose in stressing the personal invitation to serve as a leader is to avoid the problem of having a ton of volunteers, none of whom are actually well equipped to take on the job. If all you do is place a blurb in the church newsletter or bulletin that you are looking for leaders to serve on boards you should not be surprised when the people you want to serve are nowhere to be seen.

And when you do actively approach your prospective volunteers understanding what you are asking your leaders to do will relieve a lot of confusion over time. If expectations are established you will know what your leaders expect of you, and they will know what is expected of them. Expectations are needed in order to maintain any relationship. Your leaders will appreciate this (especially if you honor these expectations). They will give you their trust and stand by you as you work together in your shared task of making disciples of Christ.

### **III. Identifying Your Leaders**

#### Current Leaders

With the realities of the task that we ask our church leaders to undertake fresh in mind we will now consider who these leaders are. For the purposes of this section of the study “current leaders” will not be classified as only those who currently serve on leadership teams, but those who are currently ready to ably step into leadership positions.

We do well to keep many willing and able leaders close at hand. “The most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and then maximize their team. While the best leaders are not well-rounded, the best teams are.”<sup>24</sup> When our teams are filled with people of varying interests and skillsets we can offset the deficiencies we have as individuals. I may not be a long-term planner but if I can recruit someone for the church council who is the team will be better “maximized.”

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<sup>24</sup> Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *Strengths-Based Leadership* (New York: Gallup Press, 2009), 2.

Certain qualifications for those asked to serve in leadership positions will be different from congregation to congregation, because obviously not every congregation is the same. Every congregation has different ministries that require them to focus their resources in unique ways. Even though the tasks and skills of those asked to serve in leadership positions at their local congregations may be different from place to place, within our fellowship we strive to have commonality in mission.

With that disclaimer in place, there are common qualities that the pastor as team leader should strive to find in the members asked to serve in church leadership positions. The chief quality that should be looked for in our congregational leaders is the same characteristic that the Twelve told the Jerusalem congregation in Acts chapter 6 to look for in the seven who would take charge in the distribution of food. “Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Notice that the Twelve directed the congregation to choose their own leaders. This is prudent so the pastor can avoid the claim that only his cronies are ever selected to serve on councils.

Even though the pastor does not hand pick the church council, the congregation will look to their pastor for guidance on who should be asked to serve in positions of leadership. A love for God’s Word is a great place to start in any list for selecting leaders who will hold offices, but how will this love for the Word look in the life of those who should serve? A good place to start would be Paul’s description of elders and overseers in 1 Timothy chapter 3. In their respective books on the ministry of elders in congregations both Arthur J. Clement and Victor A. Constien equate the ministry of overseers (1 Tim 1:3-7) to that of the modern day pastor, and the ministry of deacons (1 Tim 3:8-10) to that of the practice of having lay leaders in our churches serve as elders (or deacons). Both would also find agreement that modern practices do not mirror the offices written of in 1 Timothy because we lack comprehensive ministry plans regarding all that these men did for the body of Christ.

With a conscious effort not to legalistically impose regulations upon our congregations we look at why these guidelines given by Paul to Timothy can find practical application today:

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

This brief list of qualifications should not surprise us. This type of sanctified living is expected of the pastor and of lay leadership, and even more than that "...we see that the qualities desired in elders are not much different from those desired in all of us..."<sup>25</sup> We would desire that all the sheep under our care grow in their faith and sanctified living that they would meet these standards. The truth is that not all of our members are at this point. Notice that the portions of Scripture that speak of the called minister of a group of God's people enlisting help from the flock always include the disclaimer that those asked to serve know God and his Word. Even with this warning when the financial secretary job opens up the temptation is to call up Bob, the CPA, even though he only shows up to worship once a month, and you are pretty sure he does not even know what the Bible study room at church looks like. The first priority is always that a love for God's Word is evident. This characteristic is something that our members understand as being important. In the survey response one pastor described the way his congregation seeks out capable leaders by stating, "The nominating committee looks for individuals who are active in regular worship and Bible Study when we need to fill positions."<sup>26</sup>

Even with the best of intentions our boards and councils will never be perfect. The pastor new to a specific parish might have inherited a council populated by men whose faith is weak. Then the task before you is clear, those men need to be built up in God's Word. Listen to the words of Jethro. "Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform" (Exodus 18:20). Above all seek leaders that love God's Word. The exciting thing about identifying potential lay leaders in the WELS is that because of the strong focus on equipping all members of our churches with the truth of the Bible, we typically have capable leaders waiting on the "benches" to be asked to serve in leadership positions.<sup>27</sup> God has blessed our church body with pastors, teachers, and staff ministers that have a love of the Bible. God has

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<sup>25</sup> Victor A. Constien. *The Caring Elder: a Training Manual for Serving* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1986), 22.

