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Doctrine as Pastoral Care at Bethel Lutheran, Gurnee, Illinois, to Support Members Who are in Multi-Denominational Settings

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DOCTRINE AS PASTORAL CARE AT BETHEL LUTHERAN, GURNEE, ILLINOIS, TO
SUPPORT MEMBERS WHO ARE IN MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL SETTINGS

A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Doctor of Ministry Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
Rev. Benjamin C. Squires
November, 2015

Approved by _____
Dr. David Schmitt Advisor

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To the Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil, my pastor, and Dr. Beverly Yahnke,
who showed me what “doctrine as pastoral care” meant
when I was in need of spiritual care and of knowing how to spiritually care for others.

To Samuel, Jude, and Owen, my sons,
who have shown great patience with my studies,
and for whom God calls me to show “doctrine as fatherly care.”

And to Susan, my wife,
through whom God shines with His care and love,
and His wisdom and grace.

In memory of the Rev. Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

The Problem this Project Addresses

In 2010, a month or so after I was installed as pastor at Bethel Lutheran Church, Gurnee, Illinois, I met Dan Weyerhaeuser, the senior pastor at the local Evangelical Free church. Over breakfast, Dan told me about how the pastors in Gurnee had been gathering for a number of months working on the beginnings of a project to somehow work together to bring the Gospel to the Village of Gurnee. I expressed my hesitations: I was just recently installed as pastor of Bethel, a congregation in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and this did not sound like the type of project in which LCMS congregations usually participate.

Dan understood but encouraged me to come to a meeting and see whether Bethel could be a part of this project. With much hesitation, I brought this invitation to our Elders. My hesitation came from my theological education but also from my experience with denominational policies. I did not want to violate Synodical bylaws or cause our congregation to come under suspicion. These fears were not well-founded, researched positions; they were knee-jerk reactions. My concerns arose from remembering being taught that our congregations should not give the impression of unity in doctrine where that unity does not exist. Out of fear, my initial thought had sometimes been to: 1) avoid giving this impression by avoiding any work with non-Lutherans, and 2) prepare a defense (justification) if we did attend a non-Lutheran conference or work with non-Lutheran congregations,

anticipating being charged with harboring false doctrine.

Those were my fears. The Elders at Bethel-Gurnee, though, decided together that I ought to attend the meetings, stay at the table, and see whether we might provide a Lutheran influence on how the project would develop. We agreed that Bethel-Gurnee would pull out if it became clear that the shape of the project did not actually pursue a method that focused on bringing the Gospel to the village, swept theological differences under the rug, or whittled down the effort into joint worship services or some such “window dressing” kind of unity.

Bethel stayed at the table and we saw a local, multi-denominational outreach effort emerge that we felt we could faithfully support: helping form our people for missional living in a post-Christian world. I began to see that this association of congregations was gathering its members in their neighborhoods to consider what it means to live as a Christian where God has planted them—on mission in their own zip code. Bethel-Gurnee, as much as any of the other congregations, needed to support our members in knowing how to respond to the challenges of a post-Christian world, to relate to other Christians in a post-denominational culture. Therefore, we contributed to the formation of a plan for members to work together, helped develop the training materials, and encouraged our members to join neighborhood GO! Groups.

The congregations in this effort (currently six actively participating) represent different denominations, backgrounds, or independent standings, but all would identify themselves as evangelical and “Bible believing.”¹ Now known as GO! Together, we have mapped where

¹ At the time of this writing, the congregations in addition to Bethel are: Gurnee Community Church, Joy! Lutheran, Lakeland Church, Life Church, La Vina Gurnee, and Village Church of Gurnee. Congregations agreed to the statements regarding the understanding of Scripture and the Gospel, but in some cases, this may be representative of the congregation and not necessarily their denomination. For more, see www.go-together.org.

our members live, identified clusters of Christians in neighborhoods, gathered them into groups for encouragement and training in missional living, and are sending them into their neighborhoods with actions and words of love from God. Bethel has encouraged its members to become part of these multi-denominational neighborhood groups while recognizing the vital importance of confessing true doctrine. Over the last three years, over 20 neighborhood groups of Christians have met in our Village, averaging around nine months of actively meeting. In addition, the missional living formation and model has led to over 20 more developing groups of Christians in other spheres of influence such as workplaces and fitness centers.

GO! Together is specifically referred to as multi-denominational since it does not share the traditional ecumenical goals of unification, altar-and-pulpit fellowship, or other such expressions of the ecumenical movement. Instead, GO! is multi-denominational: GO! involves congregations from multiple denominational affiliations and independent statuses representing a range of Protestant systematics. GO! Together brings together members from those congregations in neighborhood groups to study missional living—what it means to be good neighbors who also look for opportunities to share the Gospel in their individual relationships with others. These groups do not have goals of joint worship services, resolving doctrinal differences, or declaring that the congregations are in agreement on all matters of doctrine.

The effort to bring together members from our congregations is a multi-denominational approach in a post-denominational culture, where a Christian is much more likely to be focused on affiliation with a congregation rather than denomination.

[M]ulti-denominationalism is a matter of knowing your tradition and then carefully and respectfully interacting relationally with Christians from the other traditions so that the common aspects of faith and practice unite us. In this manner we get to know and trust one another. This understanding also includes knowing where we differ so we do not have to violate our own conscience or pretend that we are the same. It requires a full understanding of your own tradition in order to appreciate the other traditions of our common faith.²

Because of the multi-denominational approach, certain questions arise for Bethel-Gurnee:

“How well do Bethel-Gurnee members know their own tradition (whether Lutheran in general or LCMS specifically)?” and “How do they assess their own preparation for conversation with Christians from other traditions where differences are articulated but the common faith is celebrated?”

As I have considered how to offer pastoral care in the context of our congregation where our people are seeking to work in multi-denominational efforts, it has become clear that theological study and training is pastoral care. Doctrine, dogma, systematics—these are part and parcel of pastoral care. In order to be a faithful, confessional, Lutheran congregation that also remains engaged in conversation and encouragement with congregations from different Christian systematics, perhaps even seeking ways to work on the Christ-given mission to share His Gospel of hope with the world, the congregation must practice an intentional, theological pastoral care for our people. Teaching, study, and conversation centered in doctrine equips people to speak God’s Word in truth and purity, bring light where there is fog, and celebrate where His grace shines in the lives of Christians from other congregations. However, it is unclear how Bethel’s GO! participants perceive the effect of

² H. Bruce Stokes, "The Problems of Non-Denominationalism," (2011): 5, http://www.disciplecenter.com/html/Problems_of_Nondenominationalism.pdf. See also: Mark G. Toulouse, "What is the Role of a Denomination in a Post-Denominational Age," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1994): 207–47. John H. Armstrong, "The Emerging Face Of Being One: Ecumenical Windows For

this multi-denominational experience on their theological understanding and whether they see a need for additional “doctrine as pastoral care” to support them as Lutherans in a wider Christian context.

I credit Dr. Charles Arand for the short-hand phrase “doctrine as pastoral care” which summarizes well the goal of placing theological study in the context of the day-to-day practice of Christians.³ Doctrinal inquiry thus does not remain abstract and simplistically static, isolated to a classroom, but becomes the foundation of one’s actions and conversations. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has not recently produced any studies or curriculum that would address “doctrine as pastoral care” specifically to support laity in their theological understanding while engaged in a multi-denominational group. Past examples, such as statements regarding Lutherans and Scouting, are more than 60 years old.⁴ There is a need to develop an educational model to support Lutheran Christians as they engage in multi-denominational settings.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this Major Applied Project is to provide a “doctrine as pastoral care” formation experience for Bethel members participating in GO! Groups in order to adequately support a Lutheran theological perspective while participating in multi-denominational groups. Therefore, this project will:

Evangelicals," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 295–310.

³ Charles P. Arand, "Theological Observer: Doctrine as Pastoral Care," *Concordia Journal* 25, no. 3 (1999): 234–37.

⁴ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church: A Manual of Policies and Procedures* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Committee on Scouting, 1951).

1. Develop a process based on andragogical principles allowing participants to be actively involved in their learning
2. Interview Bethel's GO! participants about their multi-denominational experiences and what they perceive as their needs
3. Based on the participants' responses, determine the needed content and method(s) for further theological formation with these same members in order to encourage additional growth in theological understanding
4. Evaluate by means of follow-up interviews whether this additional formation experience impacted these members in their perception of and subsequent experiences in multi-denominational settings
5. Report to the Disciple Care Elders the possible impact of such a formation experience for a wider set of Bethel members as they interact with other local Christians.

The “doctrine as pastoral care” formation experience process developed for Bethel, and possibly for use by other Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations, will encourage a faithful, confessional, Lutheran perspective for those members who are engaged in conversation and mission with people taught according to different Christian systematics.

While the steps of this process might be duplicated with other members for a similar goal of “doctrine as pastoral care” to support multi-denominational engagement, the actual content—and perhaps even specific formation activities—will differ according to the themes from the initial interviews of future participants.

The Process

The process for this Major Applied Project will begin by personally inviting twelve

Bethel members to participate in the three phases of this research. These members have been a part of their neighborhood GO! Group or were part of GO! Intensive, a multi-congregation training series. I will conduct an in-depth interview⁵ with each participant about their GO! Together experiences and what they perceive as their needs for support for their ongoing participation in multi-denominational settings. I will then analyze these responses in order to ascertain what themes of need emerge and how those needs can be addressed through theological inquiry.

The main context for participants' responses will be their GO! Together experiences. However, further reflections could refer to any setting where the Christian faith is overtly acknowledged as a common bond. This could be formal, as in a Bible study in a neighborhood or workplace, human care organization, prayer group, or a local workshop/seminar. A multi-denominational setting could also be informal, as in friends who speak about their Christian faith with one another.

A retreat focused on "doctrine as pastoral care" will be designed based on the interviews and literature review. The doctrinal content of the retreat will be determined by the participants' self-identification of their needs for support. Those needs will be analyzed to determine the theological areas for further study. The retreat's exercises will support participants with regard to a Lutheran theological perspective according to their perceived areas of need as they participate in multi-denominational settings.

Yet, the retreat's design will not only take doctrinal content into account. The process, design, and facilitating will take adult education theories into account. To begin with, a

⁵ Colleen Mahoney, "Common Qualitative Methods," *User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed-Method Evaluations* (1997): 3.1–3.19, <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm>.

retreat was chosen in part because it has potential to produce the benefits of “informal religious education” as described by John Elias:

[Informal] education is designed to aid persons to grow religiously in a way that touches all aspects of persons: affects, attitudes, and values. . . . Questions are asked, discussions are stimulated, and learners are engaged. Informal education is effective because it immerses learners in a specific religious culture: a way of living, seeing the world, eating, dressing, and relating to one another.⁶

A retreat affords such an opportunity for the participants and leader to be fully immersed in an education experience. The retreat engages all present in contemplating, studying, discerning, and imagining applying a way of living.

Secondly, relying on the interviews to determine the retreat’s topic is also an opportunity to pursue designing an educational experience built on the adult learning theory in Malcolm Knowles’ concept of “andragogy.” Andragogy was coined by Knowles in order to differentiate the adult learning process from pedagogy, the learning process of children.⁷ Adult education professor Elaine Sipe summarizes well the principles at work in andragogy.

The assumptions of andragogy are that the learner

1. is increasingly moving toward self-direction;
2. has a rich experiential basis for learning which serves as a resource for self and others;
3. wants to learn that which will help in the performance of life tasks and in solving problems; and
4. is motivated by internal incentives and curiosity.⁸

A retreat developed from the participants’ own perspectives and questions moves toward “self-direction,” relies on what each participant brings to the conversation from their

⁶ John L. Elias, "Adult Religious Education," *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 2012, no. 133 (2012): 5–12.

⁷ Malcolm S. Knowles, "Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy," *Religious Education* 72, no. 2 (1977): 202–11.

⁸ Elaine Sipe, "Adult Education in the Congregation: An Andragogical Approach," *Lutheran Education*

experience, and guides reflection about how such learning will apply to their immediate context. The goal is to have a retreat that lives up to Sipe's description: "[A]ndragogy, at its best, seeks to provide a relaxed, trusting, mutually respectful, informal, warm, collaborative and supportive learning environment."⁹

Finally, the retreat will also be mindful of how Jack Mezirow built upon Knowles' work, among others, and developed "transformative learning theory." Mezirow locates transformation as occurring when we experience shifts in our "meaning perspectives" and "meaning schemes." The retreat cannot hope to be truly effective if only centered on content and information distribution. Self-directed learners, intrinsically motivated, learn when engaged in self-reflection.

Negation or transformation of inadequate, false, distorted, or limited meaning perspectives or schemes is central to adult learning; this involves the testing of fundamental assumptions rather than mere extension of knowledge. Meaning perspectives and schemes can be transformed through a reflective assessment and critique of the presuppositions upon which they are based.¹⁰

The retreat experience ought to push against and challenge the participants' perspectives, and through such disequilibrium, offer them resources from which they can draw new conclusions that assimilate their new experience and knowledge.

Three weeks after the retreat, allowing time for reflection and possible further multi-denominational experiences, participants will be interviewed again about how they view the retreat's impact on their perception of their multi-denominational interactions. This interview will also ask the participants to evaluate the retreat's design (including the importance of the

137, no. 2 (2001): 88–89.

⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, 1st ed., *The Jossey-Bass Higher and*

pre-interview in determining their needs). From these interviews, the findings will be summarized as a report to the Disciple Care Elders. The report will address the possible impact of additional theological formation experiences for a wider set of Bethel members to support of their interaction with other local Christians in their day-to-day lives. At this point, it may be that the findings would be able to help pastors in other LCMS congregations.

Project Parameters

This project looks specifically at 12 members of Bethel-Gurnee. They range in age from early 20s to early 70s (average: 49, median: 60). Some have been members of Bethel for multiple decades; some have only recently joined (average: 11 years). There is a wide range in how long these participants have been identifying themselves as Christians (from 3 years to lifelong), as actively involved in their faith life, and as Lutherans. Two participants are part-time staff of the congregation. Six of the participants are current or former leaders from the Church Council or Elders. One person is a Synodically-trained, retired teacher. While this group of subjects was not selected to be a representative cross-section of Bethel-Gurnee's adult population, the result is a fairly good sampling.¹¹

These participants have all been involved in or aware of GO! Together for somewhere between 2–4 years. Therefore, this project does not aim to measure the effect of initial involvement in GO! since the participants' prior points of view can no longer be established. Instead, the project looks at what ongoing “doctrine as pastoral care” is needed for those already engaged in multi-denominational settings.

Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 62.

¹¹ e.g.: As of 2012, the approximate median age of Bethel-Gurnee members (aged 20 and older) was 47

Initially, the project presupposed a need to help participants identify how they may or may not hear a clear focus on *sola gratia* in their multi-denominational conversations. The interviews would have attempted to clarify how much the participants could identify that deficiency, and then the retreat would have provided further formation centered around the doctrine of justification by grace alone.

However, this ran counter to the adult education theory that is also to be part of the design of this project. The theory of andragogy presupposes that adult Christians grow most from education and training that is active, participatory, creative, and responsive to their needs.¹² Setting a topic prior to conducting the initial interviews would have removed many of those elements.

Therefore, the topic of the retreat was not pre-determined, but rather came about through the initial in-depth interviews. I presuppose that through the process of the initial in-depth interviews, the participants will be able to identify their perceptions of their multi-denominational experiences and their need for further theological reflection and formation. I also presuppose that there will be areas of need in common among the participants. While there will be unique needs and situations, the interviews will lead to discerning one or more shared theological themes which can be explored in the retreat. Finally, based on my pastoral experience in theological development of laity, and in my specific knowledge of my congregation, I presuppose that the participants will be able to perceive the impact of the formation experience with just a few weeks of reflection.

(internal research conducted by the author and committee as part of a congregational initiative).

¹² Knowles, "Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy," 209ff.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Preface: My Bifrucated View of Theology and Engaged Faith-Life

Theology that was not practical, that is, that did not have as its goal the application of God's Word to the lives of people in their concrete situations, for their salvation, was no theology at all.¹³

Douglas Rutt makes the above comment in describing the Lutheran fathers' perspective on the role of theology. While I am confident that my seminary education pointed to such a framework for reading the Lutheran Confessions and systematics, I honestly can look back at the early years of my ministry and see that I failed to maintain a practice with that perspective. My initial understanding and practice of pastoral care really amounted to kindly counsel offered under the guise of the title of pastor. This "kindly counsel" likely arose due to the popular Christian literature I read which relied heavily on psychological and business techniques, while I was also influenced by our American therapeutic culture.

Since those years, through the important influence of *Doxology: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel*, I have been much disabused of that initial understanding and pastoral practice. The shift reflects the tremendous body of knowledge that was always present for me in the works of Luther, other Reformers, the Confessions, and our own LCMS heritage. However, reading Eugene Peterson's reflections on pastoral ministry, especially *Working the*

¹³ Douglas L. Rutt, "The Missiological Endeavor is Essentially Theological (and Vice Versa)," *Missio apostolica* 17, no. 2 (2009): 78.

Angles,¹⁴ woke me up again to see the ways in which my call as pastor sends me out for a unique task: speaking Christ into the mundane. It has led me to consider a very simple yardstick when measuring my spiritual counseling conversations: No later than 30 minutes into an hour-long session, I need to turn the corner—if I have not already—toward the divine realities at play in the person’s life. If making this turn seems to have no readily available traction, I must at least spin the tires with a rather generic question of “Where is God in all of this?” It signals to the person—and to me—that now it is time to listen and seek how God’s Kingdom is at hand in the midst of the mundane challenges and chances of this life. Pastoral care must include theological reflection in order to be actually pastoral; it must move beyond psychology or social work and into the formative work of the Holy Spirit brought to us through the Word and Sacraments.

Unfortunately, at least in my experience, I left the seminary with a bifurcated view of doctrine and practice, which in many ways matched the description by Anthony Robinson in *What’s Theology Got to Do with It?*

Theology may have been something a person had to study as a student preparing for ordination, but when that was done, that was it for theology. It just was not the kind of thing that was very useful in parish ministry or in the ongoing life of the church and its members.¹⁵

I did not enter the parish confident in theology’s role in the “real stuff” of pastoral ministry.

Robinson helps to correct such a bifurcation on the part of pastors by drawing on ethicist James

¹⁴ Much credit must also be given to the Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil and Dr. Beverly Yahnke, directors of Doxology, the Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel. They very much encouraged me in my study, understanding, and reflection on the art of the “cure of souls.” As described on Doxology’s Website, “DOXOLOGY offers an innovative program of advanced study retreats to strengthen pastors for the task of faithfully shepherding the souls entrusted to their care. DOXOLOGY provides pastors with a unique study and renewal experience, rooted in the classic art of spiritual care and informed by the insights of contemporary Christian psychology.” From www.doxology.us, accessed July 13, 2010.

¹⁵ Anthony B. Robinson, *What's Theology Got to Do with It? Convictions, Vitality, and the Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 18.

Gustafson “who spoke of theology as a perspective and a way of construing life.”¹⁶ In that sense, there is no getting past theology to the “real stuff” of ministry; theology is our real perspective on life, aspiring to view the world through the lens of God’s revelation.

The word *perspective* literally means “to see through.” What is the perspective through which we see life? Is it a perspective formed and shaped by cross and resurrection or by some other story or theology or doctrine?¹⁷

This is what pastors are called to represent, teach, and share with the laity, inviting them into theological formation—the perspective which they “see through.”

The Doxology program has provided a tremendous gift to the Church by showing pastors who struggle as I did how doctrine relates to the practice of ministry. Pastoral care flows from theology—as opposed to sprinkling spiritual care conversations with a bit of theology before getting onto the “real stuff” of psychological and sociological methods. The pastor brings God’s Word to bear in the context of people’s lives in order to present God’s perspective.

This chapter explores what it means to correct a bifurcation of doctrine and lived-out faith—not only for the pastor but also for the laity. Section B of this chapter considers the Scriptural perspective by briefly studying Paul’s paraenesis in his Epistles. The separation of doctrine and engaged living is not supported by Scripture and how Paul urges his readers towards lived-out faith. A clear example of this paradigm is found in Romans 12:1-2, those two verses are explored as one tool in teaching this to a congregation.

Section C of this chapter, “Theological Perspective,” turns to a set of writers who unearth the transformative power of God in theology. First, Ellen Charry’s *By the Renewing of Your Minds* where she shows her rediscovery of the intertwining of theology and formation.¹⁸ Charry

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ Ibid. (emphasis original).

¹⁸ Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York:

shows how the Enlightenment's distinction of theological disciplines (exegetical, systematic, historical, practical) meant losing sight of how earlier Christian theologians intended their doctrinal work to lead to faith and life formation. My conclusion based on Charry is that in my theological studies I made a false assumption that theology was the dry, dusty material of the academy, and I would need to look elsewhere to find support for an engaged faith life. This was the result of the problem Charry identifies. By ignoring the formative goals of theological works, I ended up with a pastoral care practice that was pulled away from a theological framework. Instead, Charry advocates for reading theological texts and seeing in them the goal of faith formation.

This project surmises that laity have a similar truncated perspective as mine: dusty theological treatises are not formative for lived-out faith. This is likely due to common trends in the Lutheran Church's approach to catechesis and adult education. Therefore, Section C continues in seeing sapience in catechesis. "Doctrine as pastoral care," the phrase coined by Charles Arand based on the work of Charry, encompasses the way theological inquiry matrixes with living as God's people in the world. Pastors shepherd people through theological study that is made applicable to daily life. Arand shows that Lutheran catechesis has suffered from the bifurcation of doctrine and engaged faith. This perspective will move this project's research from Charry's historical survey to a specifically Lutheran focus.

Finally, Section C closes by briefly exploring the work of Edward Farley who encourages inviting laity into theological reflection.

The theological perspective in this chapter shapes this project's goal of supporting Bethel-Gurnee's members in multi-denominational experiences. A "doctrine as pastoral care" approach

Oxford University Press, 1997).

rediscovers theology's integral role in forming disciples for daily living. This project flows from that shift in my understanding and practice of pastoral care. Bethel-Gurnee's GO! participants will not just need organizational, communication, and logistical support in order to be in a local, multi-denominational outreach effort. The greater need is for theological formation as they work with other neighborhood Christians, encouraging one another to reach out to their neighbors who do not know Christ.

Scriptural Perspective

The Pattern of Theological Reflection in Paul's Paraenesis and Romans 12:1–2

In the opening essay of *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass state that theologians “reflect on the shape and character of the way of life Christians enter when we *rise* from the watery death of baptism.”¹⁹ That “shape and character” of living out one's faith mimics the moves that St. Paul makes in his paraenesis in many of his letters. For instance, the “watery death of baptism” in Romans 6 as part of Paul's leading the reader to the “way of life” in living out the faith in Romans 12. This project theorizes that theological reflection is crucial for faithful participation in a local, multi-denominational outreach effort. The Scriptural foundation for this combined reflective-participation arises from the way in which the apostle Paul provided pastoral counsel to Christians. Typically Paul moves from doctrinal teaching and the proclamation of grace to paraenesis—encouraging Christians in the life of faith manifested in the world.

Dorothy Bass states the obvious when she says, “[M]ost congregations would agree that their beliefs are crucial if they are to keep their bearings.” This project's theory—in that sense—

¹⁹ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 31.

seems hardly worth articulating, especially within the LCMS. From catechism class to adult information class to using doctrinally reviewed materials in our congregations, our Synod's emphasis on doctrine appears to be foremost in our minds.

What, then, is different in saying our GO! participation will require a crucial focus on "doctrine as pastoral care"? Reflection. Theological reflection. Beyond multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer forms of checking doctrine (i.e.: getting the right answer), our GO! participants need to be invited to reflect on our doctrine through study, questioning, comparing, conversation, wrestling, prayer, and application. For the Scriptural perspective on theological reflection's connection to faith-life formation, St. Paul's pattern of how he moves to paraenesis is instructive. After a brief survey of Paul's pattern, we turn to the clear example in the transitional verses of Romans 12:1–2 which work as one tool for teaching this paradigm to the congregation.

Paul's Moral Exhortations in the Context of His Letters

St. Paul's pattern in his letters of moving from doctrinal instruction to moral exhortation (paraenesis) shows an intertwining of these functions. Although Paul's letters generally have a pattern of instruction in the first part and exhortation in the second part, this cannot be said to support bifurcation of doctrine and lived-out faith. Instead, Paul ties exhortations back to what his hearers have been taught about their faith in Christ.

In the first place, Paul's rhetoric does more than define doctrine or describe good actions; Paul is applying doctrine to his hearers so that they will be led towards good actions. His rhetoric falls within Abraham Malherbe's description of moral philosophers in which he says:

Moral philosophers constantly distinguished themselves from professional orators. Their aim was to move people to action by exposing their more condition, holding out the promises of a rational life, and persuading them to decide for the good. The

speech in which they attempted to accomplish this could be harsh or gentle, biting or soothing, but it was always to be frank and aim at the benefit of the hearer.²⁰

Paul's writings "aim at the benefit of the hearer" so that teaching about doctrine is more than facts on a chalkboard; the doctrinal instruction leads to moral exhortation whereby the hearers' lives benefit when they "decide for the good." In Section C of this chapter, Charry's work on sapience ties in with the moral philosopher's goal of teaching for the lived-out "benefit of the hearer."

Secondly, Paul uses paraenesis for moving hearers to "decide for the good."

Paraenesis is moral exhortation in which someone is advised to pursue or abstain from something....it contains useful rules for conduct in common situations and adopts styles that range from censure to consolation....Paraenetic advice may be diverse in content and consist of brief admonitions strung together (cf. Roman 12)....²¹

Paul employs paraenesis in his letters, especially in the closing chapters, often displaying familiarity and personal connection with his hearers in a demonstration of pastoral concern.

However, Paul's paraenetic sections do not rise out of the ether; they are not tacked on to-do lists. "Doctrine as pastoral care" comes from the pattern seen in Paul where his moral exhortations are shown to be responses to what has been taught about who God is, what He has done, and who He has made His disciples to be. Doctrinal instruction is active speech with the goal of being the fuel for morally, spiritually transformed lives. Tim Sensing summarizes this in saying, "Pauline paraenesis is intricately connected to Pauline theology."²² Paul Raabe and James Voelz point to how exhortation flows from identity in Christ:

²⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*, 1st ed., *Library of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 121.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 124,25.

²² Tim Sensing, "Towards a Definition of Paraenesis," *Restoration Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1996): 158.

Paul exhorts his hearers to live out their lives practically and experientially in a way that conforms with what they are already by virtue of Baptism. He calls for their new status to be actualized in their daily life.²³

Paul has taught his hearers about their “new status” before God through Christ, and his paraenesis is a direct result of this doctrinal pronouncement. Doctrine leads to lived-out faith (“actualized in...daily life”).

If Paul had simply appended his paraenesis as an after-thought, we might conclude that Paul was the one exhorting the hearers toward certain actions. Instead, Paul’s paraenesis is contextualized according to the theology he had “received” and “passed on as of first importance” (1 Cor 15:3). Sensing explains:

Paraenesis, therefore, calls for a proper understanding of the Christian tradition and faith and not merely Pauline demand. In other words, based on the knowledge of the message that led them to embrace Paul’s message originally and its meaning in the Christian community, Paul exhorts them with reminders and appeals to act in the present.²⁴

Sensing continues by quoting Hieronymus Cruz who more fully shows how the “knowledge of the message” (doctrine) leads to how Christians choose to “act in the present.” Cruz says:

The Christians are urged to do certain things or to keep off from others because of Christ i.e. because of his words, examples, second coming, especially because of his passion, death, and resurrection in which we have participated through baptism and thereby becoming “new men” we are intimately united with him as members of his body, possessing the Spirit. Thus Christ is the real power behind Pauline exhortations.²⁵

Cruz’s description of what empowers paraenesis sounds like the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Lived-out faith is powered by the fullness of the truth of God in all of its teaching on the

²³ Paul R. Raabe and James W. Voelz, "Why Exhort a Good Tree? Anthropology and Paraenesis in Romans," *Concordia Journal* 22, no. 2 (1996): 159.

²⁴ Sensing, "Towards a Definition of Paraenesis," 155–56.

²⁵ Hieronymus Cruz, *Christological Motives and Motivated Actions in Pauline Paraenesis*, *European University Studies, Series XXIII, Theology* 396 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1990), 30–31, as quoted in Sensing, "Towards a Definition of Paraenesis," 156.

Christ—all that He is, what He did, and who He will be—and how He has connected us to Himself. St. Paul’s pattern in his letters ought to be the pattern for “doctrine as pastoral care” where there is an intertwining of doctrinal instruction and moral exhortation.

Romans 12:1–2: A Clear Example for Teaching Paul’s Move to Paraenesis

Romans 12:1–2 can be used as one example of how Paul weaves together theology and paraenesis. Obviously, Paul’s paraenetical pattern cannot be limited to these two verses or this one transitional move in Romans. These verses cannot contain the entire flow of Paul’s thought, and they are not offered here as a proof text. This section explores how to use these two verses as a clear way to teach laity the shape of theological reflection for faithful living.

In Romans 12 recalls the promises of grace in Jesus and then develops a set of examples of what it means to be a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”²⁶ It can be said pastoral care happens in the space of “Romans 12:1–2,” reflecting back on the doctrinal teaching of the letter, as in St. Paul’s move from sin and judgment (e.g.: Rom. 2:12) to justification through God’s merciful work in Jesus (e.g.: Rom. 3:21ff.) and projecting forward to the manifestation of this life in the Spirit in the world.

Paul does not begin his letter to the Christians in Rome saying, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought” (12:3), as if the prior eleven chapters of theological argument are unnecessary for the Christian. No, in Paul’s “therefore” of Romans 12, he points to being “transformed by the renewing of your mind,” and the grammar of “therefore” points back to “God’s mercy” which Paul has been explicating throughout the beginning of the epistle, such as Romans 6 which teaches the Christian that in Baptism “we *rise* from the watery death of

²⁶ Quotes here are from NIV.

baptism.”²⁷ The transformative offering of “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” is a response to Baptism—to the knowledge of who God is, what He has done, and who He has made His people to be. Pastoral care comes *through* the “therefore in view of God’s mercy”—recalling what has been taught (doctrine)—which leads to being “transformed by the renewing of your mind,” in order to support the action of Christian living. F.F. Bruce states in regards to Romans 12: “Doctrine is never taught in the Bible simply that it may be known; it is taught in order that it may be translated into practice....”²⁸ Doctrine is practical by its nature.

“Therefore” (Romans 12:1)

“Therefore” points back to the ground for Paul’s argument in Romans 12. While this seems clear as one considers grammar and rhetoric, I have found that it is not always clear to congregation members. To explain the connection, I have used sentence diagrams and other grammatical explanations as the basis for the exposition of a text in a sermon. Beyond using the sentence diagram to help in my exegesis, I present the diagram to the congregation as a visual (best printed in the bulletin to allow them to mark it up themselves), so that they will be led toward discovery and strengthening of a faith concept, guided by what could be called the Holy Spirit’s “grammatical-inspiration” of Scripture’s authors.

In the case of Romans 12:1–2 and its “doctrine as pastoral care” quality, the grammar is crucial—pausing to recognize that small Greek word in the first sentence: οὖν. Douglas Moo states it this way:

²⁷ Dykstra and Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, 31 (emphasis mine).

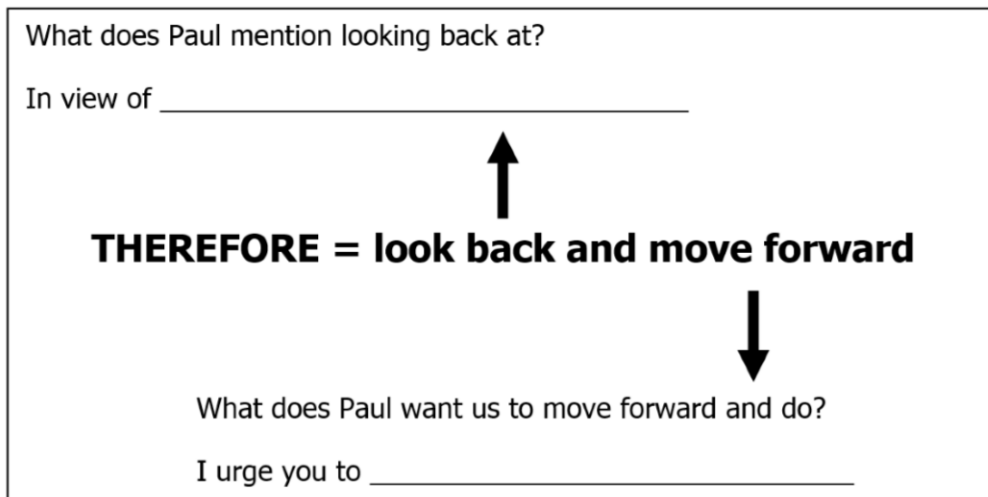
²⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 212.

“Therefore” must be given its full weight: Paul wants to show that the exhortations of 12:1–15:13 are built firmly on the theology of chaps. 1–11.²⁹

“Therefore” slows us down to look back and see the ground upon which Paul urges us to pursue Christian living.

This relationship is shown in a diagram that I have used in Confirmation classes and Bible studies based on filling in the blanks using the NIV translation of Romans 12:1.

Figure 1 Romans 12:1–2 Diagram³⁰



The diagram helps people visualize what Paul is doing with the grammar, so that the sense of Christian duty reflected in Romans 12 is anchored in the story of God’s redemption in Jesus in Romans 1–11.

Leon Morris further explicates the role of “therefore,” so that we see that this single οὖν is calling our attention to the grand scale of Paul’s teaching on God’s mercy.

Therefore is an important word. Paul is not writing an essay in abstract ethics, but telling the Romans what their conduct must be in the light of what God has done. We should probably not tie it in too closely to the immediately preceding words (though

²⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 748.

³⁰ Diagram by author.

there is a good sequence of thought), but take it as referring to the whole massive argument that has preceded it.³¹

“Doctrine as pastoral care” begins with the “therefore” since prior to interpreting a parishioner’s situation and exhorting them to Christian living, the theological ground must be known and made clear. Dorothy Bass notes our tendency as Americans to want to cut to the chase, as if saying, *Pastor, just tell me the bottom line: what should I do as a Christian?*³² “Doctrine as pastoral care” does not treat the action as the bottom line; rather, our doctrine teaches us who we are in Christ is our ground of being (bottom line). This is the identity in Christ which we have through baptism (Romans 6). Our actions as Christians living out our faith flow from this source, continually supplied by the “looking back” of the “therefore.”

“In View of God’s Mercy” (Romans 12:1)

The next question is: to what specifically is Paul calling us to look back? What is he referring to when he says “in view of God’s mercy”? Can we equate “God’s mercy” with “doctrine” for the sake of this paper’s approach?

I believe that C. K. Barrett’s explication of “mercies of God” warrants seeing this phrase as a synecdoche for the whole doctrine of God.

The “mercies of God” are the ground of the Christian’s self-sacrifice to God; but they are also the record of the way (traced out in chs. i–xi) in which God has brought his eternal purposes to their fulfillment in Christ.³³

Paul is not only pointing back to specific teaching on mercy in the earlier chapters of Romans (e.g.: Romans 3:21–25; 9:14–24; 11:30–32), but is referring to the whole counsel of God that he

³¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 432.

³² Dorothy C. Bass, "Practicing Theology in the Congregation," *Congregations* 30, no. 1 (2004): 24.

³³ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 214. See also previous quotation from Morris along with Moo, 748.

has offered to the Roman Christians. That includes law and judgment on sin, and justification by grace through faith. The divine doctrine that Paul is teaching, referred to by the shorthand “God’s mercy/mercies,” is the source for a Christian’s engaged life of faith.³⁴

“A Living Sacrifice, Holy and Acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1)

“Doctrine as pastoral care,” then, builds on the “therefore,” which points to God’s mercy (doctrine) as the foundation (and power) for living unto Christ. That grammatical move takes us to the overarching instruction Paul gives to his readers in this section of the epistle: “To offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1).

The connection between doctrine and life is evident in translating “living sacrifice” alternatively as Louw-Nida suggest: “genuine.” The Christian’s sacrificial living is *logike* in terms of “pertaining to being genuine, in the sense of being true to the real and essential nature of something – rational, genuine, true (‘this is your true worship’ Ro 12.1).”³⁵ “Doctrine as pastoral care” points to spiritual practices the *genuine* outcomes of the doctrine we have received about who God is and who we are in Him. In an apparent contrast, a number of translations (ESV, NASB, NRSV) prefer “spiritual worship,” which might unintentionally imply a more removed theological life that dwells on the spiritual plane rather than the tangible life. In the case of the arguments in this paper, it is important to explicate the phrase to draw on the genuine, reasonable, practical nature of one’s life as worship.

³⁴ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 749: “The preposition ‘through’ is better translated here ‘because of’ (TEV) or ‘in view of’ (NIV): it indicates not the means by which Paul exhorts but the basis, or even the source, of the exhortation”.

³⁵ J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 675.

“Transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2)

Paul continues in Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” As noted above, Paul’s use of the word “transformed” can be compared to “transformative learning” from Jack Mezirow’s adult education theory.³⁶ While not a theological concept for Mezirow, “transformative learning” is a helpful coinage for Paul’s understanding that the *learning* of God’s Word is accompanied with the *transformative* power of God’s Holy Spirit to move individuals beyond understanding to engaged lives.

“Transformative learning,” taking the “Romans 12:1–2” framework into account, must be defined according to the “therefore” and “in view of God’s mercy.” Dykstra and Bass’ explanation articulates such a definition: “Exploring this question involves us both in contemplating the deepest foundations of Christian faith and in figuring out the shape our living should take amidst the immediate concerns of each day.”³⁷ The complexities of daily living drive us back to the revealed wisdom of God (doctrine) in order to know how to “live and move and have our being” in him (Acts 17:28). Therefore, this project will seek to support the participants to enact their faith in multi-denominational settings in view of the “deepest foundations of Christian faith” that we hold dear.

Our 21st century, Western ears might assume when we hear Paul say “the renewing of your *minds*” that he is limiting this transformation to an intellectual exercise. Yet, that is a misunderstanding and limited view of “mind” here in Romans 12. Steve Kang and Michael

³⁶ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, xii., “There is need for a learning theory that can explain how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meanings, and the way the structures of meaning themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional.”

³⁷ Dykstra and Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, 31.

Feldman write:

“Mind” here is translated from *nous*, which means “the totality of which we are composed.” Thus this transformational renewal includes not only our basic moral disposition, but also our “moral sensitiveness and perceptiveness.” Stott describes the transformation by the renewal of our mind as the once-for-all shift in value systems. Johnson says that it is the “radical, revolutionary change at the center of human consciousness,” and others that the transformation by the renewal of our mind is “the great disturbance” that challenges, interrupts, and upsets the tranquil *status quo* of this world.³⁸

“Mind” is the signal that the transformation is taking place via God’s wisdom for renewed living (*sapience*). We will see in the second section of this chapter that Romans 12:1–2 is a biblical example of what Charry notes about sapience, whereby the Christian finds that the wisdom of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit, is “conducive to virtue.”³⁹

This holds true in further exegesis of Romans 12:2 by Leon Morris:

The transformation is to take place *by the renewing of your mind*. The believer, whose life is that of the new age, does not think like an unbeliever. The reference to the mind is important. Paul does not envisage a mindless emotionalism, but a deeply intelligent approach to life, as characteristic of the Christian who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit. The term *mind* is not confined to intellectual pursuits (it includes an important moral element), but it certainly embraces them. The force of the present tense should not be overlooked; Paul envisages a continuing process of renewal.⁴⁰

The renewal of the mind enables the believer to discern what is good, what is pleasing to God, and what is perfect. And having discerned it, that same renewal sets him to the task of performing what is seen as the will of God.⁴¹

The pastoral care conversation encourages the person to be “transformed,” but not perhaps in the way the parishioner expects the transformation to take place. The Christian does not graduate from theological inquiry in order to move on to “real” faith exemplified by acts of love and

³⁸ S. Steve Kang and Michael Feldman, “Transformed by the Transfiguration: Reflections on a Biblical Understanding of Transformation and its Implications for Christian Education,” *Christian Education Journal*, no. 2 (2013): 370–71, quoting John Calvin, C.E.B. Cranfield, John Stott, Alan Johnson, and Karl Barth.

³⁹ Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, 19.

⁴⁰ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 435.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 436.

service. As said above regarding Charry and sapience, there can be no dividing of doctrine from life, or in this case, Romans 1–11 from Romans 12–16.

Romans 12:1–15:13 is therefore integral to the letter and to its purposes. It is not an appendix, a last-minute “add-on” relatively unrelated to the real—theological—heart of the letter.⁴²

Instead, the transformation is an ongoing course correction in the way we live. Our actions are only able to be redirected via the ground of the knowledge of God’s mercy.

Theological Perspective

Charry’s Rediscovery of the Intertwining of Theology and Lived-Out Faith

This formative connection between doctrine and life is at the heart of recent scholarship by Ellen Charry. Her approach is a helpful corrective to a culture that tends to dismiss theology. Doctrine, dogma, theological study, systematics, and distinctions can all appear to be enemies of missional living and of engagement in a multi-denominational conversation and movement. In the 1980’s, an oft-repeated television commercial found lawyer Joel Hyatt in a law library saying: “Somewhere, in all these dusty law books, a great idea got lost. That was the idea that law is for people.” Perhaps a similar commercial could be filmed among the rows of shelves in a theological library saying: “Somewhere, in all these dusty *theology* books, a great idea got lost. That was the idea that *theology* is for people.” Theology is for people, all people; theology is for forming, shaping, guiding, and practicing faith in Jesus Christ.

In *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*,⁴³ Ellen Charry says that she realized the old distinctions between the disciplines of theology (especially historical and systematic) made “less and less sense” to her. These divisions have been handed

⁴² Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 744.

⁴³ Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*.

down through the Enlightenment which came to limit theological study to *scientia*—“laying out the pattern of Christian doctrines so that Christians would ascent to correct propositions.”⁴⁴

Instead of this “abnormal, shrunken, and impoverished” theology,⁴⁵ she finds that earlier Christian writers wove together systematic formulations with the practice of the faith. Charry says: “When Christian doctrines assert the truth about God, the world, and ourselves, it is a truth that seeks to influence us.”⁴⁶ By surveying classic texts of Christianity, Charry recovers that full-fledged sense of pastoral care that is doctrinal study which is salutary for people’s “lived out” faith and virtue.

The patristic age emphasized sapience as the foundation of human excellence. Sapience includes correct information about God but emphasizes attachment to that knowledge. Sapience is engaged knowledge that emotionally connects the knower to the known.⁴⁷

Charry’s work leads pastoral theologians to return to seeing doctrine as sapience—wisdom, discernment—in which the Church Fathers saw an integration of knowledge and living.

Charry shows how the separation of doctrine from faith-led living relates to the grand shift through the Enlightenment:

Sapiential theology waned with modernity. Theology came to be thought of as the intellectual justification of the faith, apart from the practice of the Christian life. The wisdom of God has ceased to function in the church as the foundation of the good life. Theology is no longer expected to be a practical discipline, burdened as it is in the modern period with the awkwardness of speaking of God at all.⁴⁸

Therefore, a sapiential pastoral care means recovering theology from its modern, artificially isolated position. Rather than standing and looking askance at doctrine, “sapience has trust built

⁴⁴ Ibid., 237.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., viii.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

in from the very outset,” so that one believes “that the truth to be known is for the well-being of the knower.”⁴⁹ Therefore, in terms of “doctrine as pastoral care,” Charry points toward how reflecting on theological texts encourages faithful living as God’s children. “Christian doctrines function pastorally when a theologian unearths the divine pedagogy in order to engage the reader or listener in considering that life with the triune God facilitates dignity and excellence. I call this the ‘salutariness principle.’”⁵⁰

“Salutary” as a word within our tradition would usually only appear in the Proper Preface of the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper: “It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”⁵¹ I have often felt odd about using the word “salutary,” despite its ancient heritage, since the word has little recognition in common American speech. Yet, I have never really felt comfortable with any substitute word or synonym. Now, in the hands of Charry, there again seems to be a lack of a better word to encompass the entire thrust of how doctrine is salutary—“advantageous, benefic, favorable, good, helpful, profitable, beneficial, rewarding, satisfying, promising, desirable, healthful.”⁵²

Charry goes on in her work to specifically explore the salutariness that exists in the very form of classic dogmatic texts. She returns to many classical texts (St. Paul, Augustine, Anselm, Calvin, etc.) to unpack what she had been discovering in the purpose clauses of various works: “I saw the explanations of the divine rationale were to a practical purpose, and that it had to do with

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁵¹ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book*, Lutheran Service Builder electronic ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), multiple locations.

⁵² Merriam-Webster, "Definition of Salutary," last modified 2015, accessed 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/salutary>.

the reader: the writers were addressing the readers.”⁵³

By recovering the beneficial nature of doctrine, Charry’s basic concepts can also be applied to theological education of laity in a congregation, especially in the form of pastoral care. This project takes a different direction than Charry, in that, it will not explore an entire theological work to see the way the form leads to transformation. Charry’s work signals, though, that returning to doctrinal reflection leads to formation for engaged living. The bifurcated view of doctrine and lived-out faith does not need to remain the reigning view. Doctrine is sapience, and theological reflection leads to wise living for Christ.

Sapience in Catechesis

A bifurcated view of doctrine and lived-out faith does not only arise in the academy; it also arises from how the Church has approached catechesis. The Enlightenment problem that Charry identified has affected how the Church has taught the catechism, so that getting students to have the right answers became the goal (*scientia*). The salutary nature of catechesis for daily living was faint among the fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and true-and-false questions in the catechism workbooks. Charry’s work alerts us to return to catechesis in the mode of *sapientia*. Sapience unearths what was lost in thinking of the catechism as teacher- and information-centric.

Charles Arand describes the central role of doctrine in the ministry of the Reformers: “Doctrine is not abstract theory to be contrasted with practical skills and how-to steps for daily living....The church believed that false doctrine could actually harm a person. In other words, doctrine had consequences for the well-being of people. It had an impact on their spiritual health.”⁵⁴ For Luther and the Reformers the holistic teaching of the faith is a matter of life or

⁵³ Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, vii.

⁵⁴ Arand, "Theological Observer: Doctrine as Pastoral Care," 235.

death, a fight with the devil and a gift of “immeasurable strength, comfort, and help.”⁵⁵ In the preface to his *Large Catechism*, Luther calls attention to the crucial work of catechesis for the sake of doctrine and life in the still-fledgling Evangelical Church. He brings out “divine rationale” for a “practical purpose” for the readers in a passionate plea with the Church.

Therefore, I once again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to try to be doctors prematurely and to imagine that they know everything. Vain imaginations, like new cloth, suffer shrinkage! Let all Christians exercise themselves in the Catechism daily, and constantly put it into practice, guarding themselves with the greatest care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security or vanity. Let them continue to read and teach, to learn and meditate and ponder...If they show such diligence, then I promise them—and their experience will bear me out—that they will gain much fruit and God will make excellent men of them.⁵⁶

That passionate intersection of catechesis and practice is the location of sapience for Luther—a wisdom which “will make excellent” the knowers.

Luther’s purpose reflects what Charry calls the salutariness principle—doctrinal reflection leading to facilitating “dignity and excellence” in living. Over time, though, the Lutheran Church has lost that formative purpose of catechesis, likely due to the same effects of the Enlightenment that Charry noted. Theology came to be limited to *scientia*, whereas the catechisms were written for *sapientia*. Arand questions the LCMS approach to catechesis:

[I]s the faith itself seen primarily in terms of information that can be quickly downloaded so that we can move on to more important matters (e.g., the discovery of spiritual gifts and other task-oriented activities)?⁵⁷

Arand describes a perspective which separates doctrine from living. This is as beneficial as separating one’s bones from the muscles. The doctrinal “bones” are the core framework of the faith, but the “lived-out faith” muscles make it possible for that framework to be active in the

⁵⁵ Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg, 1959), 360.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 361–62.

⁵⁷ Charles P. Arand, "Does Catechesis in the LCMS Aim for the *Ars Vivendi Fide*," *Concordia Journal* 22, no. 1 (1996): 57.

world.

The separation, though, persists in how the Church has taught the laity in congregations. Arand, building upon the words of Robert Rosin, applies sapience to catechesis to break the Church away from teaching the faith as only an “information dump”:

As commentaries on life the catechisms do not consider doctrine as *scientia*, a fixed body of theoretical knowledge, but as *sapientia*, a practical knowledge that includes both the head and the heart. It offers a theological approach to life. This needs to be cultivated because at its heart, “theology is an art; it is *sapientia*—wisdom. It is learning to look at life and live not from our perspective (—that’s philosophy) but from God’s (—that’s theology). It’s learning to see things from the perspective of sin and grace in terms of Law and Gospel.”⁵⁸

By attending to doctrine as pastoral care, our participants in GO! will be encouraged to grow spiritually from those GO! experiences. They are empowered through an invitation into a process that leads to transformation through self-reflection on our theology, strengthened in their resolve to hold this as our confession, and resourced to decipher other theological perspectives and articulate their own convictions.

Therefore, catechesis employs the art of theology; the catechumen is invited into “the *ars vivendi fide*, that is, the art of living by faith.”⁵⁹ In the context of Bethel-Gurnee’s participation in GO! Together, the role of doctrine as pastoral care is heightened. Yet, such doctrine is not abstract, scholarly, speculative conversation, but practical, boots-on-the-ground, ready to enact our beliefs—as much as, if not more than, explaining doctrine. “Doctrine as pastoral care” means inviting laity into theological reflection.

However, this project begins with the laity and their experience in enacting their beliefs in a multi-denominational experience. Charry’s work begins with studying theological treatises to

⁵⁸ Ibid., 58–59. Arand includes a quote from Robert Rosin, “Christians and Culture: Finding Place in Clio’s Mansions,” in *Christ and Culture: The Church in Post-Christian(?) America. Concordia Seminary Monograph Series, Symposium Papers* (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 1994), 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 58.

see how the authors designed them to encourage life formation in their readers. Her work signals that the dry, dusty pages of theology provide fuel for growing in one's faith life. Arand's work on catechesis similarly alerts us to the formative purpose of the catechism as opposed to the information-centric approach generally used in recent years. Like Charry, Arand begins with the text and then moves to the hearer.

This project first endeavors to listen to the participants and decipher the theological reflection that will help grow in their confession and engaged living. Charry and Arand point to the source of encouragement in theological texts, so that the destination is known. Before going to that source, however, attending to the participants' needs allows the "doctrine as pastoral care" to be a process of discovering how doctrine brings life and light to their unique experience. "Doctrine as pastoral care" is a form of catechesis that begins with the people's questions rather than the right answers. This theological reflection focuses on those teachings which will be formative for the people in the specific places where they are seeking to know how God and His Word are at work.

Invitation: Ending the Professionalization of Theology

"Doctrine as pastoral care" means inviting laity into theological reflection based on the laity's own experience and desire for knowledge. This means that another shift must take place in how doctrinal study is handled in our congregation. Not only has doctrine been separated from conversation about right living; doctrine has also often been limited to the purview of clergy. "Doctrine as pastoral care" invites laity into theological inquiry that builds them up in faith and formation. In order to build upon Charry's sapiential approach and Arand's "art of living by faith," we turn to Edward Farley, who raises significant questions about how the Church has situated theological inquiry with the academy, seminary, and clergy. The professionalization of

theology means that the laity often have not experienced doctrine as wisdom for living, delivered through catechesis as applied knowledge.

In Edward Farley's essay "Can Church Education Be Theological Education?" he poses the question: "How is it that the Christian faith, committed as it is to relating faith to reality, world, knowledge, and learning, continues to restrict this effort to its ordained leadership and to withhold it from the laity?"⁶⁰ Proposing to encourage and support lay members from Bethel to be engaged in multi-denominational groups implies trusting those people to be discerning in Christian conversation. However, if it is presupposed that laity are not able to engage in theological discernment, or if theology is seen as somehow reserved for academia (viewed this way by either the laity themselves or by pastors), then such theological education will not be offered to lay members.

As stated by Farley, the current approach to

the word "theology" is to reduce its meaning to its objective referent (a system of doctrines and beliefs) and then narrow the location of theological activity to the specific scholarly enterprise dealing with doctrines.⁶¹

Sequestering theology leads to sequestering a congregation, reluctant to engage with Christians outside of their own denomination. Yet, that sequestering still leaves this question: how will our lay people be able to identify the differences among the theological systems represented? Rather than separating our theology from practicing our faith, Farley, like Charry, argues that "faith was a practical knowledge having the character of wisdom because it had to do with the believer's way of existing in the world before God."⁶² Education within the congregation ought to embrace

⁶⁰ Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶² *Ibid.*

a holistic approach as had been the case in prior generations.

Dorothy Bass agrees in her essay, “Practicing Theology in the Congregation.” She cuts through pious chatter about the role of doctrine to say that a doctrinal focus in congregations is actually an aspirational value. A congregation’s actual values, decisions and practices speak very differently.

[S]ometimes these beliefs—articulated in various denominations in specific doctrines, creeds, or biblical interpretations—recede into the background like familiar wallpaper, taken for granted but unexamined. Reflecting on them at greater depth would take time—and we Americans usually prefer to use our time getting things done, especially when our activities are intended as acts of service to others. Moreover, we sense that exploring our lives theologically would be no easy matter. The creeds and doctrines that summarize central tenets in the Christian theological tradition set forth complicated concepts in words that are not part of the everyday vocabulary. Many theological books seem difficult. And in our pluralistic context, some congregants surely suspect that getting too deep into these concepts might well expose theological differences within and beyond the congregation that they would rather avoid.

Why is it important to think theologically within and about the congregation? We know it’s time consuming. It might even be dangerous. Why not just go out and do good?⁶³

Despite the Missouri Synod’s focus on doctrine, these actual values are present at Bethel-Gurnee (and other congregations in the Synod in my pastoral experience and observations). An underlying thought regarding doctrinal study remains: “It is beyond what can be expected from the laity.”

Farley’s work on the role of theological education shows that pastors ought to invite laity into the realm of theological inquiry. Pastors can equip their people with tools, and confidence, to study, discern, and articulate our theology. This requires pastors embracing that role of equipping laity through theological inquiry, because laity already need this equipping. People are already engaged in theological conversations with others in their spheres of influence. Pastors

⁶³ Bass, “Practicing Theology in the Congregation,” 24.

need to nurture laity in theological reflection to support them in articulating their beliefs and discerning theological nuances among Christians from various denominations.

In a brief reflection, “Grass Roots Ecumenism,” Arand offers a proposal for congregations to develop support for laypeople in theological conversation in the community. Arand suggests that congregations not only have boards of evangelism but also ought to have boards of ecumenism among their structure of boards and committees.⁶⁴ One reason Arand gives for this proposal is the doctrinal study it would encourage and produce in a congregation.

[I]f congregations were to take a more active role in ecumenical dialogue at the local level, it would doubtlessly encourage a renewed theological study at the congregational level. In order to dialogue with Christians of other traditions, our congregations would find it necessary to explore what our own church believes with its heart and confesses with its lips on any number of issues.⁶⁵

Such “renewed theological study” in this framework leads laity to “explore what our own church believes” in order to be engaged in the community—including the other Christians in the community.

Additionally, Christians across the congregations already knew each other in their neighborhoods. As Arand states:

Here it should also be pointed out that individual members of our congregations are already engaged in such conversations with their friends of other churches. But have we equipped them for such dialogue? This would give us an opportunity to do so.⁶⁶

This has been the experience of Bethel-Gurnee as GO! Together took shape and members of the congregations began dialogues. Speaking of faith matters outside of their own tribe was not a new experience. The landscape in Gurnee—even before the formal GO! relationships—deemed necessary an intentional “doctrine as pastoral care” approach. This is Farley’s “practical

⁶⁴ Charles P. Arand, “Grass Roots Ecumenism: A Proposal,” *Concordia Journal* 25, no. 3 (1999): 232–34.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 233–34.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

knowledge having the character of wisdom” whereby the laity are given the tool of doctrine. Doctrine is practical for the conversations laity are having with other Christians even without a formal program or gathering.⁶⁷ Laity will continue to have dialogue with Christians across the “denominational fences,” but it may be that those conversations lead to shifts in our members’ perspective without a conscious appraisal and without the benefit of intentional “doctrine as pastoral care”.