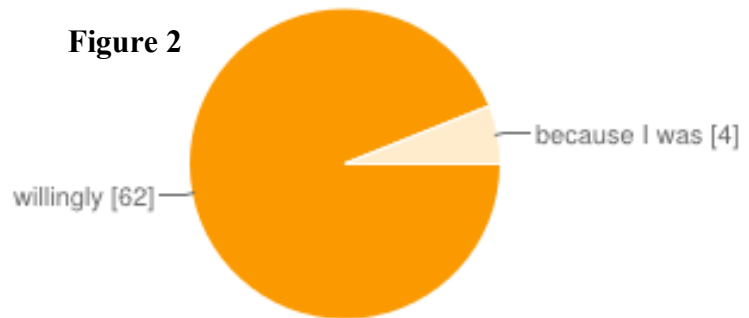
<sup>26</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

<sup>27</sup> When asked in a survey "How many member do you have that you would feel comfortable asking to serve on your administrative council with little training/down time?" only 1 of the 22 responding pastors said that he had no members that would fit this description. When asked "How many members do you think you have that could serve competently in leadership roles after training?" all 25 responding pastors were able to identify members that they felt could serve competently.

also blessed us with a membership that have the same love, and who also desire to do whatever it takes to further the cause of the gospel that they love.

Once candidates for the leadership of the congregation have been found that meet the foremost criteria of having an obvious love for the Bible, then the “secondary” matters can be zeroed in on. The various skills possessed by the members of any congregation need to be sniffed out by a pastor who knows and loves his people. Get into their homes ask about their jobs, their hobbies, and any skills. This way when a need arrives the thought pops into your head, “Dave knows about video editing, he works for the local TV station.” Certain leadership positions require skills that the pastor cannot teach to his members. I cannot teach the financial secretary how to keep the books, and I cannot teach the trustees how to do many of the repairs needed around the church campus. I praise God for providing the body of the local congregation with many different parts “so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12).

When it comes to the willingness of those who serve in leadership positions within our congregations across the country we have much to give thanks for. When asked whether or not they serve as a leader in their congregation willingly 62 of the 66 respondents to the question replied that they serve willingly (figure 2 shows that only four responded that they serve “because I was pressured into service”)<sup>28</sup>.



The people we identify as leaders should be those who are not satisfied with the status quo. They are motivated by the Great Commission and understand that all the people in our walls need opportunity to learn more. They understand there are many more outside our walls they desire to make disciples by bringing the Word outside the church walls by equipping their fellow members. So the question needs to shift from “how do I identify people who currently have the

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<sup>28</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.



right motivation to serve as leaders?” (God willing you already have a number of these members), to “how do I get more people who have the right motivation to serve as leaders?”

### Future Leaders

What if you look at your congregation and your current administrative council and you begin to realize that you have a severe lack of men qualified to serve in carrying out the ministry of the church in your corner of God’s kingdom? What do you do if you begin to think that the best option that you have is taking the names of every member of your board and shuffling them around so they all have a new title and a refreshed term in office? Obviously this is not a good situation to be in, and it causes pastors to say things like, “Many of my leaders have been members at this church for many years and have served in various roles for many years. They don’t have the energy or excitement to continue serving with enthusiasm.”<sup>29</sup> The hard truth is that as a church body we have a sizable number of churches that are not equipped with leaders ready and waiting to throw on a jersey and take the field with their pastor in an effort to direct the affairs of their church.

If leaders are not ready and waiting, in an effort to have a warm body fill the position we might end up settling for a “leader” who is waiting, but not necessarily ready. “Because of desperation, lack of time, or just plain ignorance, [we] quickly grab any candidate who comes along.”<sup>30</sup> When we settle for warm bodies it should not surprise us when a strong focus on the great commission and the unseen results of faith strengthened and of souls touched by the gospel are not highly treasured.

Why is it that we are lacking leaders that are ready to take up the mantle of leadership? In a survey that went out to pastors I asked them to briefly describe the biggest challenge they face when encouraging/training future lay leaders, and over a quarter of the responses identified busy lives or time as their biggest obstacle. There comes a point where this is very true and in order for a father to be a father and an employee to function his best at work he will need to decline an invitation to serve on a board at church. On the other hand, giving the excuse “I am too busy” *every time* one is asked to consider service as a leader in the congregation may be symptomatic

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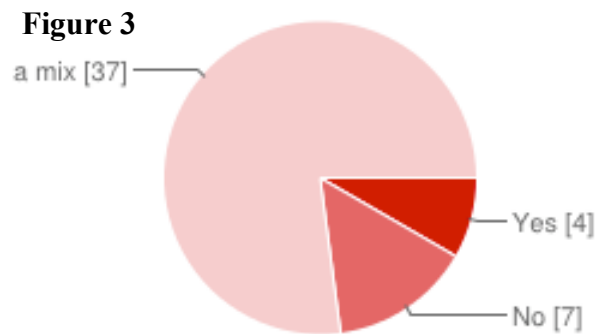
<sup>29</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

<sup>30</sup> John C. Maxwell. *Developing the Leaders Around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 38.

of a larger problem. In response to the same survey question the following answer seemed to diagnose the real problem accurately: “Lack of spiritual maturity in the faithfulness, putting-God-first-in-my-life sense. People keep letting themselves get distracted by all kinds of worldly pursuits, many of which are not harmful when done in moderation.”<sup>31</sup> In these cases we point our people back to the Word.