Conclusion Regarding “Doctrine as Pastoral Care”

In reference to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Dykstra and Bass note Paul’s teaching on the work of Christ ultimately teaches the hearer about their identity and how their lives can reflect that identity. They write:

In a sense, the letter’s author is telling his readers who they really, most fully, most truly are. As the letter nears its end, however, the author describes the specific moves and gestures that would result from bearing this identity in the face-to-face social arrangements of a first-century city in Asia Minor....⁶⁸

In this project’s case, it is carrying with us the identity of Christ in the face-to-face interactions in Gurnee, Illinois. “Doctrine as pastoral care” leads laity in theological reflection on the truth of who God is, what He has done, and who He has made them to be. That same recalling sends people out into their calling to live as His chosen ones, holy and dearly loved practitioners of the faith. This is the purpose and prayer of the “doctrine as pastoral care” given to Bethel-Gurnee’s GO! participants.

GO! Together has required many logistical planning sessions: how to map where our members live, what kind of discussion materials to design for the neighborhood groups, how to

⁶⁷ Farley, *The Fagility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University*, 88.

⁶⁸ Dykstra and Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, 31–32.

contact and encourage people to get involved, and how to create momentum for a shared effort while pursuing our individual ministries. Those logistical conversations could have come at a steep price: losing sight of our role as pastors. Pastoral care cannot be reduced to leading good mechanics for being involved in the program; neither can it shrink down to mere doctrinal exposition. Pastoral care must flow from theological formation which is part and parcel of Christian practice.

When I return from a monthly GO! Together Pastors' Meeting, overwhelmed by the numerous small steps that have to be accomplished in order for a neighborhood group to form, the terms "pastoral care," "cure of souls," and "doctrine as pastoral care" call me once again to strive toward this generous description of Luther's ministry:

The attention given by eminent and busy men to the personal problems of others is often surprising. Luther exhibits human warmth and reality in these matters, the product of his own vivid experience and emotional force. We are struck by his deep and unwavering convictions, and by the unprofessional and casual way in which he applies them in the guidance of souls. He writes not as one conscious of superior attainment, or as the representative of a priestly caste, but as a sinful and tempted Christian who is glad to bring such spiritual remedies as he has learned from Scripture and experience to the aid of those who ask, or need, his brotherly help.⁶⁹

Luther focuses on individuals receiving spiritual direction resting on the reading of Scripture, and sensing the gravity of the tasks ahead, throwing himself in prayer upon the mercy and strength of God for this endeavor.⁷⁰ The space where "unwavering convictions" (doctrine) and "guidance of souls" (pastoral care) overlap is where I aim to be as I lead a congregation in multi-denominational experiences.

⁶⁹ John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1951), 174.

⁷⁰ "Prayer, Scripture, and spiritual direction" are the "angles" of ministry in Eugene Peterson's metaphor of a triangle to describe the essential acts of pastoring. See Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 3–4.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This paper has been exploring theologically the transformative power of doctrine for life. As discussed in chapter 2 related to Romans 12:1–2, the transformation “by the renewing of your minds” is a wholesale transformation whereby one has an engaged faith life with its source in the doctrine and experience of God’s Law and Gospel. Have our educational models and methods in the Synod and locally at Bethel-Gurnee developed experiences that elicit such transformation? If not, where might adult education theory guide us to design and facilitate experiences that lead participants toward an engaged faith life?

To answer these questions, now we turn our attention to: 1) the history of the Synod’s approach to adult education, along with the adult education opportunities and approach in the author’s current context at Bethel-Gurnee, and 2) a literature review of adult education theory, specifically andragogy.

The Historical Context

Brief Survey of Methods of Doctrinal Education of Adults in the LCMS

In his dissertation, “The Development of Adult Christian Education in the Lutheran Church Missouri-Synod, 1914–1989”, Ewald Kane, Jr., mapped the history of adult education in the LCMS as the Synod grew beyond an immigrant church body focused on education of children in order to establish the next generation in a new country.⁷¹ Kane states that at the LCMS Synodical

⁷¹ Ewald Kane, Jr., “The Development of Adult Christian Education in the Lutheran Church Missouri—Synod, 1914–1989” (University of Akron, 1994).

Convention in 1944 “approval was granted for the launching of a program in adult Christian education.” However, he attempts this history because, “after forty-five years in the field of adult Christian education, not a single study of historical documentation exists.”⁷² He names a number of theses that his study hoped to substantiate, including one related to this present project: “The Synod has not developed a sustained emphasis in adult leadership enlistment and training for any significant time during the seventy-five year period under study” (1914–1989).⁷³

More than offering solutions, Kane’s dissertation displays the insufficiencies of Christian adult education. Kane notes that in 1956, some 100 years after the founding of the Missouri Synod, the Board for Parish Education reported to the Synod in convention the need for comprehensive family ministry and a new approach for adult Christian education.⁷⁴ In some ways a belated response to this need for comprehensive approach, Kane’s thorough research into convention resolutions, reports, and papers at Synodical and District levels traces the development of education emphases and curriculum from that 1956 convention to 1989, but little was found to refute his theses about the inadequacies of adult education in the LCMS.⁷⁵

Curiously, one document which seems to point so much to the need for a shift in LCMS adult education did not find its way into Kane’s historical survey. In 1963, the LCMS Board of Parish Education held the Christian Adult Education Institute at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Like Kane’s sources, the Institute’s report shows that the LCMS has identified the problems and articulated new goals for Christian adult education. There is little evidence that the 1963 Institute produced a “sustained emphasis” on adult education.

⁷² Ibid., 1.

⁷³ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁷⁵ Ibid., “Chapter IX: Summary,” 482ff.

However, the fact that the 1963 Institute met and produced a report stating clear goals for adult education seems significant for the discussion at hand. The report of the presentations lists the Institute's goals as:

1. To assess the place of adult education in the church in light of theology and the needs of our times.
2. To recognize the nature of Christian growth to maturity and the obstacles in the way.
3. To develop attitudes, insights, knowledge, skills, and procedures for more effective adult education in the local church.⁷⁶

The report includes various comments, tentative proposals, etc., that relate to developing adult education approaches in the Church that would take adult education theory into account.

In this report, while trying to describe what is wrong in the Church's adult education, R.G. Konzelman takes a "hard look" at the situation. He identifies multiple challenges, among them the Church's theological inconsistency with regards to education. He wrote:

...we do not really understand or believe the Biblical doctrine of man. If not by design, then by default, we seem to operate on the principle that it is possible for one to store up enough religious knowledge and experience by confirmation time to last a lifetime.⁷⁷

In another paper in the same report, Konzelman further explicates this operating principle as having at its core an improper view of education as primarily static versus dynamic. He quotes Robert Clemmons' *The Dynamics of Christian Education*⁷⁸, who sees the Christian learner as a "spiritual being in motion" rather than as a "thing" that relates to God and others as "objects":

Too much religious education both past and present has been more static than dynamic. We have been guilty of placing undue emphasis upon the learning of facts and propositions, Bible passages, and explanations of theological formulas in the

⁷⁶ *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1963), iii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, R.G. Konzelman, "Adult Education: Its Needs and Challenges," 55.

⁷⁸ Robert S. Clemmons, *Dynamics of Christian Adult Education* (New York: Abingdon, 1958).

hope that these would somehow issue in changed lives. Now we are uneasy for we have discovered that the result is negligible in terms of Christian living and even the facts themselves once learned are now gone.⁷⁹

Konzelman's paper goes on to outline some very important principles regarding adult learners (e.g., self-concept, adults as doers, previous experience, and quality of learning experience, and purpose or motivation in learning). Konzelman draws these principles from Reuel Howe's essay, "Dialogic Foundations of Christian Adult Education,"⁸⁰ and they have many touchpoints with the focus of our research in this paper drawing from Malcolm Knowles' description of adult learners in his andragogical principles.⁸¹

Others in the Institute papers reflect the changes necessary for congregations to provide adult education that leads to maturing faith. David Ernsberger's "From Monologue to Dialogue" points toward many of the andragogical principles discussed in this paper, such as when he emphasizes a learner-oriented dialogue rather than teacher-centric lecture:

We need to remind ourselves that telling is not necessarily teaching, and that listening is not necessarily learning. . . . True learning results from two-way communication in which meanings of words and concepts are tested by restatement and by response to restatement of them.⁸²

Such shifts in educational methods are necessary, and without such shifts, congregations cannot expect different results from their adult education programs.

The papers collected from the 1963 Institute conclude with an additional one from Konzelman describing the mechanics of developing a good adult education program in the

⁷⁹ *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, Konzelman, "How Adult Learning Takes Place," 84.

⁸⁰ University of Pittsburgh School of Education, *Wider Horizons in Christian Adult Education: Selected Addresses and Papers, Workshop on the Curriculum of Christian Education for Adults* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962).

⁸¹ Similar connections with Malcolm Knowles can be found in the results of research conducted by Oscar Feucht as reported in *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, Oscar Feucht, "Motivation and Cultivation of Interest," 117ff.

⁸² *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, David Ernsberger, "From Monologue to Dialogue," 66 (emphasis original).

parish, but the concluding paragraph may as well have been a conclusion regarding the entire report:

Let us remember that we are here talking not about something that pertains only to the welfare of the church; we are talking about adult Christian education, that which pertains to the very essence of the church and how well we do it will determine the extent to which men and women will be empowered to live in Christ.⁸³

Konzelman's words not only conclude the conference, they point us in the direction we need to go. His words highlight the critical goal of modifying how we approach adult education and "doctrine as pastoral care." We are seeking to encourage one another toward engaged faith lives.

Practicing What We Have Learned

1972's *Rejoice with Us: Membership Resource Book and Manual*, jointly published by the Boards of Parish Education of the Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the American Lutheran Church, seems to demonstrate some of the 1963 Institute's suggestions. First of all, the *Manual* (teacher's guide) emphasizes the open-ended nature of the materials, able to be adapted for the specific people in the class. The introductory notes stress this to the leader in describing the *Resource Book* (participant guide):

Use it as a *resource*.

That is, look to it to stimulate thought, raise questions, answer questions, clarify issues.

Use it as *a* resource.

The book itself quotes many, many resource persons and helps your class listen in on the words of many Christians, past and present. But it need not be *the* resource. Use others and have others available.

Use it as a resource.

⁸³ *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, Konzelman, "Adult Education:—Leadership, Supervision, Evaluation," 145.

Studying resources takes time, but it can be time well spent if people are readied for the experience and have opportunity to share their wealth when they have studied.⁸⁴

These notes bring out the 1963 Institute's emphasis on teachers who listen and encourage two-way communication in education. The notes present the materials as a voice in conversation rather than a set stock of information to be covered.

An overview table in this same introduction presents five key points about how the leader ought to approach teaching an adult class using these materials.

⁸⁴ Norman E. Wegmeyer and Glenn Wegmeyer, *Rejoice with Us: Membership Process Manual*, ed. Robert Hoyer (Augsburg, Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, and Concordia, 1972), 6.

Table 2 Summary of Assumptions⁸⁵

<i>Not so much of this</i>	<i>More like this</i>
1. Content, facts, information predetermined. Much the same material presented to all classes.	1. An effort to determine the needs, concerns, questions of each class. Factual information supplied as needed.
2. Primary purpose to expose persons to Lutheran doctrine, with the intent that they give intellectual assent.	2. Primary purpose to vary with each class, but including such purposes as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building relationships • meeting personal needs • clarifying Christian doctrine • developing skills and abilities of churchmanship • enlisting for action • hearing the word of Christ.
3. Primary teaching method: lecture and/or question and answer.	3. A wide variety of involvement type of teaching-learning procedures, chosen carefully to accomplish specific purposes.
4. Atmosphere of tentativeness and uncertainty with the understanding that participants can “make up their minds” at the conclusion of the course.	4. A deliberate attempt to deal with the participants as persons with an open purpose of integrating them into the Christian community.
5. Strictly a pastor’s class taught exclusively by him.	5. A church class, headed by the pastor but using others in ways such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team teaching with a lay teacher • involving members of the church as full participants in the class.

These key points, as we will see in the second half of this chapter, reflect some similar thoughts that were being expressed in andragogy and the development of adult education theory.

That said, this author surmises that such materials quickly fell out of fashion in the LCMS response to Seminex. The immediate need of the Synod was to have its pastors and teachers be clear and direct in teaching while emphasizing the historical and exclusive nature of Scripture.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 7.

While *Rejoice with Us* helpfully emphasized some andragogical principles, it also exposed the potential excess of andragogy that could undermine the absolute nature of Scriptural truth. This is exemplified by a paragraph from the foreword in the participants' book:

Make this book your own. Write into it your questions, whether you have an answer or not. Write into it, now and for many years, your *own* thinking about the truth of life and God. Use it as a storage place for poems, cartoons, paragraphs which strike *you* as important to *your* faith and hope. Turn the book into something that explains *you*, and you will find it useful in your own future crises and joys.⁸⁶

Given the right context, this paragraph could be helpful in an andragogical approach to Christian education that aims at helping adults be individually engaged in a faith maturing experience. However, it could also be taken to mean that the faith that emerges varies from individual to individual (open set), which would have obvious conflict with a congregation that held that certain doctrines were orthodox and Scriptural (closed set). It is not clear whether this was the reason the LCMS did not pursue more materials based on the above teaching assumptions. However, a brief survey today of what materials are approved and published by the Synod or CPH reveal that adult education mainly remains pedagogical and informational.

For instance, Herman Theiss' standard book for adult instruction, *Life with God*, produced in the same era of the Christian Adult Education Institute, is essentially a lecture in written form. Each session is concluded with a section titled "Talk It Over," wherein the questions or statements are essentially fact clarification or idea correction. This is accompanied by a set of "True – False Statements." The session ends with a set of suggested Bible readings for the intervening week (without further comment, guidance, or questions). In the "Introduction," Theiss says:

⁸⁶ Ibid., 10, emphases mine except last one original.

All of our discussions will be related to this subject of life with God through Christ....As we proceed we shall see many far-reaching implications of this Biblical life-death concept.⁸⁷

Yet, it does not appear that the written materials and discussion questions actually lead participants to consider the “far-reaching implications” for their individual lives.

The Scriptural truths *are* followed through their far-reaching development of the concept of salvation, but this remains largely theoretical. The questions seem designed according to the lower levels of Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives: knowledge and comprehension. Knowledge as an objective is where “the student is expected to store in his mind certain information, and the behavior expected later is the remembering of this information.”⁸⁸ The second level, “comprehension,” also may be reflected in Theiss’ materials, in that, “When students are confronted with a communication, they are expected to know what is being communicated and to be able to make some use of the material or ideas contained in it” via translation, interpretation, or extrapolation.⁸⁹ Therefore, adult education materials such as this example ask the respondents to show their level of knowledge, as well, as comprehension. The higher levels of Bloom’s—taxnomoy, application, synthesis, and evaluation—are not requested of the learner unless that is added to the curriculum by the instructor.

Factors Affecting Bible Study Attendance and Growth

At around the same time as the 1963 Institute and the original publication of Theiss’ manual in 1961, Paul Pallmeyer investigated reasons for the lack of growth in participation in

⁸⁷ Herman C. Theiss, *Life with God: A Manual for the Religious Instruction of Adults* (Medford, OR: Morse, 1967), xi.

⁸⁸ Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, 1st ed. (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956), 62.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 89,90.

adult Bible studies in LCMS congregations.⁹⁰ Pallmeyer's Master of Sacred Theology thesis investigates 17 factors in low participation in Bible study as identified by Dr. Oscar Feucht in his 1960 Board of Parish Education report.⁹¹ The three factors which seem significant in the context of this Major Applied Project are: 1) the authoritarian and subject-centered approach, 2) the nature and purpose of group Bible study, and 3) the subordination of the teaching ministry to other pastoral duties.

Pallmeyer begins by exploring the consequences of the authoritarian nature of Bible classes which focus on "the conveying of factual material." The instructors feel they need to be "defenders of the faith" who are very conscious of only speaking from a traditional Synodical position.⁹² Pallmeyer's research found that this means instructors "were afraid of genuine disagreement" and focus on transmitting correct information; thereby attendees see their role as passive and being "good listeners."⁹³ Such a situation may contribute to adults not wanting to participate since it puts them into a dependent, child-like role which works against their own adult view of themselves.⁹⁴ Pallmeyer sounds an even stronger alarm that this authoritarian and information-centered approach leads to "dishonesty in the classroom."

Members may hesitate to be completely open and truthful with one another for fear of being accused of doubt or disloyalty or of failing to conform to what is commonly

⁹⁰ Paul H. Pallmeyer, "Factors Related to the Life and Growth of Adult Bible Classes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" (Concordia Seminary, 1963), 13. Pallmeyer's research appeared in summary form in the papers collected from the *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, 64–65.

⁹¹ Oscar E. Feucht, *Forward in Bible Study: A Manual of Resources for the Bible Study Advance 1959 to 1962* (St. Louis: Board of Parish Education of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1960).

⁹² Pallmeyer, "Factors Related to the Life and Growth of Adult Bible Classes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," 64.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

accepted....And where this freedom to express oneself with integrity is lost, the value of the class is seriously impaired.⁹⁵

Therefore, in the hyper-conscious focus on right doctrine, our approach to adult education may in fact inhibit lifelong discipleship—living lives according to that doctrine—since the congregations are not providing safe environments for growth in spiritual maturity.

At the 1963 Institute, Ernsberger reported on similar findings regarding the consequences of an authoritarian nature of Bible studies, although Ernsberger stated this more provocatively than Pallmeyer in outlining the extent to which authoritarianism might affect students.

T.W. Adorno, a social psychologist, has shown through an extensive experimentation in his book *The Authoritarian Personality* that we can expect an authoritarian environment to produce either of two extremes, either submissive or dominating behavior. The submissive adult will be afraid of discovering and expressing his genuine convictions. He will remain silent concerning differences of opinion or questions he may have for fear of appearing ignorant. The dominating adult, on the other hand, will aggressively seek to impose his opinions on others. In either case, creative dialogue cannot take place.⁹⁶

Like Pallmeyer, Ernsberger points to research to explain how the less-than-safe environment of Bible studies leads to a lack of engagement on the part of some adults. By turning to Adorno's research, Ernsberger adds the opposite extreme: the teacher's acolyte. The dominating student is so quick with the answer approved by the authoritarian teacher that this student inhibits students who are more reluctant to share, less confident in their faith or understanding, or seeking genuine conversation.

Ernsberger highlights additional research showing that any attempt to change this authoritarian pattern faces a serious obstacle: the pastor (and his training and experience).

On the basis of their personal observations in discussion leadership classes they have conducted all across the country, Harry and Bonaro Overstreet state that those who have the hardest time learning to be good discussion leaders are—you guessed it—

⁹⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁶ *Christian Adult Education Institute, 1963*, David Ernsberger, "Dialogue and Functions of the Ministry," 77.

teachers and pastors. Their previous training and experience, the Overstreets declare, condition them to do nearly all the talking. The pastor's special knowledge is in a sense a serious handicap. It is hard for him when leading a discussion group to restrain himself when he knows the right answer, and even when he is able to restrain himself from giving the answer which comes so easily to him because of his theological training, he's often tempted to turn group discussion simply into sort of a catechetical guessing game....He may be so intent on eliciting the exact verbal response he wants that he may cut short or overlook contributions which reflect important doubts or insights.⁹⁷

While this description is bleak concerning the prospects for edifying, effective Christian adult education in congregations, Ernsberger's paper goes on to outline some of the initial steps pastors can take to be aware of their own handicaps when approaching a dialogic education process.

Let us returning to Pallmeyer's findings. Coupled with authoritarianism, Pallmeyer argues a subject-centered approach leads to a sense of adequacy of one's religious knowledge inhibits participation in adult education. Pallmeyer writes, "Many non-attenders evidently equate 'knowledge needed to be a good Christian' with knowledge necessary for salvation," which leads to a privatism and a settling for the minimal knowledge "making a person impervious to the problems and doubts in one's life."⁹⁸ This line of concern what may be the most harmful, long-term factor in low participation in adult Bible study—a factor that Pallmeyer acknowledges really requires a separate study: the role of junior confirmation.

In Missouri Synod circles this self-satisfaction with one's religious knowledge may stem in part at least from this church body's education system, especially its emphasis on the education of children in the parochial school, Sunday school, and confirmation classes...[The emphasis on the rite of Confirmation] has undoubtedly strengthened the erroneous idea that confirmation is terminal, or at least a high point, in one's

⁹⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁹⁸ Pallmeyer, "Factors Related to the Life and Growth of Adult Bible Classes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," 68,69. cf. J. Stanley Glen, *The Recovery of the Teaching Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

spiritual development and that from this time on the objective is to maintain the level of spiritual development attained.⁹⁹

The present author has certainly seen this impact when inviting people to adult Bible study and being told point blank, “Oh, Pastor, I already learned all of that in Confirmation.”

If adults have experienced prior Christian education as information-centric, they may have a “belief that spiritual maturity has been attained” leading to a reluctance of many adults to join a Bible study, seeing further study as unnecessary. Congregations’ internal invitations, announcements, and marketing of Bible study offerings have to be “pre-education education”—helping people see that the goal of adult Christian education goes well beyond “acquisition of theological knowledge” into the realm of sanctification.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, Pallmeyer considers factors related to the “nature and purpose of group Bible study.” As opposed to our doctrinal celebration of the priesthood of all believers, Pallmeyer explains that our practice “has tended to rely heavily on the pastor for initiating and carrying out the spiritual edification of its members.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, Pallmeyer suggests that congregations seek to develop studies that have an atmosphere where genuine care exists among members for the mutual edification of the brothers and sisters. This section of Pallmeyer’s research touches on important elements of andragogy that will be discussed later in this chapter, such as the goal of education that “results in change to the individual,” stability in the makeup of the group for creating a safe sharing environment, and acknowledging the role of emotions in learning.¹⁰²

Thirdly, Pallmeyer finds that participation in adult education participation suffers from a

⁹⁹ Pallmeyer, "Factors Related to the Life and Growth of Adult Bible Classes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," 69,72.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 78, emphasis original.

¹⁰² Ibid., 83–85.

subordination of teaching in the pastoral ministry. Education ministry is seen as subordinate to leading worship and growing attendance in worship services. Pallmeyer concludes this brief section by noting how many pastors surveyed tend to view adult membership instruction classes as “indoctrinating members in the program of the institution...rather than for the nurture of genuine Christian faith and life.”¹⁰³

1990's *Invited by God: Basics of the Christian Faith* by Norbert Oesch and published by CPH has a approach to presenting the material that is subject-centered and encourages an authoritarian style. The *Inquirers Guide* includes mainly fill-in-the-blank sections and limited, rather factual, discussion questions. The *Leaders Guide* reveals the pedagogical approach in explaining how a teacher might employ the curriculum:

This material was designed primarily as lecture material with students participating in discussion and questions. Other methods would require adaptation, *but could be used*. We suggest that you keep the lecture quite casual to promote questions and discussion.

At times we suggest illustrations to be written on a chalkboard or an overhead transparency. *No other visual aids are necessary.*¹⁰⁴

While perhaps meant to emphasize the “pick up and go” nature of the curriculum, these notes actually end up encouraging the leader to stick with lecture and rely on the participants to develop further discussion (since little prompting is provided in the material itself without adaptation). “But could be used,” in reference to adaptation, implies that the leader would be unlikely to need to adapt the materials for a different kind of teaching method, thereby discouraging the leader from considering the andragogical methods encouraged by the 1963 Institute.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 87–88.

¹⁰⁴ Norbert C. Oesch et al., *Invited by God: Basics of the Christian Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1990), viii, (emphases mine).

Donald Deffner, on behalf of the Board of Parish Services, wrote *How to Teach Adults: For Adult Bible Class Leaders* published in 1992, adapted from 1980's *Adults Who Learn and Like It* by Victor A. Constien.¹⁰⁵ Produced at nearly the same time as *Invited by God*, Deffner's helpful little guide points to many andragogical principles as were discussed thirty years earlier at the 1963 Institute. Deffner's brief bibliography includes Malcom Knowles' *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1988). We can briefly explore some aspects of this guide that reflect the andragogical principles to be discussed later in this chapter.

Deffner describes how adult learners differ from younger learners Adults are “problem solvers” who benefit from using their own experiences for learning, are motivated by seeing how they can enact what they are learning, gain from comfortable surroundings, grow through “spiritual and social climates,” and need to be able to “mark progress” so that they see how their learning has helped them mature.¹⁰⁶

In order to provide for the needs of adult leaders, Deffner makes many recommendations to leaders. A few examples can give us a sense of how these recommendations dovetail with other sources consulted in this paper, but also how these recommendations would fall into *Invited by God's* “could be used” adaptations.

The adults in your class learn through personal inquiry and discovery....Your task is to enable them to inquire and discover....When you plan your group session, think especially of ways to involve each person in the continuing process of learning.¹⁰⁷

If you want class members to know some new facts or to grasp some new information, one of the most effective procedures involves telling and listening.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Victor A. Constien, *Adults Who Learn and Like It, Guide for Workers in the Sunday School* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1980).

¹⁰⁶ Donald L. Deffner, *How to Teach Adults: For Adult Bible Class Leaders, Grow in Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 9–14.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

Deffner here appropriately identifies lecture as a method for knowledge acquisition..

However, he does not remain there. “New understanding” requires participants to ask questions, engage in conversation, and possibly debate in order to help them “take hold of the significance of the information” given to them.¹⁰⁹ “New attitudes” toward “self, God, and other people” develop through open discussion or in forum, smaller groups, and laboratory experience.¹¹⁰ “New interests” can be cultivated through exhibits, new subjects, and field trips. Such learning can further form individuals by helping people clarify “new values,” and see how those values may shape the life of the congregation.¹¹¹ Finally, adult education can give participants opportunities to learn “new skills,” act on what has been learned into action through role plays or demonstrations.¹¹²

Deffner also briefly quotes guidelines from Jerold Apps’ *How to Improve Adult Education in Your Church*, a set of questions which provide a succinct method for designing and evaluating congregational education opportunities.

1. Will the participants know what they are trying to do? Will they understand the assignment?
2. Does the learning opportunity involve the participants?
3. Will the participants be interested enough to try it?
4. Will they be able to do it?
5. Will they get feedback—some indication of how things are going, of how well they’re doing?
6. Will they get satisfaction? Doing something well will give more satisfaction than doing something poorly.
7. Are there enough learning opportunities available so that the participants will have a chance to learn?¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 34–35.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 35.

¹¹² Ibid., 36.

¹¹³ Ibid., 37. cf. Jerold W. Apps, *How to Improve Adult Education in Your Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972).

These questions, when employed by a teacher designing an educational experience, keep an eye toward the specific needs of adult learners in terms of design and methodology.

However, *How to Teach Adults* does not provide conclusions consistent with Apps' suggestions. Deffner remains focused on content separate from effective teaching methods for adults.. The booklet gives four reasons for using Synodical curriculum and materials, and three of those reasons focus on content—as opposed to design or methodology. In the first three reasons, synodical materials are encouraged because the writers “know the needs of the Synod’s congregations,” “work from within the doctrinal position, history, organizational structure, and programs” of the LCMS, and “emphasize various aspects of the denomination’s ministry.” The fourth reason given for choosing the Synod’s materials states:

The criticisms and suggestions for improvement submitted by those who use the curricular materials published by their denomination will help shape better materials for use by all the denomination’s congregations.¹¹⁴

While this does address the design and methodology aspect of the curricula, Synodical materials are not endorsed *because* of their design and methodology. None of those reasons address concerns that pastors and study leaders may have about how to teach effectively with proper adult education theory and methodology.

A little later in the *How to Teach Adults* booklet the Board for Parish Services again solicits feedback: “identify each weakness,” “suggest specific ways to correct it,” “alternate solutions to curricular problems are received with appreciation and respect.” For the sake of this MAP research, I was not able to discover whether any feedback came in response to this booklet, whether such feedback may have addressed curricular methodology, and how the Board for Parish Services responded.

¹¹⁴ Deffner, *How to Teach Adults: For Adult Bible Class Leaders*, 43.

Considering the current offerings for adult education curriculum in the Synod, the majority of resources continue to focus predominately on knowledge acquisition. For instance, *Lutheranism 101* is a textbook developed to teach the catechism in a “fresh way.”¹¹⁵ *Lutheranism 101: The Course*, the companion workbook for the textbook,¹¹⁶ features questions that correspond to each chapter of the text, which follows a catechetical outline, and it is in this workbook where we would hope to find discussion question on the higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. A quick perusal of the workbook questions show very few related to applying learning to one’s own faith development and daily living. The questions rarely move beyond the first two levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. The adult education principles advocated by educators in the Synod for decades still do not appear in the design of teaching materials.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Adult Education in LCMS Congregations

Given the history of efforts to improve adult Christian education in the Synod, and the persistence of approaches contrary to recommendations in official reports and studies, evaluating the effectiveness of adult education in our congregations is paramount. This author believes that the Synod and its congregations need to consider:

Has our doctrinal education of adults been effective?

What resources or studies have been produced to help pastors and other teachers of the faith know the best methods for training adults in doctrine?

What data is available about how adult members are best able to learn doctrinal positions?

Dr. Mark Blanke, Professor of Education and Director of the Institute for Religious Education at Concordia University Nebraska, and Dr. John Oberdeck, Professor Theology and Director of Lay Ministry at Concordia University Wisconsin, both noted that there is not much

¹¹⁵ <https://www.cph.org/p-17404-lutheranism-101.aspx>, accessed 6/23/2015.

¹¹⁶ Shawn L. Kumm and Scot A. Kinnaman, *Lutheranism 101: The Course* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011).

research data on what methods are effective for teaching doctrine to adults.¹¹⁷ One 1987 study specific to theological perspectives in the LCMS is unfortunately quite out of date.¹¹⁸ A partial picture of theological perspectives emerges through the “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey” by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life conducted in 2007, which researched whether church attenders hold to certain specific, evangelical doctrinal statements. Unfortunately, it puts all Lutherans in one category which keeps us from distinguishing beliefs of LCMS members.¹¹⁹ Andrew Simcak responded to this study, focusing a brief *Lutheran Witness* article on how “more than half of all Lutherans believe that a ‘good person’ can earn his way to heaven!”¹²⁰

Still, those surveys and data are available, so it would seem that they would be able to help address the questions raised here about effectiveness of adult Christian education. However, the survey questions perpetuate the same focus on knowledge acquisition that this author has found problematic. These surveys of theological learning tend to focus on retention of facts, or when they have asked questions about faith maturity/transformation, we have not focused on that in analyzing and discussing the data.¹²¹

Congregations at Crossroads:

A National Study of Adults and Youth in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1995

¹¹⁷ Personal correspondence, August 2014. Blanke: “I am unaware of studies that compare and contrast methods related to effectiveness in teaching doctrine.”

¹¹⁸ “Summary | Beliefs and Inter-Church Relations, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives,” *The Association of Religion Data Archives*. Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, n.d. Web. 26 Aug. 2014. <<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/PANEL871.asp>>.

¹¹⁹ “Religious Beliefs Vary Widely By Denomination,” *Barna Group*. N.p., 25 June 2001. Web. 26 Aug. 2014. <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/5-barna-update/53-religious-beliefs-vary-widely-by-denomination#.U_ydKPIdV8E>.

¹²⁰ Andrew Simcak, “How Do We Get to Heaven?,” *Lutheran Witness* 119, no. 7 (July) (2000): 26. The Barna Report showed 54% of Lutherans answered affirmatively to this question.

¹²¹ Appendix O is the author’s brief summaries of each survey when considered from the standpoint of looking for how it measured evidence of an engaged faith life.

In October 1995, Search Institute published *Congregations at Crossroads* which explored “faith lives of youth and adults” specifically in the LCMS with the goal of “identifying qualities of congregational life that nurtures their faith.”¹²² For this study, Search Institute developed a framework that allowed the researchers to collect data which “indicates the extent to which [people] express attitudes and behaviors associated with a life of faith.”¹²³

The Faith Maturity Index seeks to capture the extent to which individuals embody the priorities, commitments, and perspectives that grow out of a dynamic and life-transforming faith.... This Faith Maturity Index is composed of 42 items, covering these nine areas:

1. Trusting in God’s saving grace and believing firmly in Jesus’ humanity and divinity;
2. Experiencing a sense of well-being, security, and peace (the fruits of faith);
3. Integrating faith and life, seeing working, family, and social relationships as part of one’s religious life;
4. Celebrating the Good News of God’s work in individual lives;
5. Seeking spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others;
6. Seeking to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support one another;
7. Holding life-affirming values, including a commitment to the equality of all people, an affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others;
8. Advocating social change to improve human welfare; and
9. Serving humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and compassion.¹²⁴

Those indicators are an extension of the types of questions in the 1984 *Young Adolescents and their Parents* national study, but here specific to the LCMS and much more explicitly tied to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The findings included descriptors of the respondents’ congregations, which helped produce data describing qualities of a congregation that indicate an environment conducive to encouraging growth in faith maturity. This study does well in going beyond

¹²² Peter L. Benson, *Congregations at Crossroads: A National Study of Adults and Youth in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1995), 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

knowledge acquisition and delving into how people view the role of faith in daily living. While some questions do relate to understanding correct doctrine, many place the issue of correct doctrine in terms of the respondent's level of belief in that doctrinal statement, as opposed to only assessing whether the respondent can correctly identify the Lutheran doctrine.¹²⁵

The authors of *Congregations at Crossroads* indicate 42 of the survey questions (14% of 387 total questions) as constituting "The LCMS Faith Maturity Scale."¹²⁶ In order to examine how these questions relate to engaged faith life as opposed to knowledge acquisition, this author took these 42 items and considered them according to three categories I coined for this analysis: 1) information-centered (factual knowledge), 2) emotional complexity (feelings about one's faith), and 3) engaged life (applying faith to action).¹²⁷ Unlike some of the other surveys noted here, the questions labeled under the "Faith Maturity Scale" do predominantly consider emotional complexity and engaged life. Out of the 42 questions coded as making up this scale, only 2 questions are information-centered. Emotional complexity questions are 36% of this scale (15 questions), while engaged life questions are 60% (25 questions). This study's approach delves further into assessing faith in action than other similar studies which were highly information-centered.

Congregations at Crossroads (LCMS) was reexamined in 2001 by one of the study's overseers, Lou Jander.¹²⁸ He begins by observing that while the 1994 study also led to "a variety of reports, workshops, articles, and other means used to share the findings, not much has

¹²⁵ Ibid., 53 ("The Law-Gospel Index" and "The Orthodox Beliefs Scale").

¹²⁶ *Congregations at Crossroads*' Appendix B.1 titles this grouping of questions as "Faith Maturity Scale," whereas the study's text refers to the same grouping as "Faith Maturity Index."

¹²⁷ See Appendix N for author's marked copy.

¹²⁸ L. C. Jander, "What LCMS Youth and Adults Understand: Revisiting *Congregations at Crossroads*," *Lutheran Education* 137, no. 2 (2001): 104–15.

specifically been done at various levels in the Synod to intentionally address the study's many implications."¹²⁹ Jander rightly calls on the Synod to "celebrate" the strong indicators of faith maturity and knowledge which people possess, and yet he notes a critical challenge in terms of education and formation:

The LCMS appears to do well at inculcating head knowledge. The struggle comes in helping people put that knowledge into "action" in daily living; in providing "experiences" or "opportunities" for people to practice using the knowledge that has been taught; in moving the knowledge from the "head to the heart to the hands and feet."¹³⁰

Indeed, Bethel-Gurnee's foray into a local, multi-denominational outreach effort aims mainly at formation of missional practices in our neighborhoods, and yet places our members in a position to share, explain, discuss, and apply their doctrinal head knowledge. "Inculcating head knowledge" will not be enough pastoral care for people who are engaged in mission.

Congregations at Crossroads outlined 30 qualities of "faith-enhancing congregations" as gleaned from studying the survey data. Jander writes: "The study affirmed that congregations have a 'great deal of influence in shaping the faith, beliefs, and actions of youth and adults'" (quoting the Benson, et. al., report). Yet the list of qualities does not emphasize the role of doctrine in that faith enhancement. Studying "doctrine as pastoral care" is critical to go beyond the report's rather general qualities, such as, "the congregation has quality adult education" and "the congregation has strong preaching."¹³¹

Aside from content of belief, though, Jander prompts the reader to consider what this report may suggest how congregations provide theological formation. Jander says that the study uncovers "some challenges that may have resulted from congregational neglect," and on that list

¹²⁹ Ibid., 105.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 106-07.

¹³¹ Ibid., 111-12.

is one item closely related to the literature review in the next section of this project: adult education theory. Jander reads *Congregations at Crossroads* as showing that people do not “feel a sense of application of beliefs in everyday life,” and congregations will need to work on

providing learning experiences that do more than just “tell people” the information; making learning an active, experiential study and living of the Word.¹³²

Jander’s observation on the need for such learning experiences, along with educational theory observations of Blanke and Oberdeck,¹³³ led this author toward the literature review for the second part of this chapter on what educational methods may contribute to faith (doctrinal) maturity.

Snapshot of Recent Approaches to Adult Education at Bethel-Gurnee

In August 2010 when I arrived at Bethel-Gurnee, I had no overarching, well-considered plan for developing adult education and discipleship in the congregation. While this section mentions steps the congregation and I have taken to improve faith formation opportunities, the way those steps have coalesced into a discipleship focus ought to be fully attributed to the Lord’s leading.

In my first fall in Gurnee, the congregation was pleasantly surprised that I was willing to begin teaching a Sunday morning adult Bible study. The previous pastor of 14 years had rarely taught an adult Bible study, and many people had longed for their pastor to lead a discussion on Scripture.

Because the previous pastor had not taught a class, this had opened up opportunities for lay leaders to lead studies. This—while beneficial—had not placed adult education in a more central

¹³² Ibid., 113.

¹³³ Personal correspondence, August 2014. See also: John W. Oberdeck, “The Critical Role of Education in a Congregation’s Mission: Congregation and Family Together,” *Issues in Christian Education* 45, no. 2 (Spring) (2012): 1–18.

place in the life of the congregation. When I offered an introductory class for a few weeks on Sundays, I was told that the Sunday adult class met in a room in the basement. It still was out of the flow of Sunday morning, and when filled with about 20 interested folks, the room became cramped. The group that came included many people who were very committed to Bible study, but they had not considered how to broaden the reach of adult education in the congregation.

Aside from a Sunday morning offering, the other adult study opportunities at the time of my arrival included 2 midweek, daytime women's studies, 1 Friday evening "small group" home study, and 1 weekday early morning men's study. These smaller studies seemed to be the situations leading to conversations more akin to engaged life, as opposed to the information-based expectation of the Sunday morning setting. However, these smaller opportunities still tended to rely on Concordia Publishing House materials and were content with the materials' didactic approach.

Additionally, the congregation had a Director of Christian Education (DCE) who at the time of my arrival had been there for over 4 years. The prevailing assumption and description of his role reserved him for youth (especially high school) ministry. Therefore, he was not seen as a resource for development of adult education resources or opportunities, although he had attempted to implement some learning communities through recent congregational campaigns.

Since my arrival in 2010, I moved the Sunday morning adult study upstairs to the Fellowship Hall so that as the coffee time concludes adults are already in the room where the study is held. I also use a variety of teaching methods and activities to encourage discussion and smaller group conversation. In the last few years, the congregation also obtained a set of round tables which are now used for Sunday study instead of the long, rectangular tables previously used. This has enhanced opportunities for smaller group conversation during the study.

Part of the initial years' goals included inviting many people to try out adult study and explaining how I teach and lead a study. People in the congregation needed many assurances that: 1) I do not lecture, 2) I do not put people on the spot to read aloud, answer questions, etc. (with the caveat that if they see me "pick on someone," it is because I know that person well enough to know that this is an effective way to engage *that* individual), 3) Bible study is meant for all people—not just people who already know a lot about the Bible, and 4) Bible study is meant for people who feel they have already learned a lot—because we never stop learning from God's Word.

To move away from a didactic, lecture-based, informational approach to Bible study, I often write my own materials—which may include adapting materials from CPH or other publishers. Each topic is studied for usually 6–10 weeks so that no single topic drags on for too long.¹³⁴ Also, the topics covered relate to feedback I solicit from the participants through surveys and conversations. The surveys often include a limited set of topics I am prepared to lead and/or desire to develop for study, while also leaving room for people to suggest other topics. Sometimes—about once a year—we use an extended sermon series in worship in lieu of the lectionary readings. When this occurs, we use that same topic for further conversation in the Sunday morning study. We continue to encourage wider participation and encourage study participants to invite others. Outside of Sunday morning, since arriving at Bethel-Gurnee, I have tried to support development of other opportunities for adult education. I participated in the men's midweek study, encouraged that group to expand, and eventually helped guide it to shift to a Saturday morning breakfast format. I have occasionally been a guest leader for the midweek women's studies—allowing me to share a specific topic, respond to something they have been

¹³⁴ Topics covered in recent years includes: *The Lutheran Difference*, "Jesus Meets His Neighbors" (How to Start a Spiritual Conversation), parables in the Gospel of Luke, Colossians, and Nehemiah.

wrestling with, or at least show my support through my presence.

Additional opportunities in the congregation have also developed, many led by lay members, including a Monday evening women's study, a Tuesday evening study (led by a retired LCMS pastor who is a member of our congregation), and a step toward developing small groups by offering summer sermon study groups. I have also led some one-time/short-term topical studies, including a couple of series of studies following midweek Advent and Lenten services. I have reworked the new member class opportunities a couple of times to bring that experience into a form that is closer to the needs of the attendees, many of whom are coming to Bethel without a Lutheran background and with little experience in a church. While still emphasizing teaching the basic doctrines of the faith, my approach has been participant-centered.

Two other unique adult theological reflection experiences emerged in the last few years, and when I look back now, I see that God was guiding and shaping those opportunities. First, after a few conversations with two young women who had become interested in the Christian faith but had little background in the Church, I asked them to help host an open, casual, spiritual conversation at our nearby Starbucks. This came to be called Venti31.¹³⁵ I led the conversations, and those two young women and church members who came invited friends. I used conversation starters and allowed the group's questions to guide our theological reflection. We hold Venti31 once a month on different nights of the week. The experience is truly student-centered, in that, each month the conversation is shaped by who the interests of those who attend. The attendees have ranged from new Christians to seekers, long-time members to new members of our congregation, committed Christians to spiritually-minded people drawing on many traditions.

¹³⁵ Venti is Italian for "20," and John 20:31 shows the reason we'd go on a spiritual journey with Jesus: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

The second opportunity arose due to the need for a visual way to teach the faith, so that new members and people interested in the faith could see how God brings about salvation, how He applies His salvation to us, and how He leads us to respond with our lives. In order to visually depict this—especially the centrality of justification by grace through faith—I gathered a collection of relevant symbols on a large piece of paper. It was large enough to be a placemat, so that is its name now.¹³⁶ The Placemat Course guides the conversation over 2–3 weeks, depending on the class attendees, covering soteriology, means of grace, and sanctification. The conversation is flexible. We explore what the students want to discuss. The Placemat guides us toward covering the major doctrines of the faith. The Placemat Course does not replace a longer series of conversations with people new to the faith or new to the Lutheran Church, but it prepares us for those conversations. Through the Placemat conversations, I am able to see what each individual needs in terms of Christian faith formation and pastoral care.

Those last two opportunities, and other experiences noted above, reflect the congregation’s focus on discipleship. In 2011–2012, Bethel-Gurnee went through a reFocusing process led by Gary Janetzke from Church Resource Ministries. That process led us to reflect on who God has made each of us to be and who God has made our congregation to be. The outcome was a mission plan which outlined three strategic initiatives: care in the community, discipleship, and intentional, spiritual conversation.¹³⁷ Those broad areas led teams to study and pursue goals toward integrating those initiatives and values into what our congregation is doing. From this came our simple definition of discipleship: “Discipleship means God awakening Disciples from head knowledge of the faith to ‘heart life’”. The value of moving from information-centric to

¹³⁶ See Appendix Q for an image of the Placemat. For more information or explanation, please contact the author.

¹³⁷ See Appendix R for the initiatives page from Bethel-Gurnee’s Mission Plan.

engaged living as Christians has fueled much of my research, and for that, I thank the Lord for how He brings things together. I could never have anticipated so a confluence of the waters.

The Literature Review

“Sapiential Catechesis”

As discussed in chapter 2, Arand’s short study on catechesis calls on congregations to see catechism instruction as more than what “can be quickly downloaded so that we can move on to more important matters.”¹³⁸ That charge does not only apply to catechism classes for teenagers in traditional preparation for Confirmation. The challenge seems even more apparent in how we teach adults. Arand notes that our “intellectualistic understanding of the faith and hence of catechesis” is “suggested by the title most often given to adult catechesis, namely, ‘Adult Information Class.’”¹³⁹ Instead, Arand describes the role of the catechisms in a way that highlights how they are, using Charry’s term, sapiential.

The catechisms lead a person into the fullness of the Christian life, a fullness that can best be described as the *ars vivendi fide*, that is, the art of living by faith. In other words, the Small and Large Catechisms seek to form within us a habit of the mind and heart that it is lived from faith to faith. . . . They have been composed so as to shape every aspect and every activity of life in light of the doctrine of justification through faith in Christ. In the process, they make clear that faith is not primarily a knowledge of dates, places, concepts, and doctrines. It is not something lodged primarily in the intellect.¹⁴⁰

How do pastors, teachers, and congregations develop an adult education process that might be considered “sapiential catechesis”—a process that celebrates the wisdom of Scripture found in the catechisms (sapience) as the source of lived-out faith? Sapiential catechesis is a “way of

¹³⁸ Arand, "Does Catechesis in the LCMS Aim for the *Ars Vivendi Fide*," 57.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 58.

living” flowing from a “way of thinking.”¹⁴¹ But why has our adult catechesis not produced such a holistic view of following Christ?

One approach, advocated by this author, is to look at adult education theory, specifically andragogy, and to use that theory to evaluate how congregations have taught Christian adults.

Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles, developing what earlier theorists had begun, is known as the “Father of Andragogy.” Adults learn differently than children. The assumptions, principles, and methods that are used for educating children, known generally as pedagogy, do not produce effective results in adults—at least not in terms of education that strives toward transformation of thought and formation of practices. In reflecting on his contribution to *Training and Development Journal*, Knowles describes his experience as “student and teacher”:

I felt pressures from the educational system to adhere to the pedagogical model. For example, teachers must take full responsibility for deciding what should be learned, how it should be learned, when it should be learned, and if it has been learned. The appropriate role of the student is to be a more or less passive recipient of the teacher’s transmissions of content.¹⁴²

Knowles eventually translated that experience in the hallmark assumptions behind “andragogy,” a term that appears as early as 1833¹⁴³ and came to be used in Europe as “the parallel to pedagogy.”¹⁴⁴ “Andragogy derives from the Greek root—*agogus*—meaning ‘leading.’ ‘*Andra*’ translates as the world *adult*, which makes andragogy the art and science of teaching/leading

¹⁴¹ Brant Himes, “Discipleship as Theological Praxis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a Resource for Educational Ministry,” *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 2 (2011): 273–74.

¹⁴² Malcolm S. Knowles, “My Farewell Address...Andragogy—No Panacea, No Ideology,” *Training & Development Journal* 34, no. 8 (1980): 48.

¹⁴³ Bryan Taylor and Michael Kroth, “Andragogy’s Transition into the Future: Meta-Analysis of Andragogy and Its Search for a Measurable Instrument,” *Journal of Adult Education* 38, no. 1 (2009): 3.

¹⁴⁴ Bryan Taylor and Michael Kroth, “A Single Conversation with a Wise Man Is Better than Ten Years of Study: A Model for Testing Methodologies for Pedagogy or Andragogy,” *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 9, no. 2 (2009): 46.

adults.”¹⁴⁵

Knowles began by identifying the assumptions in pedagogy, which he summarized as:

The role of learner, regardless of state of maturity, is a dependent role.

The experience of the learner has little value as a resource for learning.

People are ready to learn what they are told they must learn.

Learners are subject-centered in their orientation to learning; they perceive learning as being a process of accumulating subject matter.

Motivation to learn is primarily externally induced.¹⁴⁶

Knowles, among others, was not comfortable maintaining this system of dependency—where “the teacher will tend to do everything one can to maintain dependency on the part of the learner.”¹⁴⁷ Instead, he aims to describe what it would mean to be a practitioner of andragogy—“the andragogue, while able to accept dependency at a given time and moment, or time with a given person, has a built-in sense of obligation to do everything one can to help that person move from dependency toward increasing self-directiveness.”¹⁴⁸

Knowles summarized his perspective nicely in a 1977 article, the points of which this author compiled here (also Appendix A) as a reference guide to prepare to lead a retreat with andragogy in mind.

Orientation to Learn

The learners feel a need to learn...The teacher exposes the learners to new possibilities for self-fulfillment...The teacher helps the learners identify the life problems they experience because of the gaps in their personal equipment.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor and Kroth, "Andragogy's Transition into the Future: Meta-Analysis of Andragogy and Its Search for a Measurable Instrument," 1.

¹⁴⁶ Knowles, "My Farewell Address...Andragogy—No Panacea, No Ideology," 48.

¹⁴⁷ Knowles, "Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy," 206.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Environment for Learning

The learning environment is characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences....The teacher provides physical conditions that are comfortable (as to seating, smoking, temperature, ventilation, lighting, decoration) and conducive to interaction (preferably, no person sitting behind another person)....The teacher accepts the learners as persons of worth and respects their feelings and ideas....The teacher seeks to build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness among the learners by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgmentalness.

Shared Goals

The learners perceive the goals of a learning experience to be their goals....The teacher involves the learners in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives in which the needs of the learners, of the institution, of the teacher, of the subject matter, and of the society are taken into account.

Self-Directed

The learners participate actively in the learning process....The teacher helps the learners to organize themselves (project groups, learning-teaching teams, independent study, etc.) to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry.

Building Upon Experience

The learning process is related to and makes use of the experience of the learners....The teacher helps the learners exploit their own experiences as resources for learning through the use of such techniques as discussion, role playing, case method, etc....The teacher gears the presentation of his or her own resources to the levels of experience of particular learners....The teacher helps the learners apply new learnings to their experience, and thus to make the learnings more meaningful and integrated.¹⁴⁹

This summary form of andragogical teaching principles works well as a brief preparation guide for the adult educator who is aiming toward leading an experience reflecting this educational theory.

In moving to specifically Christian, adult education, we see that Knowles acknowledged

¹⁴⁹ Multiple authors have further summarized and/or charted the assumptions of andragogy, one of which is Taylor and Kroth, "A Single Conversation with a Wise Man Is Better than Ten Years of Study: A Model for Testing Methodologies for Pedagogy or Andragogy," 46.

there was another factor when considering spiritual development that he could not account for in his concept of andragogy. Knowles said:

It is with [writing on faith development] that, as a secular adult educator, I have the most difficulty. I can grasp the notion that there is a theological definition of “faith,” but I cannot yet grasp its educational definition. . . . We educators know how to formulate educational objectives that describe desirable values, traits, and beliefs, and we know how to design learning experiences that will help people develop values, traits, and beliefs. But I take it that faith development is something more than the development of values, traits, and beliefs. What I do not understand is what the “something more” is.¹⁵⁰

Knowles’ honesty about a lack of ability to account for the spiritual is refreshing. It does not dismiss the mystical element present in faith development. It also invites Christian educators to speak into the conversation.

From the literature review, however, it does not appear that anyone has fully developed work on a spiritual andragogy. Concordia—Nebraska’s Mark Blanke began a spiritual application of these andragogical principles as he studied the reasons adults gave for participating or not participating in their congregation’s adult education opportunities. From a limited quantitative survey in two congregations, Blanke was able to draw tentative conclusions showing that an andragogical approach may indeed produce a greater level of participation in adult religious education:

Those that felt they had the role of contributing to the ministry of the church (a clear goal) were more likely to participate. We also know that motivational factors are influenced greatly by one’s social setting. We can say our adults have a resource-orientation, are primarily goal-oriented learners, or are seeking practical application from their learning experiences.¹⁵¹

Laying Blanke’s observations alongside Knowles’ summary, we see these correlations:

¹⁵⁰ Malcolm Knowles, "An Adult Educator's Reflections on Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle," in *Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle*, ed. Kenneth Stokes (New York: Sadlier, 1982), 72.

¹⁵¹ Mark Blanke, "The Participation of Adults in Religious Education Experiences," *Lutheran Education* 137, no. 2 (2001): 102.

“orientation to learn” (Knowles)/“goal-oriented learners” (Blanke); “environment for learning”/“social setting”; “shared goals”/“role of contributing” & “clear goal”; “self-directed”/“resource-orientation”; and “building upon experience”/“practical application”. While Blanke’s article draws the Christian educator to see the value in understanding adult education theory, it did not develop an andragogical template that could be used by educators in the Church.

Pastor John C. Lai offers another attempt to study the intersection of andragogy and Christian education in his paper, “Andragogy for the Oppressed: Emancipatory Education for Christian Adults.” Lai explores some of the concepts necessary to transform a Christian adult education structure away from one that keeps the laity dependent on the pastor or teacher for their theological understanding. Instead, Lai encourages pastors, teachers, and church leaders become familiar with andragogy in order to move each individual Christian toward “self-directiveness” in their learning.

Like Blanke, however, Lai has not produced a spiritual andragogy as a distinct methodology, so the conclusions to be drawn here are limited. Yet, Lai does remind Christian educators who engage learners in self-directed experiences that they also ought to be “taking into account the propensity for self-theologization” since educators hope to form “reflectively active and personally responsible disciples who can distinguish between divinely-ordained doctrines and practices from those which are merely institutionalized social constructions.”¹⁵² Despite Lai’s caution on the limits of “self-directedness” when it comes to *sola Scriptura* theological education, we can still foster a strong intersection of andragogy and Christian education.

Based on what we have seen in Knowles, we can agree with Blanke’s assessment that

¹⁵² John C. Lai, *Andragogy of the Oppressed: Emancipatory Education for Christian Adults* (1995), 3.

Christian adult education experiences in andragogical environments “fit beautifully with Luther’s concepts of the church’s role in preparing believers for their vocation and with the reformational concept of the priesthood of all believers.”¹⁵³ All believers have a role in God’s kingdom mission, including a role in their own learning. It is this author’s hope that the Church will develop a spiritual andragogy that can be applied to designing the Church’s education materials and to training pastors, teachers, and leaders in how to use an andragogical method.

Help for Designing an Andragogical Experience

Given that there is not a developed spiritual andragogy methodology yet available, the literature review uncovered at least one help for a pastor and congregation as they design an educational experience. Bryan Taylor and Michael Kroth have studied whether an andragogical approach in law school actually produces different results in the learners.¹⁵⁴ In order to briefly identify whether a teaching method is more predominantly andragogical or pedagogical, Taylor and Kroth developed the *Teaching Methodology Instrument (TMI)*, as shown below in Appendix P.¹⁵⁵

Each branch of the flowchart helps the educator to consider questions related to Knowles’ principles, such as, whether the method is more teacher- or learner- centric, and whether the learner’s experience counts for little or is integral to the education event. Scoring one’s design and teaching method according to these flowchart questions gives an educator a sense of how strongly the evaluated method is leaning toward pedagogy (low score) or andragogy (high score),

¹⁵³ Blanke, "The Participation of Adults in Religious Education Experiences," 102.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor and Kroth, "Andragogy's Transition into the Future: Meta-Analysis of Andragogy and Its Search for a Measurable Instrument."; Taylor and Kroth, "A Single Conversation with a Wise Man Is Better than Ten Years of Study: A Model for Testing Methodologies for Pedagogy or Andragogy."

¹⁵⁵ Taylor and Kroth, "A Single Conversation with a Wise Man Is Better than Ten Years of Study: A Model for Testing Methodologies for Pedagogy or Andragogy," 49.

with the maximum score being 32. The evaluator answers each question, and the answer scores the item as pedagogical, andragogical, or a blend.. As a snapshot, the *TMI* can serve the Christian educator in considering how to involve more adult education design in one’s teaching.

Conclusion

Clearly, “doctrine as pastoral care”—of any purpose, but especially for the sake of supporting members who participate in multi-denominational settings—needs a different model for the role of pastor as educator. Robinson clarifies the role of the pastor as pastor *and* teacher:

...the pastor who is a teacher does teaching in the context of a relationship, which is the way most good teaching happens. The teacher who is a pastor not only provides the comfort of presence but the gift and challenge of perspective, alternative ways of interpreting experience, and most of all a call to faithful response in the midst of life’s relentless unfolding...If congregations are to be grounded in the core convictions—the saving truths—of Christian faith, ordained clergy must once again become teachers of the faith.¹⁵⁶

The Synod’s history evidences an awareness of this need for “teachers of the faith,” but there must be much more support for pastors, teachers, and leaders to use adult education theory.

In reviewing literature related to adult education theory, this project posits that andragogy is a suitable, valuable tool for pastors and congregations seeking to develop “sapiential catechesis” for their adults. Andragogy provides assistance in designing an educational experience that celebrates the wisdom of Scripture found in the catechisms (sapience) as the source of engaged living for Christ.