Other answers that identified big problems that our congregations face in the area of male leadership are the lack of a mature (WELS) head of the household (or the lack of a male head of household all together). I fully believe that this problem of maturity of faith in male heads of household deserves a close examination. For the purpose of this study I would like to highlight that much of our culture has wrongly identified religion as something that is for the weak-minded. Therefore, we need to interact with these men to show them that a man who is strong in faith is not weird. Get involved in community sports leagues, build relationships with people outside the church membership, because this will tear down perceptions that you want to hide yourself in the church and are afraid of a world that will challenge your beliefs.

Very often those who might be equipped to serve, and could do so effectively do not want to do it. When asked, “Does your congregation see leadership as a role in which they would like to serve?”<sup>32</sup> only four of the responding 48 pastors replied with an outright, “yes” (see the figure 3).



When presented with these obstacles the pastor does what he is called to do; he serves his people with the Word of God. Through this service the pastor models servant leadership. With a smile he points out the obvious talents of his members and plants the seeds for how their gifts might be put to use within the congregation.

We cannot treat “the leadership conversation” as something that only happens when the pastor calls a perspective board member into his office to “begin” the conversation about this

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<sup>31</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

man starting to serve his congregation on the board or council. A pastor should not let the conversation about leadership start in his office when he is desperate to have someone fill an open position. He should begin the conversation sooner. We want the pie chart on the preceding page to have the answer “yes” be in the majority when it comes to the question about congregants wanting to serve in positions of leadership.

People might be unsure about serving as congregational leaders because it is an unknown. When lay leaders were asked what could help them better serve and one responded “More clear communication from the pastors as to what our particular congregations philosophy on service is,”<sup>33</sup> it becomes clear why many are not clamoring to serve on our councils. Our “philosophy on service” is not a big secret kept behind lock and key. Our “philosophy of service” is to do all we can to carry out the great commission. This will look different in every congregation, but you have to talk about it. When the concept of leadership is spoken about on a congregational level not just in board meetings it becomes less scary and more a part of the culture. This conversation does not need to start with a Bible study geared directly towards the topic of leadership. The two men that God used more than any of his other authors, Moses and Paul, also happen to be two great examples of leadership. Chances are that these men, and many other examples of Christian leaders will come across in your regular Sunday morning classes, so take advantage and take a minute to steer the conversation towards leadership.

Baby steps are all it takes. Maybe you take your weekly men’s class through a leadership course published by the WELS.<sup>34</sup> Then you have a heart to heart with your women’s class about how they view the leadership of their church. After doing these things you might begin to notice that the people are talking about the God given talents and abilities with which your little flock has been blessed.

If you have people actively paying attention to how the congregation might be well served by the special gifts that their fellow members have, people will feel open to encourage one another. When prospective leaders know they have people supporting them it is a great

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<sup>33</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Wayne D. Mueller et al., eds., *Lutheran Leadership Series: Five 6-lesson Bible Classes* 2nd edition. (Milwaukee: WELS Parish Services, 1997).

confidence booster. One pastor noted that his congregation has found that a vote of confidence from a fellow believer can do a lot of good:

A big help is to ask our sisters in Christ to suggest men whom they think would make skillful, mature congregational leaders. Approaching these men with such endorsements is encouraging and uplifting, even if they cannot consider service at this time. As the Holy Spirit says through Paul in 1 Timothy 3:13, these brothers "gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus" as they serve well. It's a pleasure to see this in a congregation where about half the communicants were adult confirmations through BIC.<sup>35</sup>

The pastor who submitted that response hit on two key points that need to be addressed as we look at our congregations with an eye for identifying future lay leaders: 1) the encouragement and endorsement of fellow believers is a great confidence booster, and 2) these leaders do not need to be born and bred WELS members. Our leaders do need to share a public confession of faith with us, but often those who have experience in a heterodox church (or life in unbelief) have a zeal for ministry that lights a fire underneath the entire body of believers to go out and share what they now know to be true.

The idea of using friends to encourage one another into service is not something unique to volunteer leadership within the church, but it is something that organizations of all types have noticed is effective. The authors of *The New Breed* refer to "The relational drive" as the concept of people using their friendships to gain volunteers:

People also commit because of friendship. When a friend personally asks, most people have a hard time saying no. A friend excited about your organization's cause is the best person to recruit. Investing in relationships can be one of the strongest stimulators when it comes to motivating volunteers.<sup>36</sup>

The "New Breed" authors view the "relational drive" as something that can build up into "core motivational drive," meaning people can begin to serve because their friends asked them to, but eventually they might come to the point where they serve:

...because they believe a cause is right. This is the highest level of motivation. Your volunteers might initially join for one of the first two levels (self-serving or relational).

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<sup>35</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

<sup>36</sup> McKee, *The New Breed*, Kindle Locations 1238-1240.

But after they get a taste of what your organization does, they could become believers in your cause.<sup>37</sup>

When it comes to volunteer congregational leaders we are going to seek to use the “relational drive” to recruit leaders who already have the “core motivational drive.” We want our leaders to serve first out of love and thanksgiving to their God who saved them. It is this love that motivates them to want to assist in whatever way possible they can to carry our the great commission. If a man serves in congregational leadership because he was motivated purely by a desire to please the “friend” who asked him to serve his motivation is wrong. When it comes to volunteer leaders in the church we want “core motivational drive” first. Then we can use “relational drive” as encouragement to serve, but not as the reason for service.

There are two key points to remember when it comes to identifying future congregational leaders:

1. Minister to your people with the Word and Sacrament: good lay leaders are ones that are well fed by the Holy Spirit, mature in their faith, and desire to more and more receive this same nourishment.
2. Start the conversation about leadership: Talk about the needs that the congregation has in the areas of lay leadership. Bring up examples of leadership from the Bible. Have your people identify potential leaders among themselves.

The pastor as team leader is a cultural trendsetter within the church. Having the role of pastor does not mean that you are only the leader of your council, but the entire congregation looks to you to help them build up a culture of servant like leadership:

Pastor's who create a culture of servant leadership and who are willing to learn WITH their church leaders. Pastors are often the culture creators and culture enables or inhibits the vision/mission of the church. Pastors who encourage and mentor leaders, but are also willing to learn from their counterparts who are ministering to others in the work place, neighborhood etc... will create a culture that is driven by a passion and love for the Gospel in its truth and purity and making God's faithfulness known. Pastor's who have the heart of Paul in Ephesians 3 can create a culture where leaders thrive and Pastor's are supported and the stories of God's faithfulness are made known (Psalm 89:1-4)<sup>38</sup>

We identify and empower future leaders that will join our leadership teams by encouraging them in the Word, and giving them opportunities to use their God given gifts to assist in the church’s mission to carry out the great commission.

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<sup>37</sup> McKee, *The New Breed*. Kindle Locations 1244-1246.

<sup>38</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

#### **IV. Building a Sense of “Team”**

Before we take time to discuss equipping those who have been chosen by their fellow congregants to serve as leaders we need to address the topic of group dynamics. Many times when you gather a church council together you are collecting a group of people who, outside the context of being members of the same church, might never have been brought together in the same room. This is a good thing!

The body of Christ is made up of many different parts, and so should our boards and councils. If all we had was a collection of “eyes” we would have a lot of observant board members who might be quick to offer opinions based on what they see, but not know how to do anything about it. If we only had a bunch of “hands” we would have a lot of willing laborers without any direction. We need to embrace the differences of our leaders, not just the differences in skillsets, but also the differences in age, socioeconomic status, and much more.

Too easily church councils can become just another set of co-workers in another work environment put together to produce results. We do not want service to the church to become just another to-do list item tacked on to the grind of the workweek. This is why we place such a high emphasis on selecting members “...who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3), but even these men can grow weary of the task of being a leader. So how do we grow a healthy team that will avoid burnout and fatigue?

Avolio and Bass, in their book *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*, have identified four major qualities that followers (in our case church board/council/elder members) look for in their leader (for our purposes, the pastor) which they call the “Four I’s.” The four I’s can be summarized as follows:

1. “Idealized influence”, which is holding to, and answering to, high standards of moral and ethical conduct.
2. “Inspirational motivation” is providing followers meaningful and challenging work which leads to a desire to succeed.
3. “Intellectual stimulation” means that followers are not just given “paint-by-numbers” tasks that require no originality, but they are engaged in coming up with strategies and plans, and encouraged to give their own insight.

4. “Individualized consideration” is the careful attention that is given to each member of the team on a one-on-one level.<sup>39</sup>

Even though the “Four I’s” of leadership were not developed with a direct application to the church in mind it can easily be seen why these qualities would serve the pastor as team leader very well in seeking to foster a cohesive team. Our purpose in examining this paradigm is not to hold it out as the only list of qualities that your team will look for in you as team leader. This list starts the conversation about how we can address the psychological needs of our people. With our biblical application of these principles we will serve the spiritual needs as well.

“Idealized influence” is why we offer ourselves in service to God and his Church in the first place. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). With our influence being the love of the one who gave himself for us, work done on behalf of this cause has the best “idealized influence” there could be. The pastor can exhibit this “idealized influence” within his own life. Through dedication to the gospel and extending love to the congregation by ministering to them in joys and heartaches, at weddings and deathbeds the pastor shows how his own life has been shaped by the “idealized influence” of Scripture. The pastor is the primary example in the eyes of the congregation for how this “idealized influence” changes the life of a modern day Christian.