¹⁵⁶ Robinson, *What's Theology Got to Do with It? Convictions, Vitality, and the Church*, 219–20.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

The Design of the Study

Original Proposal

The original proposal for this Major Applied Project made a major presumption: *sola gratia* and the assurance of salvation was the doctrine which would need to be shored up for the Bethel-Gurnee GO! participants. I made this presupposition based on my theological awareness of the other congregations in our multi-denominational partnership and how some speak of justification and sanctification. Thankfully, my advisor, Dr. David Schmitt, and the Concordia Seminary Doctor of Ministry Committee, under the direction of Dr. Wally Becker, asked me to rewrite the proposal for the sake of good research methodology and faithfulness to the project's goals regarding adult education theory.

First of all, entering into the participant interviews having already determined the doctrine which needed to be studied violated proper research methodology. The pre-retreat interviews needed to be completed and analyzed for a common theme or question that would then form the topic for the research retreat.

Secondly, the original proposal included some quantitative tools in what I realized amounted to a "test" of theological knowledge. Using such tools would have worked against the project's goal of applying andragogy to Christian adult education. The original proposal said research would have begun by interviewing each participant using a standardized set of questions regarding their faith development in regards to their Go! Together experience. The questions

about their understanding of soteriology and sanctification would have been according to a Likert scale about growth with set places when participants were invited to tell a brief story that exemplified their answer. At the interview, the participants would have completed a brief written exercise to reflect on how they might affirm assurance of salvation as understood in Lutheran theology in response to a non-Lutheran statement that potentially confuses the two kinds of righteousness. Such a design reflected pedagogical, teacher-centered education rather than focusing on what the participants saw as their need for further education and what expertise and experience they brought to that education.

In this original proposal, the retreat would likely have been designed based more on my assumptions than on the interviews and literature review. Without the guidance of the Concordia Seminary faculty who reviewed my proposal, I would have ended up doing a literature review of adult education theory that in the end would have negated my general approach to the interviews and the retreat's exercises—which were to be much more focused on getting “right answers” about the assurance of salvation and assessing theologically improper statements. The post-retreat exercise of keeping a journal about conversations with GO! Together or other non-Lutheran Christians amounted to “testing” the doctrine of these other Christians and “testing” the Bethel-Gurnee participants on whether they could recognize the theological errors. I, therefore, revised my work in a way that integrated adult education theory more faithfully.

Outline of Revised Proposal

- i. Invite a small group of Bethel members to participate in the three phases of this research. These members are those who have been a part of their neighborhood GO! Group or were part of the multi-congregation, intensive training.
- ii. Conduct an in-depth interview with each participant about their GO! Together experiences and what they perceive as their needs for support for ongoing participation in multi-denominational settings.

- iii. Design a retreat focused on “doctrine as pastoral care” based on the interviews and literature review. The doctrinal content of the retreat will be determined by the participants’ self-identification of their needs for support which will be analyzed to determine the theological areas for further study. I will analyze their responses in order to ascertain what themes of need emerge and how those needs can be addressed through theological inquiry. The retreat’s exercises will support participants with regard to maintaining a Lutheran theological perspective in their perceived areas of need as they participate in multi-denominational settings.
- iv. Interview participants again as a follow up three weeks after the retreat, allowing for time for reflection and possible further multi-denominational experiences. Participants will be asked how they view the retreat’s impact on their perception of their multi-denominational interactions. This interview will also ask the participants to evaluate the retreat’s design (including the importance of the pre-interview in determining their needs and the nature of the retreat).
- v. Summarize the project’s findings as a report to Bethel’s Disciple Care Elders about the possible impact of additional theological training for a wider set of Bethel members in support for their interaction with other Christians in their day-to-day lives. At this point, it may be that the findings would be able to help pastors in other LCMS congregations.

Research Tools and Methodology

Participants Selected

The process for this Major Applied Project began by inviting 12 Bethel members to participate in the three phases of this research.¹⁵⁷ Those invited had a significant experience with GO! Together. All 12 members accepted the invitation. Six of these members were part of their neighborhood GO! Group, meeting with Christians who live near them and are members of one of the GO! churches. Those groups met in homes around twice a month to study missional living through a video-based training series developed locally by the GO! pastors. Some groups put that training into action through reaching out to their neighborhood in acts of service, planning social gatherings, or becoming involved in the neighborhood’s community association in a more significant way. Of the six Bethel members in this research, three people representing two

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix I for the original invitation letter.

different GO! Groups met for about one year (2012-2013). Now their groups are no longer meeting. The three other participants in GO! Groups began in their groups at the same time (Fall 2012), and have continued to meet beyond the initial phase of training, developing their own plan for continued conversation, prayer, and outreach.

The six other Bethel members in this research took part in similar missional living training, using the same videos, but condensed for a 5-week course called GO! Intensive. Instead of meeting in homes, this training took place in one location (Bethel), involved people from all of the GO! churches, and gave them a good overview of the training and purpose of GO! This training was facilitated by Another GO! congregation's pastor and I facilitated this training. We hoped that some neighborhood groups (or groups built around some other commonality) would emerge from this training, but that did not happen. The training took place in the fall of 2013.

The main context for participants' responses was their GO! Together experiences. However, in the interviews and the retreat, I invited them to share reflections on any setting from recent years where their Christian faith is overtly acknowledged as a common bond of the group. This could be formal, as in a neighborhood or workplace Bible study, human care organization, prayer group, or a local workshop or seminar. A multi-denominational setting could also be informal, as in friends who speak about their Christian faith with one another.

As reported in chapter 1 of this project, the participants varied in age from early 20s to early 70s (average: 49, median: 60). Congregational research produced for a 2012 initiative showed the approximate median age of Bethel-Gurnee members (aged 20 and older) was 47, meaning that the participants in this research tended to be somewhat older than the general population of the congregation. Some of the research participants had been members of Bethel for multiple decades; some had only recently joined (average: 11 years). There was a wide range

in how long these participants had been identifying themselves as Christians (from 3 years to lifelong), as actively involved in their faith life, and as Lutherans. Two participants were part-time staff of the congregation. Six of the participants were current or former leaders from the Church Council or Elders. One person was a Synodically-trained, retired teacher. Finally, it should be noted that these participants all chose to be part of GO!, so this research does not purport to deliver findings related to Bethel-Gurnee members who chose not to be part of GO!

Qualitative, In-Depth Interviews

I conducted two in-depth interviews with each participant—an initial interview and then a follow-up interview after the research retreat. The initial interview asked them about their GO! Together experiences and what they perceived as their needs for support for their ongoing participation in multi-denominational settings. I then analyzed these responses to ascertain what themes of need emerged and how those needs could be addressed through theological inquiry.

In “Common Qualitative Methods,” Colleen Mahoney gives this description of in-depth interviews and the reasons for their use in research:

The use of interviews as a data collection method begins with the assumption that the participants’ perspectives are meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the success of the project. An interview, rather than a paper and pencil survey, is selected when interpersonal contact is important and when opportunities for followup of interesting comments are desired.¹⁵⁸

I elected to use in-depth interviews because they would allow me the most opportunity for open-ended responses, immediate follow-up questions for clarification and expansion, and a learner-centered approach—which reflects the andragogical goals of the project. As mentioned previously regarding the original design, this meant eliminating the elements of a short answer questionnaire and brief, written response to a quotation. Both of those elements reinforced a

¹⁵⁸ Mahoney, "Common Qualitative Methods," 4 (PDF page).

teacher-centered focus where the goal was to make sure the learner was able to repeat back the content of the curriculum. Thankfully, my advisor and the Doctor of Ministry committee steered me away from this direction that ran counter to my goals.

Mahoney develops the description of in-depth interviews even more, saying that such interviews:

seek to encourage free and open responses, and there may be a tradeoff between comprehensive coverage of topics and indepth exploration of a more limited set of questions. Indepth interviews also encourage capturing of respondents' perceptions in their own words, a very desirable strategy in qualitative data collection.¹⁵⁹

To use in-depth interviews well, I limited my inquiries to their experiences in GO! or other recent multi-denominational settings. There was not time and space to explore how those responses related to each participant's wider Christian experience. Yet, the in-depth interviews were the beginning of the andragogical goal of eliciting self-motivated learning and of fostering a sense for participants that they were contributing to the learning experience.

Mahoney lists the benefits of using in-depth interviews, which are in line with the goals of this project:

Afford [the interviewer the] ability to experience the affective as well as cognitive aspects of responses

Allow interviewer to explain or help clarify questions, increasing the likelihood of useful responses

Allow interviewer to be flexible in administering interview to particular individuals or circumstances¹⁶⁰

The andragogical design of this project, then, was enhanced because in-depth interviews rely on the participants' own self-concepts and show an interest in their experiences—two of the andragogical assumptions listed in chapter 3.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 6 (PDF page).

However, while conducting in-depth interviews, it was also important to keep in mind Mahoney's caution:

Interviewee may distort information through recall error, selective perceptions, desire to please interviewer.¹⁶¹

I was not as concerned about “recall error” or “selective perceptions,” because I was most interested in how these Bethel members perceived their GO! experience. How their perceptions related to what actually took place or the intended goals was not as important as helping the participants work through their experiences and discern where they needed continued support for theological formation. However, I was concerned that sometimes participants may answer interview questions with a “desire to please interviewer,” since I—their pastor—was conducting the interviews. I needed to be aware of how I phrased questions—especially off-script follow-up questions—and in what ways I might inadvertently affirm or discourage certain answers according to my own perspective.¹⁶² Those concerns were addressed in developing the interview guides and preparing to conduct the interviews.¹⁶³

Mahoney comments on the possible drawbacks of conducting interviews in varied settings:

Interviews generally take place in a wide range of settings. This limits the interviewer's control over the environment. The interviewer may have to contend with disruptions and other problems that may inhibit the acquisition of information and limit the comparability of interviews.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, it was my goal that all of the interviews would be conducted in my office at Bethel—a

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Allan Harkness speaks about this challenge “that, in common with local church congregations, theological seminaries face the continual temptation ‘to distribute approval and measure institutional success by the extent to which [people] conform to the language of Christian belief and the behavior expected of believers,’” Allan Harkness, “De-Schooling the Theological Seminary: An Appropriate Paradigm for Effective Ministerial Formation,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 4, no. 3 (2001): 145. Quoting B.V. Hill, “May We Assess Religious Development at School?,” *Spectrum* 26, no. 2 (1994): 126.

¹⁶³ See Appendices B & C for the interview guides.

¹⁶⁴ Mahoney, “Common Qualitative Methods,” 6 (PDF page).

comfortable setting and one that was familiar to almost all of my participants. My office fit with most of Mahoney's recommendations:

Select a setting that provides privacy for participants.

Select a location where there are no distractions and it is easy to hear respondents speak.

Select a comfortable location.

Select a nonthreatening environment.

Select a location that is easily accessible for respondents.

Select a facility equipped for audio or video recording.¹⁶⁵

For the most part, I limited distractions and interruptions by conducting interviews in my office. As I said, the office is comfortable for conversation at a large table, and the privacy and quiet space allowed for the audio recording of the interviews.

Interviewing Techniques

For a number of years I wrote and maintained my own music review website. As that site grew, I had opportunities to interview artists. I developed some interviewing skills including writing out an interview guide ahead of time, establishing rapport with the interviewee, and seizing moments for follow up questions and exploration of topics that I might not have anticipated in the original interview guide. In reading about conducting in-depth research interviews, I realized I could build upon those same skills.

Developing the initial interview guide began with reflecting on Mahoney's general suggested questions:

What does the program look and feel like to the participants? To other stakeholders?

What are the experiences of program participants?

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 7 (PDF page).

What are participants' and stakeholders' expectations?

What features of the project are most salient to the participants?

What changes do participants perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the project?¹⁶⁶

The initial interviews for this project were focused on participants' perspectives on their GO! experiences, as well as, how they had been able (or unable) to integrate those experiences into their daily faith life. Rubin and Rubin encourage the open-ended nature of the questioning: "Phrasing initial questions in an open way allows you to hear what your conversational partners think before you inadvertently narrow down the options for questioning."¹⁶⁷ Indeed, while this project presupposed that there would be theological topics that participants would be able to identify as needing additional exploration in regards to their GO! experiences, the interview questions could not be too overt in steering the interviewees toward certain areas of doctrine. The questions even somewhat veiled the doctrinal inquiry since this project also presupposed that many laypeople feel as if "doctrine" is not within their sphere of understanding.

In the same way as when I prepared to interview musicians, I saw that prepared guidelines for this project laid out a somewhat uniform inquiry across the interviews. Mahoney speaks of the interview guide this way:

Indepth interviews are characterized by extensive probing and open-ended questions. Typically, the project evaluator prepares an interview guide that includes a list of questions or issues that are to be explored and suggested probes for following up on key topics. The guide helps the interviewer pace the interview and make interviewing more systematic and comprehensive.¹⁶⁸

The interview guide paced the conversation, even while allowing for flexibility in terms of when

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 5 (PDF page).

¹⁶⁷ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 46.

¹⁶⁸ Mahoney, "Common Qualitative Methods," 5 (PDF page).

to further explore certain probes.

However, my initial draft of the interview questions did not center enough on the key inquiries of this project. Rubin and Rubin's general concerns regarding the main interview questions reflect the suggestions I received from my advisor as I worked on adjusting my initial drafts of the interview guides.

First, do the main questions cover the overall subject?...Second, do the main questions flow from one to the next?...More generally, the separate main questions should cover an overall subject in ways that suggest an underlying focus....Finally, in choosing main questions, check to make sure the questions match the research design.¹⁶⁹

This last point proved crucial in that the interview guides I first developed strayed from what I hoped to accomplish in my research. The interview questions reflected earlier iterations of the project proposal. Checking the questions against Rubin and Rubin's concerns helped clarify where I was drifting away from developing a good interview guide.

It was also helpful to refer to the questions as a "guide," because this helped focus on the nature of qualitative interviewing which relies on a flexible, continuous design. For this type of in-depth interviewing, the set of questions were a guide rather than a rigid prescription. Over the course of the set of interviews, the questions were adapted as I discerned how to frame questions according to the interviewee's experience, discovering that some questions were misleading or misunderstood, and utilizing what had been learned over the course of the previous interviews.

As you learn about how the interviewees understand their world, you may want to modify what it is you are studying or rethink the pattern of questioning....Design remains flexible throughout the study because you have to work out questions to examine new ideas and themes that emerge during the interviews....The continuous nature of qualitative interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project. A particular answer may suggest a new line of inquiry....¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 147.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 44,45,47.

Since the interviewer must strike a balance between uniformity in the interviews and uniqueness in each individual interview, the process of the interviews—and the individual contributions from the participants—was part of the further shaping of the project and its outcomes.

A flexible design, then, meant there was room for additional exploration according to each conversation through the use of follow-up questions.

The purpose of follow-up questions is to get the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implications of what has been said...[F]ollow-ups cannot be prepared prior to the initial interview, because they will be based on the interviewee's responses to the main questions.

Part of the skill, according to Rubin and Rubin, was knowing when to ask follow-ups and when to let topics go without further exploration. For instance, as pastor, I desired to know more about these Bethel members' wider experience in learning about missional living (e.g.: what else have they learned, where have they learned it, where have they attempted to practice it), but as a researcher, I needed to focus on what the participants revealed that would be most helpful to the goals of the project.

The trick is choosing to follow up on only those matters that provide insight on the core matters of concern. Listen for partial narratives, unexplained lists, and one-sided descriptions of behavior that beg for elaboration...Asking good follow-up questions is a matter of trained curiosity, recognizing and pursuing puzzles while exploring emerging themes.¹⁷¹

Because I have learned to use curiosity as a way to get to know the people I am called to serve, my pastoral experience prepared me for in-depth interviewing. However, it was critical that I see how interviews for a research project differed from pastoral conversation, because I was focused on themes that related to the project's goals.

Keeping the project's goals in mind helped train my curiosity, directing the interviews so

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 151,53.

that the participants were also aware of how the conversation centered on the themes explored in the project. Making the participants aware of the project goals invited them to be consciously contributing to the research—an important aspect andragogically. Rubin and Rubin point toward a similar quality that exists when using in-depth interviews:

When answering [the researcher's] follow-ups, the interviewee becomes a full-fledged research partner. You can ask this conversational partner what he or she thinks of an idea that a different interviewee has suggested. Or you can follow up by asking about themes you think are in the answers this interviewee has already given, but you are not sure about them yet.¹⁷²

The in-depth interviews were part of the project's andragogical goals because the interviews themselves helped the participants orient toward learning, bring their experience to the learning process, and see themselves shaping and contributing to the learning process—not merely receiving.

Armed, then, with the flexible interview guide, it was also important to reflect on interviewing skills, so as to elicit depth, honest reflection, and investment on the part of the interviewees. Mahoney's description of the interviewer's demeanor seemed within easy reach due to the fact that I served as the interviewees' pastor.

The interviewer becomes an attentive listener who shapes the process into a familiar and comfortable form of social engagement - a conversation - and the quality of the information obtained is largely dependent on the interviewer's skills and personality....sensitive, empathetic, and able to establish a nonthreatening environment in which participants feel comfortable.¹⁷³

Yet, because a research interview is a different context than my normal conversations with these Bethel-Gurnee members—whether in pastoral care, leadership, or staff meetings, I also studied other interview skills and techniques. For instance, the interview guide itself became a signal for the interviewees and the author that this was not the same as other pastoral/parishioner

¹⁷² Ibid., 154.

¹⁷³ Mahoney, "Common Qualitative Methods," 5 (PDF page).

conversations; this was an interview with a set of specific questions for the sake of a research project. Rubin and Rubin write: “[T]he physical guide itself becomes an interviewing prop. Holding a guide makes the researcher look professional and prepared.”¹⁷⁴ The written guide in my hands helped establish the context of the conversation.

Additionally, Seidman in *Interview as Qualitative Research* offers a number of techniques to keep in mind while interviewing. Of those suggestions, several seemed to be important for me to take on the role of researcher rather than pastor in the midst of the interviews. First, Seidman says to “avoid interrupting participants while they are talking.”¹⁷⁵ While this is an important skill in pastoral counseling, this Doctor of Ministry student—an active parish pastor—struggled to refrain from interrupting, perhaps subconsciously hoping to nudge the conversation toward a desired outcome. Fortunately, Seidman offered a technique to use to replace an interruption: “[T]he interviewer can jot down the key word and follow up on it later, when doing so will not interrupt the participant’s train of thought.”¹⁷⁶ As stated, this not only accomplished the goal of allowing the interviewee to speak uninterrupted; it also kept the researcher from prematurely inserting his own thoughts or swaying the conversation in a direction it was not headed.

Related to this, the interviewer needs to “avoid reinforcing what your participant is saying, either positively or negatively.”¹⁷⁷ For a pastor, called to offer spiritual nurture for the same individuals he is interviewing, this was a difficult balance. Seidman again offers a technique that at least slows down the pastor’s instinct to offer immediate feedback: “A more effective and less

¹⁷⁴ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 164.

¹⁷⁵ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998), 70.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 74.

invasive method is to refer later in an interview to something participants said earlier.”¹⁷⁸ This helped me recall what I wanted to return to later in the conversation to elicit more on that topic. Jotting down notes on some items instead of offering immediate feedback to the interviewee made me slow down to check whether what I wrote down was more about my own interpretation of the participant’s answer. However, Seidman balances this caution when encouraging the interviewer to allow one’s own doubts and questions to coalesce and bring them forward in the conversation: “Follow your hunches. Trust your instincts. When appropriate, risk saying what you think or asking the difficult question.”¹⁷⁹ The art of interviewing resided in this balance between restraint and risk.

Finally, Seidman encourages interviewers to “ask participants to tell a story,” a follow-up technique that might unlock even fuller descriptions to go with the interviewee’s initial answers.¹⁸⁰ Since many of the participants in this study were attempting to recall GO! experiences from a couple of years ago, Seidman’s advice about reconstruction came much into play if the participants were nervous about misremembering. Instead, the interviewer sought to “[a]sk participants, in effect, not to remember their experience but rather to construct it....Reconstruction is based partially on memory and partially on what the participant now senses is important about the past event.”¹⁸¹ Because this project was interested in what would lead to theological formation for adult Christians, the questions sought to discover the participants’ understanding of their multi-denominational experiences. That understanding would carry them forward and shape their formation.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 71.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 74.

Research Requirements

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent agreement that covered all three phases of the research.¹⁸² It stipulated that their answers in the interviews will be kept confidential and that their names will not be used in the final project. The consent included permission to make an audio recording of the interview. Audio transcription of interviews was completed by a third party, but the consent agreement informed the participant that this person would not know the interviewees' names and would be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.¹⁸³ Quotations from research participants that appear in the final paper are brief and exclude identifying details.. If any longer quotations or narratives are used, I asked the research participant for further, documented consent. The consent agreement asked participants to agree to keep conversations at the retreat confidential, so that all participants felt free to share openly. Finally, the consent form gave the participant information about how to exit from the research at any time.

At the retreat, participants were asked to sign a second confidentiality agreement.¹⁸⁴ This agreement reiterated the original consent, but also established the expectations of confidentiality rules as the retreat began. This agreement stipulated that the author's notes and comments about the participants' conversations at the retreat would remain confidential, and that quotations that appear in the final paper would be kept brief and exclude identifying details. If longer quotations or narratives were used, I asked the research participant for further, documented consent. The participants agreed that comments made by others in this setting would be kept private unless explicit permission was given to share those comments.

¹⁸² See Appendix J.

¹⁸³ See Appendix L.

¹⁸⁴ See Appendix K.

Only audio of the interviews and retreat were recorded, and the original recordings and the transcriptions will remain secured by the author with all other confidential materials gathered as part of this research.

Formal permission to conduct research at Bethel-Gurnee was requested and granted from the Board of Elders as a part of their November 2014 meeting.¹⁸⁵

Any interviews of scholars, researchers, authors, or others were to be conducted after informing them of my purpose in using their comments for publication of my study. Such an approach was also used if interviews were to happen with colleague pastors or congregation staff from other Gurnee congregations.

Retreat

A retreat was the theological formation experience chosen for this project. Because the participants had separate GO! experiences, they needed to come together to share with one another, reflect on their experiences, and encourage one another in theological formation. Because the nature of GO! is that it does not take place within the normal, weekly routine of Bethel's activities, there is not a pre-existing time that may be used for this purpose (e.g., a regularly scheduled Bible study). Therefore, it was determined to ask the participants to step away for one night for a theological formation retreat. This allowed the retreat to interrupt the participants' weekly routine, give them time and space for reflection, and conduct a focused time of learning rather than spread it out over a several weeks.

A retreat incorporates some of Marmon's thoughts related to transformative learning theory:

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix M.

Reflection on any level rarely happens without prompting. Our behavior and cognitive patterns need interrupting by intentional, communal evaluation... Talking with one another about their impressions and asking questions of each other and of the group as a whole heightens the potential for change in each team member. In turn, the team's insights can impact their faith community as a whole.¹⁸⁶

This reflection within community builds upon God's design of the Church in which He calls us into community through His Son with one another. The participants would gain a more full-fledged formation experience by being in community. While this project's retreat would include time for quiet reflection in between sessions, in the evening, etc., the retreat aimed to utilize the unique contribution to growth that God provides for us when we are in community.

The importance of learning within community forms a piece of Alan Harkness' reflections on seminary education—reflections that can certainly carry over to adult Christian education in the congregation.

“Co-labouring” for Christian formation and transformation is primarily with God, mediated through the Holy Spirit; and then in relationship with others. Such interpersonal mutuality, expressed in committed responsibility and accountability, is highlighted, for example, in the numerous “...one anothers” of the New Testament letters (e.g., “care for one another,” “admonish one another,” and “teach one another”). This mutuality is encapsulated in *koinōnia*, with its connotation of deeply supportive relationships, which leads to completeness and wholeness both of individuals and of the corporate communities of which they are part.¹⁸⁷

As opposed to many educational endeavors, a theological formation experience ought to be “intentional, collaborative, and communitarian.” The retreat in this project was not designed to see who learns and who gets left behind, as if it were a competition or individual achievement test. Instead, the participants traveled this journey together and brought one another through the process.

¹⁸⁶ Ellen L. Marmon, "Transformative Learning Theory: Connections with Christian Adult Education," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 2 (2013): 428.

¹⁸⁷ Allan Harkness, "Assessment in Theological Education: Do our Theological Values Matter?," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 5, no. 2 (2008): 197, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1558/jate2008v5i2.183>.

R. Paul Stevens, quoted in Harkness in relation to seminary education, mentions themes of collaboration that apply to the goals and methods of theological education in a congregation.

Biblical theological education is a complex reality involving many strands of learning, faith development and active ministry evoked by authentic relationship with the living God...it is community-oriented (rather than individualistic), co-operative (rather than competitive), life-centered (rather than merely school-based), oriented towards obedience (rather than the mere accumulation of cognitive information), life-long (rather than concentrated in a degree program) and available for the whole people of God, the *laos* (rather than a clerical elite).¹⁸⁸

The language we use at Bethel-Gurnee about membership emphasizes that being a member of the congregation means that the individual is asking to be shepherded in their faith—by this gathering of believers—and committing to encourage fellow believers in their faith. The retreat in this project aimed at helping individuals grow through the shepherding that the individuals provided for one another.

Aiming for such reflection, a location was chosen for the retreat that would be conducive to community and introspection. The DeKoven Center, a retreat and conference center of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee, is located in Racine, Wisconsin, about 30 minutes from Gurnee.¹⁸⁹ The DeKoven Center offered affordable room and board in a historic, former boarding school home, along with a comfortable space for group sessions. Because the center provided meals, we did not have to leave the DeKoven Center and participants were able to focus on the retreat experience.

In order to acknowledge the participants' donation of their time to this project, it was also determined that the costs of retreat should not be passed on to the participants. Additionally, Bethel-Gurnee had already supported my schooling and research in multiple ways, including

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 198. Quoting R. Paul Stevens, "Marketing the faith—A Reflection on the Importing and Exporting of Western Theological Education," *Crux* 28, no. 2 (1992): 17 endnote 14.

¹⁸⁹ www.dekovencenter.org

financially, over the last five years, so I did not want to request financial support from Bethel for the retreat. After researching a number of funding sources, our local Thrivent chapter board accepted my grant request and provided nearly the entire amount for room, board, and supplies of all participants and the author. The author used his own funds and his professional expense line in the church budget to cover the remaining costs. As much as the members participating in the research was a gift to me, I wanted them to feel as if there was a gift to them in the retreat's accommodations.

Designing and Leading the Project According to Andragogy

As noted above in chapter 3, I developed the retreat and led the sessions with an andragogical approach. When considering the different learning sessions during the retreat and what methods to use, the *Teaching Methodology Instrument* helped me consider how to ensure that I was drawing on the adults' experience in the learning event and ensuring that I was a co-learner as the group explored the retreat's topic.¹⁹⁰ Secondly, I referenced the Knowles summary page (Appendix A) in order to help me be aware of the andragogical aspects that were present through the way I facilitated the retreat.

"Doctrine as Pastoral Care" in the Project Design

While it has been shown in this paper that pastoral care comes through doctrinal reflection, I have observed that many Christians do not recognize this. For instance, when someone meets with me about a life issue, or even a faith struggle, they do not often directly ask about a doctrine. However, the care that someone needs when facing a crisis in life or faith actually does come in the form of reaffirming doctrine(s). Someone who is overwhelmed with guilt may not ask about justification, but the comfort for them comes in affirming that their guilt has been

¹⁹⁰ See Appendix P.

removed and placed on Jesus on the cross.

Therefore, in the interviews and retreat, the doctrinal focus could not necessarily be named as such. The interviews sought to get participants talking about doctrinal matters without asking directly—at least not initially—that the interviewee list doctrines they consider to be central to participating in GO! Together. Similarly, the retreat had a doctrinal focus, but that was going to be especially highlighted as the “common theme” in the initial interviews. The retreat engaged the participants in study, thought, conversation, and application of doctrinal formulations, while maintaining the overall focus on supporting them in their lived experience and pursuit of missional living. In this way the project celebrated the wisdom of God’s Word that comes to us through sapiential catechesis, holds to our confessional standard, and leads to transformation of our daily lives.

Implementation of the Project

Invite Participants Fall 2014

Invite a small group of Bethel members to participate in the three phases of this research. These members are those who have been a part of their neighborhood GO! Group or were part of the multi-congregation, intensive training. There is a potential for 12 participants from this invitation group.

Twelve members of Bethel-Gurnee were identified as meeting the requirements for the participants in this research: they were active in a neighborhood GO! Group or attended the GO! Intensive, a multi-congregation training held at Bethel. I invited these 12 individuals to participate in the three phases of this research, and all 12 agreed to participate. This gave an equal distribution of people who were in a GO! Group and those who only attended the Intensive training. This division could potentially give further insights into whether that difference in multi-denominational experience affects the respondents’ perspectives.

Some of those invited expressed hesitancy that they did not feel that they had much to contribute. Before committing to participate in this research project, three individuals asked for one-on-one conversation in order to understand more of what I was requiring of them and what would happen if they could not complete all of the phases due to unforeseen circumstances. These conversations allowed me to emphasize the importance of their experience and perspective for my research, and became pastoral opportunities to affirm these individuals as having unique gifts from God that are indeed valuable to many processes in our congregation. Two of these individuals were GO! Intensive only participants; one had been in a GO! Group. Eventually, all 12 individuals who were invited agreed to participate.

Initial Interviews November-December 2014

Conduct an in-depth interview with each participant about their GO! Together experiences and what they perceive as their needs for support for their ongoing participation in multi-denominational settings.

The Initial Interviews were conducted December 2–12, 2014. All of the interviews, except one, were held in my office, as had been my intention. The one exception was due to repair work being done in my end of the building, so we moved to a vacant office in another part of the building.

Prior to the interviews, I prepared an interview guide that I then used as a tool and a prop in conducting the interviews. As a prop, it gave the participants a signal that this conversation was different than our typical pastor-congregant appointments. I used the guide as a tool to jot down notes for future reference, highlight key phrases that I might return to in the interview, and quickly note follow-up questions. I was prepared that I may need to adjust the questions for better clarification and add questions as I saw what follow up questions were helpful in the first

few interviews. Ultimately, I did not revise the printed interview guide, but I did close many of the interviews with this open-ended question: “Is there anything else you feel would be helpful for Bethel people to be supported as they become part of a GO! experience?” This question was added because the interviews were not yielding my expected result of specific doctrines that needed to be addressed, reviewed, or clarified in order for people to be clear in why Lutherans articulate the faith differently than other Christians.

Retreat Design December 2014-January 2015

Design a retreat focused on “doctrine as pastoral care” based on the interviews and literature review. The doctrinal content of the retreat will be determined by the participants’ self-identification of their needs for support which will be analyzed to determine the theological areas for further study. I will analyze their responses in order to ascertain what themes of need emerge and how those needs can be addressed through theological inquiry. The retreat’s exercises will support participants with regard to maintaining a Lutheran theological perspective in their perceived areas of need as they participate in multi-denominational settings.

The design of the retreat needed to take into account how one discerns themes and concepts from the in-depth interviews. Rubin and Rubin offer this description:

Themes are statements that explain why something happened or what something means and are built up from the concepts. Concepts reflect the underlying ideas with which people label their descriptions and understandings of their world...[C]oncepts are usually expressed in simple words or phrases, usually as nouns, noun phrases, or gerunds. These words, though, are simply the labels or symbols that represent the underlying ideas.¹⁹¹

Therefore, the retreat’s theme and concepts to be explored were chosen after the initial interviews. I reviewed the transcripts and my notes in order to ascertain what most commonly appeared in the conversations, so that the retreat reflected what the participants—as co-laborers—desired to explore in terms of necessary theological formation along the way of

¹⁹¹ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 57.

cooperating with other congregations locally.

Additionally, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the researcher could not pre-determine the retreat theme based upon academic studies and assumptions of what people would need to study in order to be prepared for multi-denominational settings. Instead, the theme needed to reflect the participants' own experiences. The research project then could test whether that process and the respondents' theme did provide the desired support for their multi-denominational involvement. Again, Rubin and Rubin:

In qualitative interviewing, theories emerge from the interviews, not as mere extensions of the academic literature. The theories reach for broader significance but remain firmly grounded in the experiences and understanding of the interviewees. After you have a theory that you have built and tested, you can compare it to the literature and locate your study with respect to other people's writing, but if you start off with other people's theories and only test them, you will not be able to see anything new; you may not even be able to see what is out there.¹⁹²

By adjusting the original design of this project so that the initial interviews shaped the retreat theme, this project avoided only testing other people's theories or missing the theories that needed to emerge from this specific context with these specific participants.

The theme that arose from the interviews was "commonology," a term coined by one of the participants. This will be explained further in chapter 5. "Commonology" captures what every participant spoke of: celebrating how GO! emphasizes the faith in Christ which we hold in common with the other congregations. They used other phrases like "common purpose," "common faith in Christ," and "common bond of belief," yielding a theme related to the doctrine of the Church and theology of missions. The participants needed "doctrine as pastoral care" that would allow them to continue to celebrate this "commonology" and give them the resources necessary to reflect theologically on how this theme relates to our Lutheran confession.

¹⁹² Ibid., 63–64.

Research Retreat
January 16–17, 2015
Retreat held at DeKoven Center, Racine, WI

The retreat sessions needed to produce a discovery process where outcomes are not pre-determined, resources for research are equally available, and cooperative work would be elevated over teacher-centric lecture or individuals dominating conversation. Rather than simply explaining in a pedagogical method how “commonology” does or does not line up with Lutheran theology, the retreat needed to andragogically draw the participants into doing the research themselves. However, given the time limitations on the retreat, and the reality that few of the participants would be able to do extensive research on their own prior to coming together as a group, I decided to craft the retreat in such a way as to present different perspectives on the possibility of “commonology” in a setting such as GO! Together. Having “different voices speak to us” (through printed quotations) at the retreat enabled a self-directed discovery process. Our conclusions were informed by what we had available to the group in common. A description and schedule of the retreat sessions is provided in Appendix E.

The retreat began with participants sharing something about themselves and their GO! involvement. While the participants—for the most part—are acquainted with one another from the congregation, there were a few who had not spent much time together, and this group of 12 individuals had never been together.

The second portion of the first session introduced the GO! involvement principles and decision tree as I related Bethel’s (and my) story of how joined GO! Together. This session introduced that first portion of retreat content and established that our participation was not a foregone conclusion. I described how this had been the subject of much of my research and thinking and that there remained open questions surrounding how Bethel-Gurnee as an LCMS congregation participates faithfully in GO! Together.

Having set the table around our GO! experience, I revealed the common theme from their initial interviews. This meant that early on in the retreat the participants were aware that what we were researching together was what had been on everyone's mind in regard to GO! It also allowed the central question of the retreat to be introduced: "How do we build on this celebration of common Christian faith in GO! in a way that is both Scriptural and in agreement with our theological position?" The participants quickly became aware that I was a co-learner who also sought answers to this question.

The common theme quotes from the initial interviews regarding "commonology" were introduced by having each quote printed on an individual page and those pages placed in random order underneath the participants' seats.¹⁹³ At that time in the retreat, participants were asked to retrieve the pages and go around in the circle, reading the quotes aloud, acknowledging that these quotes revealed the common theme from the interviews and the focus of our time together. It was emphasized that the quotes were brief excerpts intended to be free from any identifying characteristics, so that the confidentiality of the interviews was maintained.¹⁹⁴ We then taped the pages up on the walls for reference during conversation. Immediately, we could see how this common theme begged to be in conversation with the principles of involvement and decision tree I had already introduced.

The first step in exploring this "commonology" question came in introducing John Armstrong's *Your Church is Too Small*¹⁹⁵ which was our source for a voice that emphasizes how the local Church can partner for mission while emphasizing their common faith in Christ. A

¹⁹³ See Appendix D for the list of those interview quotations.

¹⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the retreat has also begun with a reminder of the confidential nature of our conversation at the retreat and the signing of the Group Retreat Confidentiality Agreement. See Appendix K.

¹⁹⁵ John H. Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small: Why Unity in Christ's Mission is Vital to the Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

more detailed look at Armstrong’s book is provided in chapter 5.. I purchased a copy of the book for each participant. I contemplated giving them the book prior to the retreat, but I decided against that because: 1) I had not told the participants from the beginning that they would have pre-retreat homework, 2) I knew that if I asked them to read, some would read and some wouldn’t, starting the retreat with participants at different stages, and 3) my experience led me to see a benefit to reading aloud together as a group learning exercise.¹⁹⁶

After one session with Armstrong’s book, I presented Synodical perspectives through a “Room of Quotes.” The quotes culled from Synodical sources were divided into 18 individual quotes.¹⁹⁷ Some sources produced more than one quote, so that the 18 quotes were taken from 12 sources. These quotes were reproduced in triplicate and taped up on the walls, so that the participants could walk the room and read them. After considering them, the participants were asked to select four quotes to become familiar with and consider referencing as our conversations continued during the day. Eventually all of the quotes were selected by at least one person, with many having been selected by multiple people. The range of LCMS perspectives was meant to allow us to discover where the Synodical perspective does support a celebration of commonalities but to be aware that the Lutheran perspective also includes cautions on the extent to which “commonology” can be said to be present among a disparate group of congregations.

Two more sessions on Armstrong’s book followed, with the participants now informed by the Synodical quotes and encouraged to bring those perspectives to bear on what *Your Church is*

¹⁹⁶ For the last two years, I have been in a discipleship huddle with 3 other men. We meet weekly for faith encouragement, and we began with the idea that we would work through a book together. Initially, we tried reading ahead, but quickly realized we were not all getting our reading done. So we switched to reading aloud to one another each week—early in the morning at Starbucks—and pausing as we went along in order to talk and share. I leaned on that experience in making the decision to reserve the book for the retreat and plan sessions where we would read portions together.

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix F for all 18 individual quotes.

Too Small says.

The retreat concluded with a small group work session in which participants were asked to draw conclusions on how Armstrong, the decision tree, and the Synodical quotes hang together—or do not—according to a chosen case study.¹⁹⁸ I took on the voice of one who is skeptical that an LCMS congregation can be involved in GO!, thereby inviting the participants to work hard together to see how they can support our endeavor in this “commonology.” I wrote the case studies after several retreat sessions in order to ground the small groups in the questions they were trying to address.

The retreat closed with a large group session in which the small groups reported their findings and how they came to their conclusions. This challenged the participants to articulate a “commonology” approach that was adequately supported by Lutheran theology.

The retreat experience needed to take into account what it means to be an andragogical teacher, so I took part as facilitator and fellow learner. Marmon’s words, while related to transformative learning experiences, reflect andragogical goals and the hoped-for type of facilitation for this project.

Unlike many educators in a formal setting, the transformative learning facilitator joins the other adults as learner. Throughout the journey of identifying and questioning long-standing “habits of mind,” adults need an objective and invested person to walk with, ahead of, and behind them. Mentors need to be aware and respectful of the mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and behavioral concerns of their students. This is incarnational teaching at its best...[Transformative Learning Theory] calls for genuine, respectful community; it calls us to be Christian adults together.¹⁹⁹

To ensure that I led the retreat with that mentoring approach, I reviewed aspects of Knowles’ description of an andragogical environment—not only in terms of retreat design but also in how

¹⁹⁸ See Appendix H for the case studies as presented.

¹⁹⁹ Marmon, "Transformative Learning Theory: Connections with Christian Adult Education," 428.

to lead in such an environment. For this review, I used the prepared summary as referenced earlier in this paper.²⁰⁰

Follow-Up Interviews February 2015

Interview participants again as a follow-up three weeks after the retreat, allowing time for reflection and possible further multi-denominational experiences. Participants will be asked how they view the retreat's impact on their perception of their multi-denominational interactions. This interview will also ask the participants to evaluate the retreat's design (including the importance of the pre-interview in determining their needs and the nature of the retreat).

The follow-up interviews were conducted February 4–11, 2015. All of these interviews were held in my office. As with the initial interviews, I prepared an interview guide.²⁰¹

Additional questions for clarification were added in the course of each individual interview in order to tease out what I was hearing in the participant's comments or stories.

The follow-up interviews assumed that the participants were able to continue contributing to this project and the theological formation experience through their observations, opinions, self-reflection, and evaluation. In that sense, the follow-up interview was an informal assessment method more in line with the andragogical theme than a formal method would be. Richard Berlach explains the difference between formal and informal assessment methods and their goals as they relate to seminary theological education. This description can apply to working with this project's laity and discerning the assessment provided by the follow-up interviews.

In the arena of information-gathering techniques, formal methods may include instruments such as multiple choice tests, essays, closed-book examinations, and professional portfolios; whereas more informal methods may include instruments such as naturalistic observations, anecdotal notes, discussions and personal portfolios. The former tend to be more psychometrically oriented, while the latter are based

²⁰⁰ Appendix A.

²⁰¹ Appendix C.

more on obtaining an intuitive ‘feel’ for what the student knows or can exhibit...Each form can evaluate different types of learning. Broadly speaking, formal methods may be utilised to extract cognitively-mediated information-based material (e.g. facts, procedures, and problem-solving ability); whereas informal methods may be used to determine more affectively-based data (e.g. feelings, dispositions, preferences, and likes).²⁰²

The retreat sessions included some formal methods, such as the use of case studies which allowed the author to assess the participants’ problem-solving abilities, The overall retreat experience, however, was much more oriented toward informal methods, such as assessing what the participants learned through observing their discussions. In this same way the follow-up interviews gathered “affectively-based data” to assess the participants’ learning and their evaluation of the project experience.

Given such goals for the follow-up interviews, and the andragogical goals of the entire project, Hill’s explanation of assessing students according to “how” they learned is relevant.

Teachers spend much time measuring *how much* students have learnt, but that is probably the least important aspect. It is far more crucial *how* they learnt it, for this affects estimates of future potential for learning. Similarly *why* did they learn it, what motivated them? This will greatly affect their inclination to use this learning, and learn more, in the future. The rubbish bin test is relevant here. How many students consign their textbooks and project reports to the bin as soon as they have taken their last exam in the subject?²⁰³

This project had a “what they learned” component, but ideally, that was only a by-product of the experience. The actual assessment needed to focus on the “how,” because that is what can be repeated with other groups of adult Christians for whom the congregation seeks growth in their faith and application of doctrine to an engaged life.

²⁰² Richard G. Berlach, "A Christian Approach to Evaluation," *Journal of Christian Education* 45, no. 2 (2002): 23-24, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002196570204500203>. Quoted in Harkness, "Assessment in Theological Education: Do our Theological Values Matter?," 187–88.

²⁰³ B.V. Hill, "Is Assessment Compatible with Agape?," *Journal of Christian Education Papers* 96 (1989): 7-8, (emphasis original). Quoted in Harkness, "Assessment in Theological Education: Do our Theological Values Matter?," 190.

Present Project Summary to Bethel's Board of Elders Upon Completion of the Major Applied Project

Summarize the project's findings as a report to Bethel's Disciple Care Elders about the possible impact of additional theological training for a wider set of Bethel members in support for interaction with other Christians in a person's day-to-day life. At this point, the findings might be helpful pastors in other LCMS congregations.

I plan to present a summary of findings to Bethel's Board of Elders, and potentially in other settings, such as with leaders working in areas related to Bible studies and discipleship. I believe portions of the research will also be valuable for our staff to consider as we see the broader ways we can encourage adults to develop in their engaged faith life. Finally, my Sunday morning adult Bible study has inquired about my research, and I will seek a way to share some of the results with them in order to help more of Bethel-Gurnee's adults appreciate the need for "doctrine as pastoral care" along with the specialized ways of encouraging growth and learning among adults.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROJECT EVALUATED

The research retreat was held at the DeKoven Retreat Center, and our sessions took place in the Taylor Hall Library, a wonderful room in the 1877 mansion that had once housed Racine College (Episcopal). A key president in those early days, Father James DeKoven led the school from 1863 until his death in 1879. The Library still contains some of his original bookshelves and books from his personal collection. Beyond that, the bookshelves are crammed with books from all sorts of backgrounds—religious and not—and it gave the retreat a very historic, “one holy catholic Church” feel.²⁰⁴ This comfortable, warm, inviting, quiet, and historic room symbolizes this project’s outcomes. The participants felt safe and supported as they explored the doctrinal questions they identified as arising from their multi-denominational experiences and which needed to be answered according to our Lutheran theological perspective.

Findings of the Project

The initial interviews leaned toward practical application rather than theoretical conversation or philosophical inquiry about Bethel-Gurnee’s involvement in GO! Participants related their joy at how GO! helped them to practice being in relationship with other Christians in their neighborhoods, while they also sought answers in the “how” and mechanics of developing GO! The common theme that emerged—celebrating our commonalities with other GO! congregations while maintaining our theological distinctives—is a doctrinal issue even if

²⁰⁴ One activity we played during a snack break was trying to find as many Lutheran books as possible scattered among the collection’s wide theological selections.

the participants did not name it as a doctrinal question.

Analysis of Initial Interviews for Discernment of Doctrine to Be Covered in Retreat

Over the course of the initial interviews, I became increasingly aware that the common theme was nowhere near what I expected. I anticipated doctrinal issues of conversion, baptism, Lord's Supper, or other differences to arise as teachings which needed clarification, highlighting the ways in which Bethel-Gurnee's GO! participants needed additional assurance of their orthodox and biblical faith according to Lutheran theology. This never emerged. If participants noted some struggle with those doctrinal differences among the GO! churches, they mentioned them as a sidebar in the initial interview. Overwhelmingly, the common theme among the interviews was: **GO! is important because it works from a place of celebrating that we have much in common with these other Christians rather than "majoring in the minors."**

The participants had many different ways of articulating this "commonology," a term coined by one participant. Other participants said it in these ways:

We're talking to family—God's family.
Working together to be the unity, the church, the Holy Christian Church.
I don't think Bethel needs to go get more Bethel people.
The differences in the churches involved, not anything that [leads] to damnation.
There is way more common ground than uncommon ground.
There's going to be differences, and that's not what we want to emphasize.
Realization: "[Bethel] is not the only group of Christians meeting on Sunday mornings."
More comfortable in my reception of what they're saying, while still trying to be discerning as to what the differences are.
You don't look for attack points; you look for common points and friendship points.²⁰⁵

The participants were articulating a desire to focus on the common faith we share with other Christians in this post-denominational time in the midst of an increasingly post-Christian culture.

²⁰⁵ See Appendix D for the entire list of common theme quotations.

The idea of “friendship points” reflects the sense that we need to circle together all those who hold to Jesus Christ for salvation, while reserving any strong language of rejection to be used for differentiating Christianity from the other religions of the world.

There are a cluster of doctrines related to this common theme articulated by the participants: 1) the doctrine of the Church, 2) the catholicity of the Church, 3) theological understanding of fellowship and ecumenism, the theology of missions, and 4) the necessity of antitheses in framing doctrines. First, the theme pointed to the need to study the doctrine of the Church. How does celebrating a common faith with other Christians mesh with the Augsburg Confession definition of the Church (AC VII) as “the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments administered according to the gospel”?²⁰⁶ In the participants’ responses, there is resonance with the Smalcald Articles’ statement: “God be praised, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is: holy believers and ‘the little sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd’” (SA 12). The participants desired to emphasize how the congregations are all part of the Church.²⁰⁷

Second, the theme affirmed the Church as one universal Church. As the Confessors affirmed, the Lutheran Church is part of the catholic faith (AC I; FC Ep. 3). On the other hand, the participants were saddened by the continuing divisions among the denominations, so the common theme had to take into account the theological basis for continuing separations among different confessions.

These controversies are not merely misunderstandings or semantic arguments, where someone might think that one group had not sufficiently grasped what the other group was trying to say or that the tensions were based upon only a few specific words of relatively little consequence. Rather, these controversies deal with important and

²⁰⁶ All Lutheran Confessions quotes are from Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

²⁰⁷ See also AC Ap. VII and VIII, 5-6; LC Creed, Third Article, 51-52.

significant matters, and they are of such a nature that the positions of the erring party neither could nor should be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused or defended (FC, SD art. 0, para. 9).

Amidst the sadness over the divisions among the people of Christ, how do we understand the necessity of those divisions?

Third, this led to studying the teachings on fellowship,²⁰⁸ inter-Christian relationships,²⁰⁹ and ecumenism.²¹⁰ This project, in working with the participants' common theme, had to acknowledge what the LCMS has concluded on these matters and how or whether the GO! experience was addressed by those theological statements.

Fourth, the conversation related to the theology of missions. As will be noted in the next section of this chapter, I chose John Armstrong's book *Your Church is Too Small* as part of the retreat conversation.²¹¹ Armstrong coined the term "missional-ecumenism" to describe the Church working together locally in order to reach others with the Gospel. This term does not appear in the Confessions or other Lutheran theological statements. However, because Armstrong means to combine the sense of the one holy, catholic Church (ecumenism) with the focus on bringing the Gospel to the world right around us (missional), this led the conversation into the theology of missions.²¹²

Fifth, in distinguishing between the doctrines of the denominations, the retreat needed to

²⁰⁸ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981).

²⁰⁹ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1991).

²¹⁰ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism: With Application for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1974).

²¹¹ Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small: Why Unity in Christ's Mission is Vital to the Future of the Church*.

²¹² Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009). See also Appendix F and the sources for the retreat activity, "Room of Quotes."

acknowledge the necessity of antitheses. Anathemas are out of fashion and appear to threaten the commonality the participants celebrated in their GO! experiences. Nevertheless, doctrinal framing still requires being able to say *sic et non*, “this and not this.” Part of this necessity came in stating that GO! Together did not imply that the congregations were in agreement in all things, as carefully articulated in the Formula of Concord: “We wanted to make a clear, lucid, decisive explanation so that all may see that we are not deceitfully covering up and papering over differences and simply giving the appearance of unity” (FC SD XII, 5). On the other hand, divisions are not created for divisions’ sake as stated in the Formula: “...we must steadfastly maintain the distinction between unnecessary, useless quarrels and disputes that are necessary” (FC SD art. 0, para. 15; cf. para. 14–20). The theological conversations with the project participants needed to guide them into how to maintain that distinction.

To summarize this cluster of doctrines, this paper will use the term “commonology”—which comes from one participant’s interview but came to be used at the retreat among all the participants. This theme took me by surprise in how much it appeared across the board through the 12 participants. There is not much in the way of trying to differentiate between how GO! Group participants versus GO! Intensive participants spoke of this commonness. Neither is there reason to break out participants’ quotes related to this “commonology” according to length of membership, length of being Lutheran, age, gender, or role in the congregation. Instead, what emerged was a common theme in the interviews regarding the commonness of faith among the Christians that the Bethel-Gurnee people had come to know through GO!

Because this theme surprised me, I had not even anticipated how to design a retreat experience to explore this “commonology.” I had anticipated that GO! would lead to conversations about the problems facing Lutherans who are trying to participate in a process that

crosses denominational and theological boundaries (e.g.: infant baptism, practice of the Lord's Supper, pulpit-and-altar fellowship, and conversion). The research participants, though, did not focus on the problems in the initial interviews; they celebrated the common core of faith they found that they shared with neighboring Christians.

The retreat needed to be designed to maintain this celebration and joy that the participants felt regarding this “commonology” in GO! while also challenging the participants on the extent to which this lines up with our theology. A central question for the retreat was: “How do we build on this celebration of common Christian faith in GO! in a way that is both Scriptural and in agreement with our theological position?”

The initial interviews, followed by comments made at the retreat, showed that while the participants all held this “commonology” perspective to greater or less extent, they also were nagged by doubts as to how this would square with other Bethel members or the LCMS' official position. For instance, in this quote from an initial interview, notice the hesitancies and nervousness to express an opinion about “commonology”:

Honestly, there is way more common ground than there is uncommon ground. And the uncommon ground, portions of it, at least in my opinion—and other people may take offense at this; you, [Pastor,] may take offense at this—but the things that aren't common are more of the little things, the little nuances in denominations, not the big [doctrines], Jesus is Savior, grace of God. That's the common ground. We can talk about whether somebody believes that you need to be baptized again later on down the line. In my opinion, and again this is probably going to get me in trouble, but in my personal opinion, if that baptism brings them to Christ and that...Do I believe that their first bath and that just took care that? Yep, I do. But if that baptism brings them back to the big things, then have at it.

This interviewee was very confident in his GO! experience and the value of working together with Christians in his neighborhood from other congregations, but comments like “people may take offense at this” almost were said while ducking his head, waiting for the church roof to fall on him. Participants wanted to celebrate what they had experienced in GO! relationships but also

were revealing a certain level of fear that what they were pursuing would not be allowed by their church body. Therefore, the doctrinal content offered in the retreat needed to help us articulate our opinions, explanations, and positions about celebrating “commonology” in conjunction with our Lutheran theology.

The tension that the participants expressed between celebrating “commonology” and maintaining our Lutheran doctrine can also be seen in comments made during the first session of the retreat. Two participants told the story of how I first approached the Elders with the invitation we had received from the Gurnee churches to participate in GO!

Participant A: You had some reservations about this, you were skeptical, but you were willing to do it. I thought it was a pretty good idea, but I think I even liked it more than...you weren't really selling us.

Participant B: You were bringing it to our attention. You said you were willing to attend their meetings, but we should wait and see.

Participant A: We will participate until we can't anymore. At some point they're gonna say something that we can't go along with, and then we'll have to drop out.

These two participants, who had been Elders at the time of our entry into GO!, benefited from having a “doctrine as pastoral care” where they could explore for themselves—alongside their pastor—whether there is a way in which our Lutheran theology can celebrate the commonology experienced in GO!

Another participant experienced the timidity of our GO! involvement through the Sunday morning adult Bible study which I led around the time of asking our congregation members to be involved in GO! groups. She recounted this observation in the first session at the retreat.

I remember in Bible class that you referred to this group at times, but you were very carefully telling us the Lutheran doctrines and where these different churches stood and what they believed, and it was like you were training us to think about these things and see similarities with other people's beliefs but our focus was for our faith in Christ. And if that didn't come out, then there was more of a break. But as long as it centered on Christ and our dependence on Him. I remember looking at that and

thinking, “This was written so much clearer than when I was in school.” You’re good at that.

This participant’s experience on Sunday morning shows again the need to be addressed in a “doctrine as pastoral care” retreat: reflection on discerning theological distinctives even while acknowledging the “commonology.”

Research for Doctrine to be Learned at Retreat

In order to have the retreat participants explore the doctrinal considerations behind focusing on “commonology,” I researched different resources that advocated a “majoring in the majors” approach in a post-denominational world while also seeking an array of sources from the LCMS that would reveal relevant perspectives to our work with Christians from other denominations. Additionally, a third set of resources for the participants was some of the earlier writing I had done on the decision process regarding Bethel-Gurnee’s involvement in GO! These voices would be the content of the retreat—the “library” we would have at our fingertips as we explored this question.

For the multi-denominational approach in a post-denominational world, I turned to John Armstong, founder and director of the ACT3 Network. ACT3 developed out of Armstong’s approach a few decades ago in reaching out to build a network of congregations while he was a pastor in Wheaton, Illinois. His missional-ecumenism has been part of conversations that led to networks like ChristTogether—which began in Lake County, Illinois, brought the Gurnee pastors into closer relationship, and eventually launched GO! Together.²¹³ As GO! developed, Armstrong invited the Gurnee pastors to share our story at one of his network gatherings in

²¹³ “ACT3 is a network of relational partnerships between churches, missions and leaders. We’re inspired by the spirit of missional-ecumenism: the idea that unity among the whole church is central to spreading Christ’s kingdom to the ends of the earth. Jesus prayed specifically for our oneness (John 17:20-24) and said that, “the people of this world will believe that you sent me” when they see Christians living the kind of mission that grows out of relational unity,” goal statement from <http://act3network.com>. Accessed July 29, 2015.

February 2013; Dan Weyerhaeuser of Lakeland Church and I presented our history and concept of work together.

Armstrong wrote on the topic of missional-ecumenism in his 2010 book, *Your Church Is Too Small: Why Unity in Christ's Mission is Vital to the Future of the Church*. An early statement in the book summarizes well the observation that Armstrong had made and wanted to explore in the book:

I have come to believe, in the context of an ever-growing post-denominationalism in an emerging post-Christendom culture, that significant numbers of [Christians] are discovering how we share a common ancient faith that is greater than all of our historical and personal differences.²¹⁴

Armstrong presses this observation forward by connecting it to the past (New Testament and early Church writings). He also challenges certain concepts that have been central to ecumenical discussions. For instance, when considering whether “unanimity” truly needs to be the goal, Armstrong says:

The issue of unanimity comes down to this: Can there be real disciples who understand one or more points of doctrine in ways that appear contrary to your tradition? I am convinced that a truly evangelical approach—one solidly rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ (*kerygma*)—can endure different understandings on many doctrinal issues.²¹⁵

Armstrong’s writings would help this project’s participants flesh out what they had said in the initial interviews about wanting to celebrate “commonology” with other Christians even while acknowledging each other’s distinctives. Essentially, Armstrong’s book was the voice at the retreat to expound on the informal motto of the GO! Together pastors: “A win for one church (small c) is a win for the one Church (big C).”