Other students of the concept of leadership would identify “idealized influence” as being key within a church setting because as members of a church we confess the same faith (this might not hold true in all churches, but it is a blessing that we have as confessional Lutherans). From a sociological view a leadership based off of shared faith would be classified as “values based.” “When everyone in the team holds common values and the team’s aim reflects those values, then team members should be able to work together effectively.”<sup>40</sup> Since we have this blessing by nature of the heritage of God’s Word we need to be careful not to let this be something we neglect.

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<sup>39</sup> Bruce J. Avolio and Bernard M. Bass, eds., *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin Benfield, *Create a Winning Team: a Practical Guide to Successful Teamworking*. (London: Teach Yourself, 2011), 145.

Show your people how you are shaped by the Scriptures and then lead them in their quest to shape their lives by God's will for his people. The first "I" of leadership is intended to focus on the team leader for motivation. What I want to stress is that we focus on the God who shapes the leader and give him credit for the inspiration to lead. By displaying this Biblical influence, you have a living segue into the next "I" which is "inspirational motivation."

When it comes to "inspirational motivation" it is so easy for boards and councils to do tasks without thinking simply because they have always done them. Here we will want to remind our leaders just how important their service is. Without them the day-to-day work of the local congregation simply could not happen. Their tasks have purpose and should be held to certain standards not only because this work is directly related to the work of the church, but because these men are Christians. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). No area of the Christian's life is divorced from the fact that he is a representative of Christ in all he does. The pastor as team leader will do well to remind his team of this "inspirational motivation" that extends into all areas of the Christian's life. This motivation to spread the gospel message in response to the Great Commission adds to our excitement. How awesome it truly is that God has chosen our shaky hands to handle his holy work and our trembling lips to spread his life giving words!

In an effort not to waste the motivation that our leaders have in their service to the one who saved them seek to offer them "intellectual stimulation" as they carry out the tasks assigned to them. It can become easy to micromanage your leadership to death, because we all think our way of accomplishing tasks is best. This only makes more work for the micromanaging pastor, and frustration for the elder who constantly has someone looking over his shoulder. Ask your leaders for their opinions, and let them run with them. If they fail at something they will have learned an important lesson. In many cases your leaders will respect you for letting them attempt their own ideas. If they find success they will be even more fired up for doing the work of the church.

Building a sense of team has a lot to do with rallying around the cause ("idealized influence"), offering motivation, and having confidence in the intellectual abilities of those you are serving with. These leaders are still the sheep that you as pastor have been called to shepherd. "Individualized care" naturally lends itself to the job of a pastor, and yet when it comes to our



leaders it can become easy to forget that this man who is serving because he has been recognized to be strong in God's Word is also someone who will have moments of weakness and struggles. Here we have opportunity to apply on an individual basis genuine love and interest in these servants. We do not want any of our members thinking that they need to fight "to have a little support from the pastor."<sup>41</sup>

Most of what has been covered has to do with accomplishing tasks. Building off of the "individualized care" concept we will want to remember that these leaders need personal relationships not only with their pastor, but also with one another. Time needs to be spent as a leadership team together away from the "normal tasks" where you can focus on things that typically get pushed out of the normal business agenda. Larry Osborne refers to meetings like these as "unity meetings or shepherd's meetings:"

The beauty of a regularly scheduled nonbusiness meeting is that it provides both me and the board with a regularly scheduled forum for communication, training, and prayer that is unencumbered by competing agendas. I don't have to jam leadership training, healthy discussion, or extended prayer into an already packed meeting.<sup>42</sup>

It may seem hard to implement another meeting in an already hectic schedule, but if you highlight the social nature of these meetings people will buy in over time. People are social creatures and desire connection. The point of these get-togethers is to build upon personal relationships where over time a culture of openness and honesty is developed. Fellow board members will not be seen as tools to get something done, or an obstacle in the way of what I want to accomplish, but will be viewed as friends and fellow believers whose opinions matter. This concept is something that was reflected in a number of survey responses by pastors. One pastor's response that will be highlighted here was: "The best tool has been time together to study and discuss ministry. In my opinion, the best thing I can do is get our leaders in God's Word with devoted time to discussing the work that we do together."

This style of team building is not unique to the church setting, but has been identified as an effective technique in the business setting as well. Classified as an "interpersonal" approach

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<sup>41</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Osborne, *Sticky Teams: Keeping Your Leadership Team and Staff on the Same Page*, 141.

to team building its primary focus is developing personal friendships to bolster the commitment of each member to the team:

Team members learn how to listen and how to develop more effective communication channels. If they understand each other well enough, they will work together effectively. A culture of trust and confidence will grow out of open discussion about relationships and conflicts.<sup>43</sup>

Coupling this “interpersonal” approach with the Biblical “values based” approach that we share by nature of our common Christian faith love and unity will increase within our leadership groups. With this genuine love on display in the leadership a culture of mutual care and concern for brothers and sisters will spill over into the rest of the congregation. Too often we hear stories about how infighting within leadership leaves board meetings and infects the congregation at large causing rifts. It should be our goal to do the opposite and encourage the culture of Christian love and concern that a congregation should have from within the boardroom.

The beauty is that this does not have to be accomplished within the stuffy meeting room, but could easily happen casually around a grill in someone’s backyard, in a living room after getting together to watch a game. Play up the social aspect and people will see value in building up relationships. Events like these could be carried out every month or maybe a little less frequently. One lay leader responded that, “As a Council we have regular meetings and an annual weekend retreat that gives us 2 full days of planning, studying God's Word and Christian fellowship.”<sup>44</sup>

An integral part of team building is about building relationships. In the unique setting of equipping Christian leaders we get to focus on the most important relationship: the one between Christ and Christian. That “most important” relationship will naturally lead to Christians wanting strong relationships with fellow believers. When these strong relationships exist in the ministry teams of our churches we will be better equipped to tackle the challenges that come our way.

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<sup>43</sup> Benfield, *Create a Winning Team*, 145.

<sup>44</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

## V. Equipping Your Leaders

So far a paradigm has been suggested for building leadership that addresses what many people will look for in the pastor as team leader. A strategy for shaping your leadership team into a cohesive unit by taking them out of the meeting room and establishing a comfortable environment to grow as fellow Christians as well as leaders has been proposed. We still need to address how we are going to equip these men with leadership examples that they can use in personal discussions about leadership. We will also address how to facilitate equipping these leaders for the every day “practical” tasks of leadership.

### Equipping with Examples

By “equipping with examples” I do not mean that I want to put forth “Bob” as the best elder who ever sat at the church council table. The goal here is for these people to learn leadership from the examples that God sets forth in scripture. Think back to the “Biblical Basis” portion of this paper. How did Jethro assist the leadership of Moses (and even serve as a leader to the leader of God’s people)? What about the seven mentioned in Acts 6? How were they to lead and what motivated them? But there are many more examples. Bible studies and devotions can be formed based on the servant leadership of Jesus, and how he always made sure that his people focused on what was most needful. Contrast the leadership of Joshua to that of Moses and why God used different leaders at different times in salvation history. The Bible is excellent at equipping believers for lives as Christian leaders.

The men selected to be on church boards and councils are chosen because they are known to have a love for God’s Word and they turn to it for guidance. The council should not be the place where strong Christians are sent to deteriorate. Deterioration of faith can happen if these volunteers begin to see their service as a grind. If we add long Bible studies to meetings that extend for long hours the pastor could unwittingly contribute to his leadership seeing studying the Bible as a drag. A useful suggestion to equip these men with leadership examples would be to pick a Biblical example of leadership and design a short devotion (5-10 minutes) to focus your business/planning meeting, but then take that same leader and develop a discussion oriented Bible study to focus on in your more informal “unity/shepherd’s” meetings.

We will do ourselves a great service to keep God's mission for us as his church as our motivation. The business world literature on building teams is good at identifying psychological needs of leadership teams, and giving labels for the problems, but their end goal is different than ours. Many of our concepts of leadership are taken from the business world, but we need to take care to understand the results we want are different. Business leaders look to profits, church leaders look to the s of God's prophets and apostles to change hearts. The results that we pursue will not truly be seen until we enter eternal life. Just because results may go unseen this side of heaven does not mean results are not there:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:10-12)

God's Word produces the results that he desires and he does this with our hands. So take joy and peace in knowing your faithful administration within the church is not without purpose.

### Equipping in Practical Matters

The pastor as team leader realizes there are many practical matters involved in running a church that he has little knowledge of. For that reason God gives many and varied gifts to congregations through our members. So we take extra effort to assist our members in selecting men with gifts need for specific areas: the fiscally minded to serve as financial secretary; the handy man to serve on the properties board; the member with a finger on the social pulse of the community may be a natural fit to serve as evangelism chair. One pastor explains why we seek to match up skills with areas of service by saying:

We are selective in matching the ministry position to the person and the talents they possess being more concerned about matching skill sets than forcing someone into a position they would have to train hard to do and wouldn't enjoy doing once they learned the position.<sup>45</sup>

While our members and selected councilmen may have many gifts, often it might take awhile for them to learn the ropes of a position and how to apply their gifts to the job set before them. So it makes sense to think about plans for integrating new leaders into their positions:

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<sup>45</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS pastors, November/December 2013.

In industry it would be unthinkable not to make plans ahead of time for replacing key personnel in the event of death or retirement. Is there a good reason why a Lutheran congregation should not use the same common sense? What training can we and should we offer prospective church leaders to make them more effective and more efficient servants of God and man?<sup>46</sup>

In an answer to these questions a number the pastors and lay leaders that were surveyed brought up the concept of mentoring. This could be designed that the incoming leader be paired with his predecessor so when the reigns of leadership are officially handed off to the new leader he can hit the ground running.