From there, I also needed to have voices from the LCMS. In the first iteration of this Major

²¹⁴ Armstrong, *Your Church is Too Small: Why Unity in Christ's Mission is Vital to the Future of the Church*, 14, emphasis original.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

Applied Project, I did a lot of research into the Synod’s ecumenical positions, past efforts at working with other Christians, and constitutional documents and history regarding ecumenism. That research had not yielded a single book or source that could act as a counterpoint or conversation partner with Armstrong, so I culled through my sources and found a series of quotations that would speak into our retreat’s exploration. The participants would be able to read, review, and utilize these quotations during the retreat, and the original sources would be available in the event that participants wanted to see the context of the quote. The sources included official Synodical documents, symposium presentations, textbooks, and journal articles.²¹⁶

The final piece of retreat content came from my initial MAP research into how LCMS Christians might faithfully participate in a multi-denominational outreach effort. This research was developed as a paper for a class, DM-900: Pastoral Theology. The paper, “Pastoral Care for Christians Living in an Intersecting Faiths and Multi-denominational Context,” included three “Principles of GO! (Multi-denominational) Involvement”:

- 1) **multi-denominational not ecumenical**
celebrating commonalities with other Christians without disregarding distinctives
- 2) **purposeful multi-denominationalism**
cooperation with other denominations for a Gospel-centric purpose rather than only toward unity for unity’s sake
- 3) **confessional not confessionalistic**
celebrating the distinctives of Lutheran theology without disregarding commonalities with other Christians.²¹⁷

These principles aimed at deciphering a middle way—cooperating with other Christians without

²¹⁶ See Appendix F.

²¹⁷ *Confessionalistic*: In a 1968 issue of *Concordia Theological Monthly*, John Groh noted that some were using the term “‘confessionalism’ for the ‘legalistic expression of the confessionality of the church’” wherein “such ‘exaggerated confessionalism’ displaces God in favor of the confessional system” (John E. Groh, “Interaction: Ecumenism and Confessionalism,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39, no. 3 (1968): 147). See below in Chapter 6, A, “Contributions for the Broader Ministry,” for more explanation on “confessional not confessionalistic.”

compromising our theology, acknowledging that the old category of ecumenism might not adequately describe what missional-ecumenical churches were attempting to do. For this paper I produced a decision tree to consider the possible avenues and outcomes related to Bethel-Gurnee being invited to be part of GO! Together.²¹⁸ The decision tree helped elucidate the pitfalls—not just the dangers of cooperation with non-Lutherans but also the potential negative outcomes of refusing to participate in a multi-denominational, local outreach effort.

These principles and decision tree were the third portion of retreat content, wherein I could outline for the participants the questions I had been exploring for the last few years while inviting them into the process of discerning that middle way. The retreat asked the participants to bring their experience in GO! along with their intellectual, cooperative work during the retreat to address the retreat’s question: “How do we build on this celebration of common Christian faith in GO! in a way that is both Scriptural and in agreement with our theological position?”

Analysis

This project’s findings can be analyzed overall according to the original statement from Chapter 2 regarding “doctrine as pastoral care”: **By attending to doctrine as pastoral care, our participants in GO! will be encouraged to grow spiritually from those GO! experiences. They are empowered through an invitation into a process that leads to transformation through self-reflection on our theology, strengthened in their resolve to hold this as our confession, and resourced to decipher other theological perspectives and articulate their own convictions.**

We will break down this statement into three sub-sections to analyze whether these hoped-for elements were present in the participants’ experience.

²¹⁸ See Appendix G.

- Empowered through an invitation into a process that leads to transformation through self-reflection on our theology.
- Strengthened in their resolve to hold to our Lutheran confession.
- Resourced to decipher other theological perspectives and articulate their own convictions.

The retreat aimed at these elements by asking the participants—and me, as co-participant—to lay their impression of “commonology” alongside Bethel’s commitment to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod theology and practice. In terms of “doctrine as pastoral care,” the retreat had to explore sources on the doctrine of the Church and theology of missions. The participants needed doctrinally sound pastoral care that would support their celebration of “commonology” while being led into a discovery process to articulate our distinctive theology. The catechetical experience would be a sapiential, spiritual growth experience. Based on the follow-up interviews, the participants generally agreed that the retreat—along with the pre- and post-retreat interviews—contributed to an overall stimulating, supportive, spiritual growth experience. In each section, we will note where some participants expressed feelings that would indicate the project was not successful in that area, and whether that difference can be attributed to any observable factors. The exceptions to this conclusion were a minority, and these will be analyzed under each sub-section.

Empowered Through an Invitation Into a Process That Leads to Transformation Through Self-reflection on Our Theology

The literature review of Charry, along with Farley and others, led to a conclusion that transformation and renewal are not apparent without self-reflection—intentionally seeing how God has been at work to challenge, change, and grow one’s understanding of who God is and who He has made us to be. This project created space for such reflection toward transformation. **This project achieved an outcome whereby many of the participants reported feeling empowered for theological self-reflection. They reported this empowerment came through**

the project design and the retreat’s reflective nature. However, a few participants also spoke about their remaining concern that they were not intellectually able to achieve the theological reflection in the process. In relation to this portion of the goal statement, positively or negatively, there does not appear to be a significant difference seen between those in GO! Groups and those in the GO! Intensive.

The empowerment for theological self-reflection came, in part, due to the design of the project. The design emphasized the participants’ contribution by letting the initial interviews determine the retreat topic. When asked, “How important was it to you that the pre-retreat interviews helped shape what we focused on at the retreat?” participants generally agreed that this was significant for their learning. Here are comments from two different participants:

- I think you said you didn’t think this [topic/theme] was going to come out at the interviews, what did come out. So if you had not interviewed us, you probably would have gone in the direction you thought we should have gone and then we would have spent a day and a half discussing something that maybe wasn’t as important as we talked about.
- I think we would have had a very different experience if you would have just gone with your gut and not had those pre-retreat conversations. You would have taken us down a path, and everybody would have kind of looked and said, “What?!? [laughs] There wasn’t a whole lot of conflict here. That’s not what we talked about mostly.” I think that would have been awkward so I’m glad you did the pre-retreat conversations.

The pre-interviews, then, were an important part of fulfilling the goal of empowering the participants for theological reflection—seeing how their input shaped what we explored together.

Participants also talked about how the retreat led them in a method of theological self-reflection. The exercise of the retreat built their confidence about their ability to engage topics theologically in the future. One participant said:

You know, I feel that this was a tremendous tool and very empowering to help people understand that you can get to the answers to address any questions that you may encounter. I think that that’s kind of a phobia perhaps that a lot of people have about talking about Christianity, in becoming involved with church. So I think it kind of

showed me there are tremendous tools, [so] that no one should ever feel that they can't get the answers. I think still the biggest question that remains in my mind is that you can get to the answers by virtue of the process that we used, but it's very much guided.

Another participant, in reflecting on whether a retreat like this one would have been important to attend prior to being involved in GO!, said, "I don't think that would have changed our group."

Instead, this participant saw the impact—the empowerment—of the retreat on future opportunities to lead a multi-denominational group.

If we did decide to start our own group, that would help my husband and [me]. It's something we talked about in being a new neighborhood. Is that something we could start here? But we weren't sure because [our group hosts] are so strong and knowledgeable in their faith, and so it's easy to have them as leaders. So [my husband] and I were like, "I don't know...if we know enough to branch out and do that for our current neighborhood." [The retreat] kinda helped. It clarified some of the different things about our own faith. We're always learning exactly what it means to be Lutheran. We're still learning; we're always going to be. So that helped; the retreat helped us see some different things.

This works against the concerns researched earlier in this paper that the laity feel that theological study is solely for the clergy. Instead, this project's design developed the participants in their confidence for studying doctrine.

Methodologically, such a process relies on andragogical principles, especially Knowles' "self-directed" principle. The participants were drawn into this empowerment for self-reflection early on by introducing the initial interview saying that my research was intending to see how best to support Bethel people involved with GO! or other multi-denominational experiences. The initial interview questions were drawing the participants into discovering that "best support" with me. Additionally, the interview questions were open-ended regarding their experiences, which signaled that I was not arriving with pre-conceived notions of what they needed but rather sought their expertise as those who had gone through GO! This not only set up an andragogical element, but also led to inviting the participants into self-reflection on our theology for the sake of serving

others in our congregation.

Even the invitation itself—asking the participants to be part of the theological study and reflection—turned out to be essential for empowering the participants. For instance, one follow-up interview question asked what learning exercise at the retreat proved to be most helpful. One person said it was the decision tree (Appendix G), which showed the multiple paths Bethel could have gone down when invited to be part of GO!

I liked how thoroughly you thought things through. That it wasn't just something like, "Well, I always wanted to get together with a group," but instead, "What are my guidelines?"....I just appreciated knowing that it wasn't just something you were hoping to get involved in as soon as you came here. It wasn't like a pre-planned thing, it was something that God used you, and you came at the time he wanted you here.

The decision tree exercise opened up the GO! process to the participants for their input which this participant "appreciated," because she was empowered to reflect on it as well and contribute to the research, reflection, and direction going forward.

Concerns Raised Over Academic Level of Retreat

There was a concern for some of the participants that the retreat was too heavily weighted toward scholarly matters. One participant expressed his own sense of inadequacy which was not necessarily relieved by the retreat.

It's no surprise to me that a lot of people are much better educated than I am in religion. You know, I've taken a lot of years off, and I have not been a student. I'm a believer, but I'm not a student. I can see that just the inherent knowledge of so many is refreshing. I don't know where I would be, for example, on a scale of understanding in Christianity. But it tells me what I think I know, and that I'm low on the curve.

The lack of self-confidence shown here, though, was not unique in his answer to this question, but rather related to his own life experience and situation. Despite his misgivings, he reported that the GO! experience (he was in the Intensive) and the retreat have helped him continue to

focus on his mission field—his sphere of influence where he might have an impact on others in their faith.

Participants who made comments about a feeling of inadequacy were both those in GO! Groups and those in the GO! Intensive. There does not appear to be any correlation between academic level concern and the length of membership at Bethel or number of years as a Lutheran.

Another participant who was hesitant about his intellectual abilities in terms of theology came to realize through the experience that an element of empowerment comes in feeling the freedom to admit one's own lack of knowledge.

I would say sometimes I don't think of myself as being real biblically, scholarly type of thing, and that's something that holds me back. But then I'm beginning to realize more—and even how the retreat helped—that I don't necessarily have to have all the answers. I can say that I don't know, or that I don't understand; and that's all right. And it's not anything that shows a weakness in my faith, but just that I know I have that faith.

As much as the retreat helped empower the participants for theological reflection, the open conversation and group community strengthened people in their confidence to say, “I don't know” without fearing that it meant they were inadequate.

So then, while some talked about the retreat as too academic, others found that the retreat maintained a balance between doctrine and personal experience. This can be seen in representative comments from the follow-up interviews with two different individuals:

- It was more heavily on the doctrine than I was expecting....I thought we were going to talk about, “Hey, this is what our group did.” So it was more heavily focused on [doctrine], but once I understood that was the purpose, more of the focus of the retreat, that was fine. I thought the balance between doctrine and personal experience was fine. When we started going down the personal experience route for the various groups, it wasn't like it was cut off and said, “Nope. Cut.” I didn't think that as an issue.
- I don't think it was too heavy either way. I feel like we were able to share our experiences as well as learn new things. I thought it was a good balance.

One other participant, in reflecting on the intensity of the study and pacing of the retreat, acknowledged what was necessary in order to lead the group toward self-reflection:

If you didn't [push the group], we would have all sat around there and waited for you to lead the group.... You made us come to the decisions and then provided guidance when we were off track.

This meant the pacing of the retreat and intensity of the study were an important part of yielding an outcome of empowered participants.

Conclusion—and a Word on Location for Reflection

Inviting people into the process of research helped them reflect theologically, but that invitation into research and reflection required more encouragement for some. The difference in level of encouragement, though, does not appear to be related to the kind of GO! experience they had had. In considering this first aspect of the goal statement, “empowerment... transformation through self-reflection on theology,” this project shows that “transformation through self-reflection” does work as a process for “doctrine as pastoral care.”

One final aspect of the project design appears to have been related to empowerment for theological reflection: the retreat location. At least two participants mentioned specifically how meeting at the DeKoven Center contributed to their reflective engagement and how they felt cared for spiritually. These participants said:

Participant C: I think one of the things that had something to do with was the location itself. Had we been in a new, modern building; in a classroom type of setting with stainless steel and windows and lots sunlight, I don't know if I would have had that same feeling. So, I think that the environment—the classical, the older, more kind of reflective, even as you walked around the building and you looked at all the things from the 1860's—it kind of made you reflect and think about things differently than if you were around and looked at big shiny art sculptures or something. So it wasn't a place necessarily to go to be creative as much as you needed to be reflective. So I thought it was a very good choice of a place.

Participant D: I think the location was conducive to [feeling spiritually cared for]. I really did. Being surrounded by, I mean that library—you couldn't have picked a better spot for the conversations that we were having. You would walk down the wall, and you'd go, "All of these people, all these Christians; mostly Christians" [who were authors of these books]. There is some differences, but they're all in this library. I thought that that was really cool. And, I don't know if you did that on purpose; my guess is no. But [pointing to the sky] somebody did it on purpose. That was cool.

So, then, beyond all of the attention to designing a retreat experience that invited the participants into self-reflection on theology, the tangible aspects of the location lent much to developing that environment. As the one participant said, that was not *my* design; the Lord is the One who designs and empowers our spiritual reflection.

Strengthened in Their Resolve to Hold This as Our Confession

The pastoral care advocated in this project has been "confessional not confessionalistic," wherein we celebrate the distinctives of Lutheran theology while acknowledging the commonalities we have with other Christians. This project aimed to trust that "empowerment for theological self-reflection" would help our laity be strengthened in their resolve to hold to our Lutheran theology. **Considering what was said by the participants at the retreat and in the follow-up interviews, many did experience this strengthening of their Lutheran confession through this project. However, as will be seen in this section, it did not prove to be the case for every participant, and those who spoke more robustly of being strengthened may tend to be those who were in GO! Groups. Additionally, participants revealed that some of the strengthening came from outside the scope of this project through the ongoing opportunities for study and conversation in the congregation.**

At the retreat itself, and later in the follow-up interviews, individuals reported being strengthened in their doctrinal commitment through their engagement with theological reflection. These participants' comments reflect that they experienced "doctrine as pastoral care" through

this project which allowed them to celebrate our own distinctives while honoring the commonology that had become an important aspect of their GO! experience.

In relation to the value of reflecting on our theology and how that lines up with the other GO! congregations, one participant said:

It's very important for us, especially if we're with other people [who are not Lutheran], because then we know where our church stands and we feel stronger in what we believe and what the Bible says. And it helps build up our faith.

In the initial interview, this participant did not see herself capable to articulate her beliefs and revealed a certain nervousness about "getting things right" which holds her back. Yet, toward the end of the retreat she was able to see the ways she was being strengthened to hold onto her beliefs.

Many of the other participants described similar benefits from the retreat experience in strengthening them in their Lutheran theology. In the follow-up interview, one participant said:

[The retreat] clarified some of the different things with our own faith. We're always learning exactly what it means to be Lutheran. We're still learning. We're always going to be, so that helped. I think the Retreat helped to see some differences....

This participant had been the one who also expressed that she was more confident after the retreat about trying to start a multi-denominational group in her new neighborhood. From her comments, it seems that part of the confidence comes from clarifying our Lutheran beliefs, but also from the invitation to continually learn.

Long-term Relationships with Other Christians Strengthen One's Resolve

The above comments from those who felt strengthened by this project's process had all, except for the first one mentioned in this section, been a part of a GO! neighborhood group.

Through their GO! Group, they had multiple years of relationships with other Christians in their neighborhood. **One might assume that the longer people are in a multi-denominational**

group, the less committed they are to the distinctives of their own theology. Contrary to that assumption, these participants—who have valued their multi-denominational experiences and count other group members as friends—are even stronger than they were before GO! in their commitment to the Lutheran Church and its theology.

When teaching laity to compare Christian theologies, the pastor might argue from a Lutheran perspective against a straw man representing other denominational teachings. I speculate that a straw man in comparative theology conversations can easily be dismissed by laity as only an abstraction and having little to do with their life among the Christians in their neighborhood and daily interactions. Those laity can then more easily conclude that careful theological distinctions are not actually significant enough to warrant concern.

Counter to this, the participants here who were in GO! Groups built friendships and had long-term conversations across denominational lines. Those participants' theological reflection, then, were not set up against a straw man but rather the actual people whom they knew, heard confess Christ, and also speak of the Christian faith in ways which may differ from our Lutheran articulation. The distinctives became personal and important in those relationships. Bethel-Gurnee members were seeking to know why we say the things about God the way we say them and also discern the ways we can affirm what other Christians say. The engaged relationships drove these participants deeper into their Lutheran theology rather than dismissing the distinctions or drifting unaware over to another theological perspective.

Strengthening as Lutheran and Not Drifting Away to Another Congregation

Two participants who had served as leaders in the congregation both had a number of thoughts about how the retreat helped them feel even more confident that Bethel's involvement in GO! has not compromised our own doctrine. Their thoughts also contradict the fear that

interacting with other congregations might cause some members to leave and join those other congregations. Rather, these two participants, among others, spoke about how much the GO! experience had led them to celebrate their Lutheran commitment even more.

One of these participants, serving as a congregational leader, spoke of the perspective he had gained through the theological reflection of the retreat, so that he was more confident as a leader to continue guiding Bethel-Gurnee in GO! involvement. He said:

It reassured me that we're not belittling or taking a little less [of a] stance on what we believe, our approach on doctrines; and that we're focusing on the common core of things that we do agree on.

He also affirmed how the retreat strengthened his personal resolve to be Lutheran, even though that had not been his Christian background prior to his marriage.

[The retreat] still reinforced my belief. I was not raised Lutheran. I came to the Lutheran church with [my wife]; but now I have a choice. I don't have to go to a Lutheran church; I can go to other churches. But I believe the Lutheran church is the clearest and most accurate interpretation of the Scriptures and salvation, and I wouldn't consider any other church to attend. I believe that now, ever since I've become a member and gone through the Confirmation classes and continue up to this point. But then participating with other churches, that kind of gives you an appreciation for your church and the Lutherans.

Along these same lines, the other participant talked about how participating in GO! and this research project sent him to do more study of Lutheran theology. He shared this story at the retreat:

I was relatively new to the LCMS when I was asked to participate in this, and I was relatively new to exploring my faith....I had walked away from the Church for a long time, and there was a risk in Pastor asking me to do this that I would go out there and find something I really liked. It could have been a flashy light over here, or a nice program that I heard about over here, that could have been the difference. Now, that's not what happened. What actually happened was that I dug in deeper into what LCMS was about and learned more about the doctrine and why we believe the way we did.

As opposed to the fear of people drifting away and joining a different congregation and denomination, these two participants were seeing the interaction with other denominations as

leading them to celebrate their Lutheran theology. I believe their perspective articulates what others also experienced, so that it can be said that this project led to strengthening of commitment to Lutheran theology.

Other Factors in Strengthening of Theological Resolve

From the story the second participant told about having “dug in deeper” to understand our theology, we can infer that the strengthening may not have been a result only of participating in this research project. The same participant talked about the importance of the other things taking place in the congregation concurrently with getting involved in GO!, such as Sunday morning Bible studies using *The Lutheran Difference*, reviewing the catechism, and comparing Lutheran theology to other theological systems.

In the follow-up interview when asked whether he would recommend a similar retreat for others at Bethel considering involvement in a multi-denominational group, this participant said:

If [someone] were to just go [into retreat first] and you’d start talking about the differences and doctrine, and how we approach these differences and what our folks say about it, if I would have gotten that up front, I think if I would have been even more nervous about [being part of GO!]. I like the way it was handled. It was [first] strengthen our understanding of our core doctrine and our faith—which you did in both sermons and Sunday School. Then let us go [be part of a GO! Group], and then ask about it. If you wanted to get to some of the folks halfway through, I don’t see that would be an issue. I don’t think I would do [the retreat] up front.

Therefore, the strengthening of theological conviction may have come about through a wider experience in the congregation than just what this project set out to observe.

“Made Things Much More Muddy”: When Participants Were Not Strengthened

While that participant spoke of being strengthened in his resolve to hold to his Lutheran confession, he cautions that such a theological reflection retreat should not be held too soon in the process for GO! participants. This reflects another clarification that came from this project:

for people who are going to participate in a multi-denominational group, front-loading the process with a retreat such as the one in this project may be more detrimental to the strength of their theological resolve. Multiple participants shared such a concern during the follow-up interviews.

This can be seen most clearly through extended comments from one participant—a leader at Bethel-Gurnee and a GO! Intensive participant. This participant saw the retreat as having made things less clear for him about how to maintain a distinctive theology in a multi-denominational context and even how he as a leader in the congregation can necessarily say that Bethel is making the right decision in being part of GO!

The Retreat made things much more muddy for me. So nothing was clarified for me as a result of the Retreat. And I talked a little bit in our Elder Meeting, [how] I had gone on the Retreat, and I couldn't even make up my mind at the end of the Retreat whether [our GO! participation] was the right thing to do or not, because you hear all of these opinions. So within the LCMS—I think you talked a little bit about this—we're a Synod which means come together. And you've got all these people within the LCMS who have these different viewpoints, and it's like, "Alright, we're not together. We're not all of one mind on this. It's very clear." So that was kind of a struggle for me, I think. And yet everyone [at the Retreat] seemed to be of the mind that we should be doing this; we should engage with Christians in other denominations. So that was kind of hard to reconcile for me, I think, a little.

This participant had not grown up Lutheran, so he had also talked about his comfort level in talking to people from other congregations at his table in the GO! Intensive classes. He understood their language, the ways they expressed their faith. Yet, this participant is an Elder at Bethel and very much committed to Bethel's LCMS membership. He spoke of his desire to celebrate commonalities with other GO! congregations, but he also felt conflicted about whether we were being faithful to the Synod.

I could see when we would go through all the different authors that we read, I could see their viewpoints, and why they would say that we shouldn't be doing this. And then I could see the other ones that would say why we should be doing it. And I'm in the middle, and I don't know what to decide at this point. And I know how I kind of

personally feel, but I'm not sure what's right. So that's what I'm kind of stuck with. It's a real struggle....It certainly seems like there's some kind of struggle within the...or conflict, or I don't know what, discussions within the LCMS about this.

Notice that part of the struggle also came from realizing that the voices in the LCMS are not necessarily in agreement on how to approach matters of working with other denominations. The LCMS voices we listened to in the DeKoven Library sometimes celebrated the confession of Christ that we share with other Christians across denominations, geography, and generations. While this resonated with this participant's convictions, he also felt compelled to ensure that we heed the warnings about when a congregation's multi-denominational engagement might violate our theological confession.

This participant's struggle may also raise up the concern that the method of using shorter quotes from many LCMS sources may have limited his ability to understand the arguments in context. Charry's work points to seeing theological arguments in the flow and form of theological texts and how the overall design of the writer's document works to encourage faith formation. The retreat may have been better served in limiting the number of sources for considering Lutheran theology, so that the texts could have their full arguments heard and their form play a role in the conversation.

This participant could not see a clear-cut answer on these questions. His struggle might be said to reflect Chapter 2's conclusion regarding "doctrine as pastoral care," which recognizes that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. As was said, "difficult, unique, complicated, localized, time-bound circumstances call for thoughtful, individualized decisions which are nonetheless built upon the timeless theology we have received through Scripture." Because there are no quick answers, the strengthening of resolve to hold to a Lutheran confession can only come through engaged theological reflection. Leaders need such "doctrine as pastoral care" as they consider the unique questions that congregations and Christians face in how to support

others who confess Christ in our post-denominational landscape.

Conclusion

It is my conclusion that those who take part in a GO! group and spend a significant amount of time with those other Christians (at least nine months covering the original training materials together) will be more likely to be strengthened in their Lutheran theology through the overall experience. A retreat, such as the one in this project, may be a significant contributor to that strengthening, but group participants seem prepped to cull theological strengthening from other opportunities like sermons and Bible studies. Long-term relationships with Christians from other denominations seem to help people become comfortable in their own skin, as opposed to short-term experiences like the GO! Intensive.

1. Resourced to Decipher Other Theological Perspectives and Articulate Their Own Convictions.

In analyzing the findings of this project, it has been shown to generally have empowered theological reflection which leads to strengthening in resolve to hold to a Lutheran confession.

The participants also spoke of having been resourced through this project to decipher other theological perspectives and articulate their own convictions. For this third and final sub-section of analysis, we consider what the participants identified as having resourced their theological discernment and articulation. **This resourcing came through two major factors: challenging the participants to find support for their “commonology” perspective (while also giving them a time and opportunity to research that support) and presenting the background story, information, and decision process that went into GO! Together. Among the findings on this element, there is no evidence of any difference between those who were in GO! Groups and those in the Intensive.**

In answer to the follow-up interview question about whether the retreat gave her more confidence in speaking from a Lutheran perspective, one participant said:

Before I would just, not hide, but I would keep quiet on the topic and say, “Yes, we believe in Jesus; that’s our central belief.” But probably I wouldn’t elaborate any more. I don’t know if I would still, but at least now maybe I have more knowledge on how to approach it.

Her comment brings out the sense of being resourced in a very practical way, imagining herself in her GO! group and feeling more able to speak about how our church has come to its theological conclusions. While her comment certainly shows that she felt resourced by the project, she did not point to what specifically gave her that sense of being able to speak up on a theological topic in her GO! Group. In order to make her experience a repeatable experience, further analysis of comments from other participants was necessary to see how this resourcing was achieved.

Resourcing through Being Challenged to Support One’s Perspective

The previous sub-section section included extensive quotes from the participant who found that the retreat made things more “muddy” for him regarding Bethel’s involvement and how to apply our Lutheran theology. This same participant, though, recognized that the retreat pushed the participants beyond an easy answer as to whether we join a multi-denominational effort. Instead, the retreat pressed participants to support their reasons from Scripture and doctrine. This participant offers multiple comments in this vein from the follow-up interview:

[The retreat] was more thought-provoking, I think, about kind of how do we handle this, why are we doing this, why shouldn’t we be doing this, why should we be doing this. That aspect....At the beginning [of the retreat] it seemed like this was clear cut; it’s like we’re all on the same page [in being part of GO!]. This is great, this if fine and that’s that. We’re done. And then it’s like, “Ok, not everybody thinks this way.”

I thought it was scripturally sound and based. And I think that’s where the struggle came from. We have these kind of like warm, fuzzy feelings about this, so then,

“Alright, let’s look at Scripture. We can’t just have warm, fuzzy feelings.” We need to be based in this, and we have to understand that maybe not all the quotes that we put up there [from our interviews] were doctrinally sound....

This participant’s comments show that issuing a challenge to the group—pressing them to do research—was itself a resource to the people in order for them to decipher theological positions and articulate our beliefs. That aspect of resourcing seems related to the comment shared earlier in relation to the retreat’s balance between doctrinal study and spiritual growth:

If you didn’t [push the group], we would have all sat around there and waited for you to lead the group.... You made us come to the decisions and then provided guidance when we were off track.

“Doctrine as pastoral care” happens in this challenge to study, because now the laity are supported in celebrating the wisdom of God’s Word that comes to us through sapiential catechesis. The question of whether the “commonology” interview quotes were all scripturally or doctrinally sound was an opportunity for the participants to learn for themselves how to speak well theologically about our GO! experience.

Background Information as the Resource

Multiple participants in the follow-up interviews expressed the way in which the GO! story, background information, and decision process enabled them to consider the role which doctrine plays in our GO! involvement. The challenge to study came with the opening of the “library” from which the participants could gather ways of seeing and speaking about Bethel-Gurnee’s decision through doctrinal lens.

One participant found herself buoyed by the fact that the group was supplied with background information on the study and work that went into making decisions about how the GO! churches were going to work together.