The concept of a job fair might also be useful in bringing all service opportunities to the attention of the congregation. Here different booths can be set up that give full descriptions of each position. Some benefits that could come from a venture like this are:

1. An awareness of the many people needed to run various ministries of the church.
2. A greater recognition of the many gifts possessed by the members.
3. An appreciation for the time spent in service by the volunteer leaders of the church.

The concept of equipping leaders of congregations does not need to be one that each congregation has to answer on its own. Local congregations can get together to put on workshops designed to teach basics of leadership that are useful skills for all members on boards and councils to have. Philip Smith, member of Reformation Lutheran Church in San Diego, CA, was kind enough to share PowerPoint presentations of a leadership workshop held in 2004 at regional high schools. Key items addressed were meeting facilitation, project management, and dispute mediation.<sup>47</sup> A workshop of this type fills the need that many congregations face when they have a new leader take a position.

A mentoring program is a good tool for the local congregation, and something that could be relatively easy to put in place, but some of the men surveyed had bigger ideas than I anticipated for improving leadership within our congregations. One interesting suggestion was: “I’m thinking that a standardized communication tool, like a Facebook for the WELS, would be the most helpful thing for myself and others. Connections and a place to bounce ideas around,

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<sup>46</sup> John C. Jeske, “Building Lay Leadership Within a Congregation.” Church Officers’ Seminar, Lansing, Michigan, <http://wlsessays.net/node/929> (February 1971): 5.

<sup>47</sup> To see a PowerPoint slide that outlines the workshop go to appendix C.

even with other congregations, would be great.”<sup>48</sup> At one time a collaborative online resource like the one suggested would have seemed like a pie in the sky dream, but with the development of resources like connect.wels.net a “lay leader friendly” version with message boards on various topics, does not seem out of the realm of possibility.

We have a church body that desires to thrive in the ministry of the Great Commission. Our leaders want to work together in equipping the next crop of leaders. Each congregation has different circumstances, and members with different gifts, but there are many similarities that we can pool resources to develop programs. It just might be an enterprising member who takes the initiative to develop such a collaborative program with other local (or not so local) congregations.

### **Conclusion**

The pastor as team leader focuses his team on the mission set forth in God’s Word. This Word does not just give us our mission, but it is our source of encouragement and motivation because it contains the life giving words of the gospel. With such a great heritage as a motivating force the pastor and his team will want to expend their best efforts in service to the one who gave us eternal life

Our prayer will remain that God’s will be done. We pray that God would work through all of our efforts to raise up men on the congregational level that have a zealous desire to serve in God’s church so that the efforts of our congregations in communities can be multiplied and more might come in contact with the saving message of Christ crucified. We do this knowing that God has gifted the Church with many and various gifts and so often we just need to open our eyes to the resources that are before us. At times we squander the gifts of God’s Word and the talents of those around us. Let us repent of those times and move forward resolutely to take up the Great Commission that our Lord gave us before he ascended to the right hand of the Father.

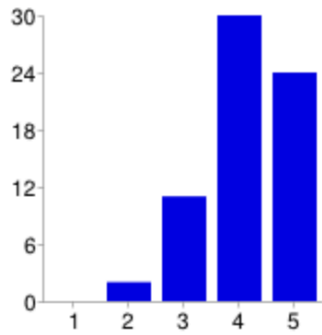
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<sup>48</sup> Response to Google forms survey of WELS lay leaders, November/December 2013.

**Appendix A:**

**Statistical representation of the survey sent out to WELS lay leaders**

**I am adequately equipped to serve as a leader in my congregation**



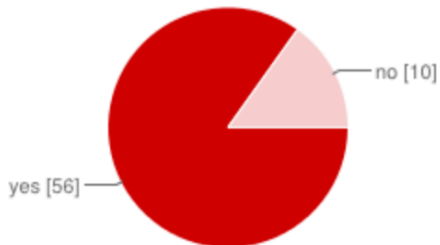
1	<b>0</b>	0%
2	<b>2</b>	3%
3	<b>11</b>	16%
4	<b>30</b>	45%
5	<b>24</b>	36%

**I serve as a leader of my congregation...**



willingly	<b>62</b>	94%
because I was pressured into service	<b>4</b>	6%

**I would participate in a program designed to better train me to serve as a leader of my congregation**



yes	<b>56</b>	85%
no	<b>10</b>	15%

**Appendix B:**

**Statistical representation of the survey sent out to WELS pastors**

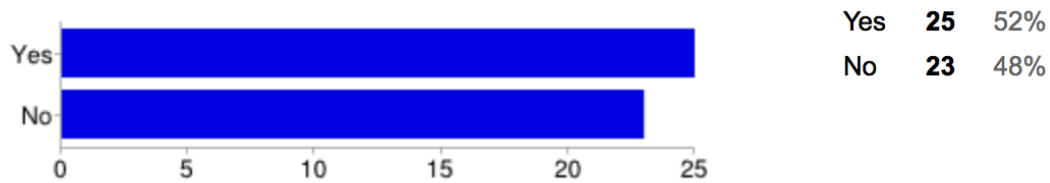
**How many adult members do you have in the congregation you serve?**

800 159 155 154 600 286 150 40 22 270 210 170 175 102  
 220 225 90 325 792 525 88 79 1350 245 80 249 85 300  
 301 231 120 75 56 450 1170 250 650 655 1200 53 140

**How many men do you have in your congregation that currently serve in leadership positions?**

35 40 25 28 30 7 6 32 5 4 9 8 19 17 18 15 13 14  
 11 12 21 20 10 115 58

**Do you have women in your congregation that have been asked to serve in certain leadership roles?**



**How many members do you have that you would feel comfortable asking to serve on your administrative counsel with little training/down time?**

35 40 25 27 3 2 1 0 7 30 5 8 15 16 13 11 20 10  
 75 60 140 50

**How many members do you think you have that could serve competently in leadership roles after training?**

1003 35 40 25 26 3 7 30 6 5 9 8 15 13 12 21 20  
 100 180 120 75 56 60 45 50

**How long are terms of service?**

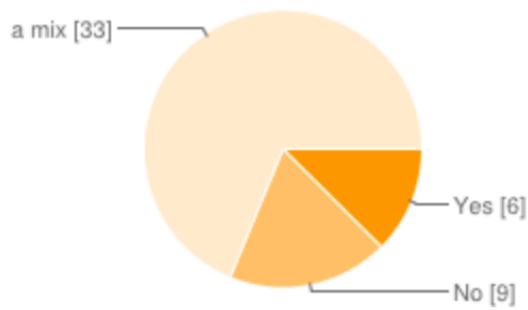
3 3 2 1 4

**How many consecutive terms can leaders hold?**

9999999999 25 3 2 1 0 5 1000 418 99 100 50

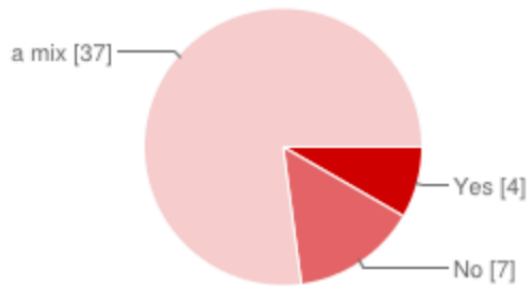


**Are the leaders of your church people who needed to be pushed and persuaded to take the position?**



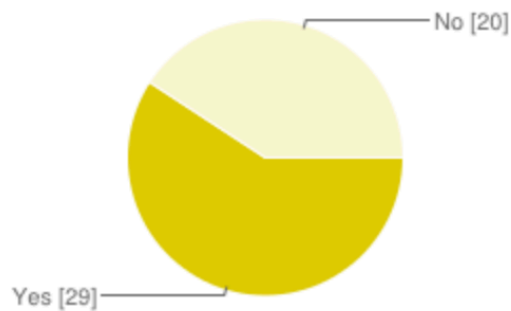
Yes	<b>6</b>	13%
No	<b>9</b>	19%
a mix	<b>33</b>	69%

**Does your congregation see leadership as a role in which they would like to serve?**



Yes	<b>4</b>	8%
No	<b>7</b>	15%
a mix	<b>37</b>	77%

**Do you have any plans in place for actively identifying and/or training lay leaders**



Yes	<b>29</b>	59%
No	<b>20</b>	41%

## Appendix C:

### Sample schedule for a regional lay leader training workshop<sup>49</sup>

LAY LEADER TRAINING - APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2004 - CLHS WILDOMAR CA

**LAY LEADER TRAINING FOR  
ALL GOOD WORKS**

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004

California Lutheran High School  
Wildomar, CA

1

LAY LEADER TRAINING - APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2004 - CLHS WILDOMAR CA

- 8:30 to 9:00      **Statement of Problem**
- 9:00 to 10:00    **Synod Resources**
- 10:00 to 11:30   **Separate into Training Classes**
  - Meeting Facilitation
  - Project Management
  - Dispute Mediation
- 11:30 to 12:30 Problem Solving working lunch.**
  - Each group must come up with:
    - » a solution
    - » a process to inform the congregation
    - » a presentation to communicate that solution.
- 12:30 to 13:30    **Presentation Solutions.**
- 13:30 to 14:30    **Training Team Critique of Solutions**

**About one week after we have completed our program, our issue and its possible solutions will be posted**

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<sup>49</sup> Philip Smith. "Lay Leader Training for All Good Works." PowerPoint, Leadership Training Seminar at California Lutheran High School, Wildomar, (April 2004).

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