It was interesting to see some of the stuff that you had written doctrinally as well as just emotion, brain-wise from us, that we wouldn't get you in trouble or our church in trouble by participating [in GO!]. Because you have carefully, among [the GO! pastors], drawn your lines, and that was very reassuring. It seemed like it came out every time I went to some kind of a GO! event, that it was clear there were differences between the various churches, between the various pastors, and the way they did things, and that those differences were accepted on the grounds that we're different. But we all are together on: Christ is the Lord, the Savior, the One who came to save us from our sins. And that came out in the retreat.

Resourced for theological inquiry by seeing the doctrinal considerations that went into the GO! process—and not just the “emotion, brain-wise” stuff (personal opinion) where she felt the lay participants mostly made their assessment of GO! This resourcing allowed her comfort level about GO! grow (she had only been part of the GO! Intensive).

One of the younger participants spoke in the interviews multiple times about respect for others who hold different beliefs. This idea of respect might have lent itself to the more prevalent thought in our culture toward tolerance, so that a retreat that still tried to articulate the distinctives among the GO! churches would have run counter to “respect.” However, this participant saw the resourcing at the retreat—in the background information on GO! and the amount of doctrinal study involved in the decision—as increasing her sense of respect for the role of doctrine. In the follow-up interview, I asked her to explain what she means by respect:

I think just being open to hearing people. And I mean, you have the background of your beliefs; I get that. But you also have the humility to be able to hear what other people are saying, and maybe you are not 100% right. Maybe they're not 100% right. But if there's some common ground there, you can meet in the middle somewhere, you know what I mean. It's not just the “Oh, no, you're totally wrong; I have to go” type of thing.

With that sense of what it means to “respect” others, this participant also recognized the impact of doctrine and respecting the role it plays in how people speak about their faith.

Coming away from the Retreat, I don't think I realized how much of an impact that doctrine should or does have on the whole idea of [GO!]. I think I came away from it with more of a respect of that, and it is something that we have to pay attention to. So

then when talking with people, I just have that in the back of my head that it's not always as easy as it looks, I guess. Because I would have never thought we would even have to decide based on that. I would be like, "You know, this really sounds like a cool thing." But you have to pay attention....

The resourcing for theological study also meant that she saw why there is more to Bethel's GO! decision than she may have thought at first.

Another participant experienced this resourcing as "doctrine as pastoral care," because it helped him realize the amount of thinking that has gone on in the Church to know how to approach situations that cross denominational and theological lines. This participant had experienced frustration in the past with the Church, feeling as if the Church was too quick to draw lines and cause division. The retreat could have potentially exasperated that frustration once again, especially in the session called "Room of Quotes" which laid how the range of thoughts from the LCMS. Instead, though, he found that the doctrinal focus encouraged him in ways.

It was helpful for me to understand that there have been a lot of people that have thought about this. And put some good effort in, and it's sounds like it's still not figured out. I've always viewed church like I viewed doctors. Church has it figured out, they know everything; doctors know everything. And as I get older, I realize doctors don't know everything. I've also figured out that the church doesn't know everything. And doesn't have it all figured out. But it was good to know and nice in terms of trying to figure out if we should be doing this, period. That there has been some thought process that has already gone in at different level.

That encouragement through "seeing the work" behind the doctrine came about because the retreat resourced the participants in the theological dimensions rather than keeping the laity on the outside of that study.

Other Outcomes Observed

Aside from the analysis above according to the three sub-points, the follow-up interviews brought out a few other outcomes worth noting.

1. Offer discovery process for leaders

Knowing that there will continue to be hesitancy about Bethel being involved in GO!, the group found it to be very practical to consider different Synodical positions, so that we could form opinions, explanations, and positions in response to our Lutheran position. This conclusion could be observed in the conversation during the final session at the retreat, as well as, some of the comments in the follow-up interviews. Doctrinal reflection is practical, in that, doctrine informs our decisions and actions as a congregation. The participants sensed that a retreat along these same lines could help other leaders, especially elders, in a discovery process that would yield a more sure sense of the thinking behind Bethel's GO! involvement.

2. Provide "doctrine as pastoral care" definition early on in the process

After all of the initial interviews were complete, and looking back on them through the lens of the follow-up interviews and retreat, I wonder if it may have been beneficial to have provided a brief description of "doctrine as pastoral care" during the initial interviews. This would have allowed the initial interview to introduce the concept that would be further developed at the retreat, giving the participants perhaps a head start on seeing the connection between doctrine and spiritual care, and doctrine and practice. As it was, I found that while I eventually was able to see a doctrinal thread in the interviews, the participants arrived at the retreat much more in the mindset of practical application—how to be good "practitioners" of GO! in the context of Bethel-Gurnee. Perhaps this helped with the andragogical method of guiding participants toward discovering and learning themselves,²¹⁹ but it also meant that some participants said the retreat was not

²¹⁹ E.g.: "Attached more meaning to learning they gain from experience than those they acquire passively"

what they expected. They were thinking that our retreat would be working on the practical, mechanics, planning, or organizing aspects of GO!²²⁰

3. Use a shorter book selection that is more manageable

The Armstrong book chosen for the retreat was written in 2010 and really was the first lengthy description of his concept of missional-ecumenism. However, in 2011, he also produced a smaller booklet with a similar theme called *The Unity Factor: One Lord, One Church, One Mission*.²²¹ I considered both as candidates for a portion of retreat content, and I elected *Your Church is Too Small* due to the fact it presents Armstrong's entire argument and the initial chapters lay out the idea behind the title which GO! has echoed in the language of celebrating the "Church in Gurnee." In hindsight, the shorter booklet *The Unity Factor* would have been more than sufficient for the retreat, and may have been less cumbersome. The book length of *Your Church is Too Small* hampered how much we were able to interact with Armstrong's points as we went along in the retreat.

4. Recognize the importance of "No church is an island" in post-Christendom

It was noted above in multiple places that the participants sense that focusing on "commonology" with other Christians is key going into our post-Christian culture. The

from the *Teaching Methodology Instrument*.

²²⁰ From the Follow Up Interviews:

Question: "What did you expect the retreat would be about?"

Answer: "How to fix the bugs....Group mechanics, or one pastor said something in the video that someone didn't like...."

Answer from another participant: "More about the process that we are using and are there better ways to go about this."

²²¹ John H. Armstrong, *The Unity Factor: One Lord, One Church, One Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2011).

greatest danger to the Gospel comes not across evangelical denominational lines but rather from the deteriorating framework around us that is less and less recognizable to the Church and how the Church has perceived how to do missions. The importance, then, of a project such as this comes from carefully discerning how to celebrate commonalities without disregarding distinctives, *so that*, the churches committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ move forward united against the onslaught of other worldviews. One participant rejoiced in Bethel-Gurnee's decision to be part of GO! by saying in the follow-up retreat:

I'm glad to see that we are participating with other congregations. I do think it's important. I think our entire faith is under attack. If we are to survive and to thrive, I think there needs to be this unity. And it doesn't have to be unity on everything; we went through that on the retreat. But every church shouldn't be an island. I don't think it will bode well in the environment that we're under.

The environment—challenges to the claims of Jesus Christ as the one true Savior—abound in our world, but the GO! experience and this research project leads toward a “commonology” that also yields a confidence of faith as we stand with other Christians.

Conclusion

This project—through the interviews and the retreat—provided doctrinally sound pastoral care for the participants which: 1) empowered them by inviting them into a process that leads to transformation through self-reflection on our theology, 2) strengthened their resolve to hold to our Lutheran confession, and 3) resourced them to decipher other theological perspectives and articulate their own convictions. In this way, the participants were supported in their celebration of “commonology” even while being led into a discovery process to articulate our distinctive theology. The participants reported feeling cared for spiritually, so that the theological inquiry was a sapiential, spiritual growth experience.

There were some cautions among the responses about the retreat's academic level, as well as, the amount of clarity that could be provided in the context of a short-term project. Yet, those cautions were not conclusively significant so as to conclude that the project did not achieve its goals. Additionally, the participants were also able to point to other congregational supports (sermons, Bible studies, etc.) that lent additional "doctrine as pastoral care," factors that were not the direct area of study in this project. Again, though, these reports were not in significant enough numbers to void the project's outcomes on the basis of outside factors being more highly influential on the participants' reports of feeling encouraged through the "doctrine as pastoral care" which they received.

Therefore, we can conclude that overall this project achieved its goal of discovering a process which would support members engaged in a multi-denominational, local outreach effort. That support was "doctrine as pastoral care," theological study for the purpose of lived-out faith among other Christians—and ultimately in their neighborhoods.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When I was first trying to formulate what a MAP might be that researched GO! Together and Bethel-Gurnee's involvement might look like, I imagined a project that delved into the history of the LCMS, the background of its constitution, and the doctrinal assertions concerning fellowship, unionism, and syncretism. Then with the guidance of my advisor and the Doctor of Ministry Committee, I turned toward a much more manageable project which considered what theological care Bethel-Gurnee members needed as they participated in a multi-denominational, local outreach effort. The focus turned to "doctrine as pastoral care," and the research methodology of interviews and retreat meant that the doctrine in question would emerge from the initial interviews. I did not anticipate that the months of research into LCMS writings on fellowship would become part of the substance of the retreat, but once the initial interviews revealed the participants' overwhelming focus on "commonology," all of that previous work became the retreat's "library" of voices.

Contributions to Ministry

Contributions for Bethel-Gurnee

This project contributed to the ministry at Bethel-Gurnee by giving some of our members an opportunity to consider the fellowship questions regarding our involvement in GO! Together. That was no longer the stated goal of the project itself; the research, though, led to this opportunity. Because the initial interviews revealed the participants' desire to celebrate our common faith with other GO! congregations even while maintaining our distinctive Lutheran

theology, this became the retreat's content and focus of conversation. While far from being a definitive study on the question, and while in no way representing a decision-making body of the congregation, these 12 participants were able to engage the question studying theological texts that may or may not support our involvement in GO! Together. Some participants may have been strengthened to find support for their own position on the question; some may have had their initial position clarified or corrected.

This project contributed to ministry at Bethel-Gurnee by formally describing and researching "doctrine as pastoral care." As I have shared in this paper, Doxology helped me to see again what it means to provide pastoral care that is spiritual and practical, always unique to my calling as a pastor. While I have explained aspects of this to our Elders, other leaders, and staff, and have taught about pastoral care in sermons and Bible study, this project gave me the opportunity to further research and understand what it means to lead people in a process focused on "doctrine as pastoral care."

As noted above in chapter 5, a number of participants assumed that the retreat would focus on the practical aspects of having a GO! Group and the mechanics of sustaining a neighborhood outreach effort. Although I did not research perspectives of other congregation members, based on a number of conversations I have had about my project, I can see that many congregation members assumed I was looking at the practicality of GO! Together. Many of us as Christians find it difficult to resist the impulse to immediately jump to the how-tos instead of pausing to see the doctrinal aspects involved.

With this project, I was able to develop with Bethel-Gurnee a "doctrine as pastoral care" approach to ministry that will influence my pastoral conversations with individuals. It may also influence how our Elders go about their work, how our youth ministry sets goals for time spent

with students, or how our staff considers caring for individuals even as they come to us with what seem to be only practical matters and complaints. In all of those cases, “doctrine as pastoral care” means pausing to hear the issues involved in the conversation, considering the core beliefs expressed, and returning to our theology to lift up truths from God that remain the clear course for hope and life.

Related to the overall research of “doctrine as pastoral care,” this project contributes to Bethel-Gurnee’s ministry by showing that the laity can be empowered for theological reflection. I have tried over my years in ministry to lead with this perspective, inviting laypeople into theological reflection in Bible studies and sermons. I have assumed that such invitations in doctrinal considerations were effective for the spiritual growth of those involved. This project has allowed me to research that assumption and see that laypeople are strengthened in their Lutheran confession when they are empowered and resourced for theological reflection.

Therefore, at Bethel-Gurnee, we need not shy away from more difficult conversations in Bible study or assume that sermons must maintain only a surface-level consideration of theology. The laity will be strengthened by theological reflection even when they feel as if the conversation is pushing them to think in ways that are unfamiliar. Pastoral counseling can include doctrinal education, and through doctrinal discourse, pastoral care yields more robust spiritual growth. Keeping the audience and situation in mind, the invitation to laypeople to see more theology, to “see the work” that goes on behind a doctrinal question, or to learn how a doctrinal concept applies to their individual concerns will be fruitful for discipleship.

Another outcome is having a set of congregation members who have considered “commonology” and realized that there is not a clear-cut answer on the balance between celebrating commonalities and maintaining distinctives. Their study of the “library” of voices

assembled led them to see that there are no easy answers, our “warm, fuzzy” feelings need to be backed up by theological research, and any answer is nuanced and complicated. Now Bethel-Gurnee has a set of congregation members who experienced that research and recognized the difficulties involved in making a faithful decision. Those members, along with others who may have already realized this through other means, come to leadership and congregational meetings more able to consider questions slowly, thoughtfully, and doctrinally. This helps our congregation to faithfully set a course—rather than being “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind” (Ephesians 4:14).

However, I must remember the caveat learned from the follow-up interviews: watch the academic level of theological reflection. While the participants generally expressed an appreciation for the process of theological reflection at the retreat, there were some who doubted that they were truly able to keep up with the academic level of the study and conversation. This is a delicate balance, considering these participants also said they would not have engaged in such study if they had not been led and encouraged to do so. Knowing my own excitement about scholarly writing, I will need to maintain a balance between inviting people into theological reflection and providing source material that allows everyone to come into that study and conversation. Related to this is rethinking the decision I made to have a large number of sources for the “Room of Quotes.” This type of theological reflection may benefit from a more thorough consideration of a smaller set of sources with longer selections offered to the participants.

A final contribution to Bethel-Gurnee’s ministry is the study of andragogy in this project. How do we design Christian adult education opportunities with andragogy in mind? How do we train Bible study leaders to utilize andragogical principles? This project’s retreat could not have been designed prior to interviewing the participants and reflects the participants’ own questions.

How do we create spaces for adult education in the congregation that reflect the questions on the minds of those attending? I have not come to a conclusion on questions like these, but this project has made the significant contribution of alerting me to ask them.

For instance, I think of how we have handled new member classes at Bethel-Gurnee, including the couple of iterations of new formats I have attempted. I have spoken to the Elders about the new member process needing to be more flexible, styled on the needs of the people interested in becoming part of the congregation. However, up to this point, I have still created those classes ahead of time, so that the “styled on the needs” of the students remained guesswork and required in-class vamping. What would it mean to interview people prior to class, and then design a class that would help those specific individuals learn how Lutheran theology answers their questions—and the questions behind the questions—based on Scripture? How would we do that in a way that also allowed for assembling classes in a timely manner? How does a class design allow for people from a wide-range of backgrounds? These are questions that we will have to consider as we move forward.

Contributions for the Broader Context

First, “doctrine as pastoral care” arises in response to people’s life experiences as they reveal their questions, struggles, sorrows, and challenges of day-to-day life. While Charry’s work affirmed the role that theological treatises are meant to play in forming Christians for living out their faith, she approaches that rediscovery through the texts first and then applies them to the people. Charry’s groundwork signaled that there was gold in the texts at the bottom of the mine, but this project found that “doctrine as pastoral care” starts at the entrance to the mine with the people. At the top of the mine, the pastor investigates the experiences and needs of the people, engaging them in conversations that map out the theological exploration ahead. Then as fellow

miners, the pastor and people plunge into theological reflection to discover the gold of God's Word and how that gold sends us back to the top, out of the mine, formed by the Holy Spirit for engaged living as Christians. This project contributes to the broader context of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by pointing to “doctrine as pastoral care” as a form of catechesis that begins with the people's questions rather than the right answers. We know there is “gold in them thar hills;” there is no need to rush. Instead, we journey together in “doctrine as pastoral care” to discover that the gold of theology is what we needed all along for our questions about life and how to live it.

Second, in my seminary and professional experience, I have repeatedly noticed references to a fear that if LCMS congregation members are exposed to Christians from other denominations, the LCMS members will jump ship, abandon Lutheran doctrine, and head for the neighboring congregation. However, I did not find any research to support this conclusion aside from anecdotal stories. This project contributes to the broader context of the Synod by showing in this case the fear was unfounded. The overwhelming response from Bethel-Gurnee's members who participated in GO! Together and in this research project was that they were strengthened in their resolve about their Lutheran confession. The experience of knowing other Christians, and celebrating the common faith, also drove these Lutherans to study and celebrate Lutheran theology. They gave thanks for how GO! Together helps us acknowledge that there are other Christians in our community. They also were thankful for and committed to being Lutheran Christians. This especially proved to be true for those who were in long-term relationships with GO! Groups and non-Lutheran Christians. Their friendships did not dilute the distinctions among their theological points of view. Their friendships were based on a shared faith in Christ but also were safe places to express their own theological perspective. I hope this project will encourage

more study by our Synod into how theological convictions are strengthened even as we partner with other Christians in this post-denominational, post-Christian culture.

Third, the research for this project revealed a persistent discrepancy between what educators in the LCMS have been recommending and the design of educational materials produced within the Synod. Educators have been encouraging andragogical—or similar—principles be used in Synodical congregations for Christian adult education in order that more of our adults experience spiritual growth in Bible study and apply such study to engaged living as disciples. However, an absence of materials produced with these principles in mind, along with a possible lack of training for pastors in such educational theory, means that the LCMS is not helping its pastors, leaders, and congregations to put this “best practice” into use. More research similar to this project could have an impact on the Christian adult education happening in our congregations.

Fourth, it is my prayer that this research will help our Synod to continue conversations about what it means to be Confessional Lutherans in a post-denominational, post-Christian society. As Charry described the Enlightenment’s effect on the Church: “Theology came to be thought of as the intellectual justification of the faith, apart from the practice of the Christian life.”²²² Such a bifurcation set up the false choice between confessing pure doctrine and practicing acts of love. D.G. Hart describes the current landscape in a series of essays in his book, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*:

The recovery of confessional Protestantism in the historiography of American religion suggests that the central struggle throughout Protestantism’s history has been between confessionalism and pietism, not evangelicalism and liberalism.²²³

²²² Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*, 5.

²²³ D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism, American Intellectual Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 183.

The aspects of the Christian religion most dear to confessionalists—creed, polity, and liturgy—are matters formal and peripheral to pietists, thus making it easier for an understanding of Christianity based on personal experience and morality to provide a basis for unity than one that looks for theological, governmental, and liturgical consistency. The history of American Protestantism bears out this point since confessional Protestants have been the ones who most resisted interdenominational cooperation and church unity, while pietism produced ecumenism's most vocal advocates.²²⁴

The LCMS knows this struggle all too well, emerging in Missouri in the middle of the 19th century, carrying elements of pietism from Germany and confronting the dangers and allure of an American subjectivism that might topple Scripture as the only source and norm for doctrine.

Our synods and congregations stand here in the midst of a churning hotchpotch of almost innumerable sects and parties, which indeed fondly boast of their “evangelical Protestantism” and mostly also of their “vital piety,” but which through their deceptive rationalisations [sic] and enthusiastic dreamings shamefully falsify the dear word of God, and especially the alone-saving gospel of the free grace of God in Christ, yet ridicule the orthodox church on account of her faithful witness, and seek to seduce her children, by means of false doctrine and the trickery of men, into the nets of her false-believing communions.²²⁵

To avoid pitting creed against piety, there ought to be a middle way. Theological pastoral care provides that middle way. On the one hand, it upholds the importance of doctrine but on the other hand it recognizes how doctrine is intimately involved in pastoral care. Pastoral care that is confessional not confessionalistic, celebrating the distinctives of Lutheran theology without disregarding commonalities with other Christians. Celebrating distinctives means raising up the beauty, joy, peace, and truth found in the Scriptural expressions we have received in the Book of Concord while never disregarding the common faith which we share with all who call on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

²²⁴ Ibid., 176.

²²⁵ Kurt E. Marquart, "Inter-Christian Relationships': A Minority Report," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 57, no. 1–2 (1993): 82–83, translated by Marquart from "Denkschrift [Memorandum, Comprising a Thorough Presentation of the Reasons Why the Synods Joining Together into the Synodical Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America, Could Not Join One" (1871).

This project contributes to this conversation by recognizing that our laity celebrate “commonology” with other Christians without jettisoning the distinctives of their Lutheran confession. This project brings a middle way—faithful to our doctrine while also faithful to seeing God’s Church as the One Church in the One Lord Jesus Christ. **Theological pastoral care is *confessional* but not *confessionalistic*.**

Let us remember that celebrating distinctives certainly plays a significant role in helping congregations be clear in their witness to the wider Church and to the community. We acknowledge that theological differences remain among a multi-denominational partnership of congregations, such as GO! Together. Robert Kolb sets forth the confessional goal for church bodies:

[Members of a church body] should give a united witness to God’s Word and will for his chosen people. When they do not, it is difficult for them and for those outside the church to take their message as seriously as God’s Word should be taken. It is God’s will that the church’s confession be clear, and that for the sake of this clear confession believers draw lines between themselves and those who deny God’s truth....²²⁶

“Doctrine as pastoral care” will help GO! participants from Bethel understand why it has been important that the GO! churches have continually maintained that we have not eliminated, resolved, or ignored our doctrinal divisions. As said above, this is a multi-denominational approach not an ecumenical one (in the historical “ecumenical movement” definition). As noted in one example of our Synod’s basic doctrinal teaching materials:

All who worship the Holy Trinity and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins are regarded by Lutherans as fellow Christians, despite denominational (or nondenominational!) differences.²²⁷

“Doctrine as pastoral care” is clear about our confession of faith while joyfully heading out from

²²⁶ Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 271.

²²⁷ Edward Engelbrecht and Robert C. Baker, *The Lutheran Difference : An Explanation & Comparison of Christian Beliefs* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), xiii.

our street and into the wider neighborhood, affirming the confession of Christ among other denominations, and encouraging one another in telling others about the Gospel in this post-Christian world.

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

This project has often pushed me to feel as if I have exceeded my academic reach—not unlike the feeling of some of the participants at the retreat! This project has been the biggest academic challenge of my life, and while I have at times felt as if I was not up to the challenge, the project is now complete. Rather than only concluding from this experience that I should not attempt academic research or writing again, this feeling of exceeding my academic reach has clarified for me that the Lord has designed me for pastoral, congregational ministry. When I began the Doctor of Ministry program, some members wondered whether this meant that I was aiming toward some kind of position in the academy. I was surprised by their question, because it did not cross my mind. I knew that the D.Min. is a practical degree designed to equip pastors to further develop their ministries in congregations. I explained this to the congregation. Yet, I also knew—especially the more I worked on this MAP—that I could not foresee myself serving the Church in any other capacity save that of congregational pastor. If there is a positive in flailing and thrashing about trying to write academically, it is this clarification: I am thankful to serve as a pastor of a congregation.

The research for this project allowed me to explore questions that have long been on my mind as a pastor. I always wished that I had taken education courses in undergrad, because I felt I needed more training as an educator when I entered parish ministry. Here was the opportunity. Also, I had often attempted encourage laypeople to step into theological study, but I was continually experimenting with different ways to do this—not always with success. This project

allowed me to consider “doctrine as pastoral care” and how to invite laity into theological reflection.

Finally, this project brought together the parallel learning I had been doing during my Doctor of Ministry courses. Doxology had been teaching me the art of pastoral care, and Doxology was a wrap-around course for my D.Min. coursework. This project provided opportunities to bring that pastoral care study and reflection into the research I was pursuing.

Recommendations

At Bethel-Gurnee, I will share the results of this project with our Board of Elders and make the following recommendations:

1. “Doctrine as pastoral care” ought to be studied by the Elders so that they are able to consider my ministry in this light and hold me accountable in providing this kind of care to our people;
2. The sub-group of Disciple Care Elders ought to further study “doctrine as pastoral care” so that as we develop our discipleship focus, we will continue to lead laity toward theological reflection;
3. Our new member process needs to take into account the needs of the individual students, and this may mean developing an interview process in order to design education experiences that reflect the individuals’ needs;
4. When the congregation is making major decisions, the Elders will show leadership in those conversations by inviting leaders and the congregation into theological reflection on the matter (as applicable), empowering the laity to see how our decisions ought to reflect our doctrinal commitments;

5. As our involvement in GO! Together continues, the Elders can provide opportunities for Bethel's people to keep considering what it means to celebrate our "commonology" even while maintaining our distinctives.

I also recommend that the LCMS consider "doctrine as pastoral care" and andragogy in developing future Christian adult education materials. Along these lines, I will encourage my brother pastors through Circuit meetings and other District connections. I recommend that our Circuit study the research materials from this project to learn about "doctrine as pastoral care" and andragogy. I hope that this would benefit the Christian adult education in their ministries. Similar conversations could be made available to other pastors in the District through other Circuits or for a breakout session at a pastors' conference.

APPENDIX A

REFERENCE GUIDE FOR LEADING THE RETREAT ACCORDING TO ANDRAGOGY

Compiled from Malcolm Knowles' "Adult Learning Processes : Pedagogy and Andragogy."
Religious Education 72, no. 2 (1977): 68–69.

Orientation to Learn

The learners feel a need to learn...The teacher exposes the learners to new possibilities for self-fulfillment...The teacher helps the learners identify the life problems they experience because of the gaps in their personal equipment.

Environment for Learning

The learning environment is characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences...The teacher provides physical conditions that are comfortable (as to seating, smoking, temperature, ventilation, lighting, decoration) and conducive to interaction (preferably, no person sitting behind another person)...The teacher accepts the learners as persons of worth and respects their feelings and ideas...The teacher seeks to build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness among the learners by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgmentalness.

Shared Goals

The learners perceive the goals of a learning experience to be their goals...The teacher involves the learners in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives in which the needs of the learners, of the institution, of the teacher, of the subject matter, and of the society are taken into account.

Self-Directed

The learners participate actively in the learning process...The teacher helps the learners to organize themselves (project groups, learning-teaching teams, independent study, etc.) to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry.

Building Upon Experience

The learning process is related to and makes use of the experience of the learners...The teacher helps the learners exploit their own experiences as resources for learning through the use of such techniques as discussion, role playing, case method, etc...The teacher gears the presentation of his or her own resources to the levels of experience of particular learners...The teacher helps the learners apply new learnings to their experience, and thus to make the learnings more meaningful and integrated.

APPENDIX B

INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

You are participating in research as part of my Major Applied Project toward completion of my Doctor of Ministry degree. I am looking at how Bethel's partnership in the Go! Project (recently renamed Go! Together) has affected individual Bethel members and their spiritual growth.

The findings from this research will be used in my thesis, along with forming recommendations to Bethel's Disciple Care Elders about further opportunities for Bethel's members to be encouraged in their faith and understanding of the Gospel.

Reminder of the steps of the research:

- Between now & January, an initial interview (45 minutes) with each participant (individually).
- Attend a one-night retreat from Friday, January 16, (6:30 pm) to Saturday, January 17 (5 pm). This will be held at the Dekoven Center, Racine, WI. Due to a grant from the Lake County Chapter of Thrivent, this retreat will be free of charge for you.
- A follow-up interview (45 minutes) with each participant (individually) the week of February 2–7.

1. Aside from your GO! experiences, have you been in any other recent multi-denominational settings (whether formal or informal, ongoing or one-time)? Multi-denominational settings can be defined as a situation in which the common bond of Christ is overtly acknowledged.

Many of the questions in this interview will refer to GO! experiences, but if your other multi-denominational experiences ever are applicable, you may also answer based on them. Simply indicate that as the setting as opposed to GO!

2. What has been most helpful or encouraging about your GO! experiences?

<p>3. Has there ever been a time when you have been uncomfortable in a GO! setting? If so, please you share briefly about that moment.</p>
<p>4. How would you describe the level of comfort people had in your GO! setting as they talked about their faith experiences with one another?</p>
<p>5. Has there been a time in your GO! setting when you were confused or challenged by how somehow else was explaining something about the Bible, their faith, or their experience? If so, please share briefly about that moment.</p> <p>How did you respond to that moment of confusion?</p>
<p>6. Has there been a time in your GO! setting when someone else was confused or challenged by how you were explaining something about the Bible, your faith, or your experience? If so, please share briefly about that moment and how you responded.</p>
<p>7. How do you perceive Bethel Lutheran's willingness to be involved in multi-denominational groups as opposed to other local congregations (especially those that might be termed: "evangelical" or "conservative")?</p> <p>What do you think leads Bethel to our decisions regarding being involved?</p>
<p>8. Has there been a time in your GO! setting when a conversation proved to be disruptive or potentially threatening to ongoing work together? If so, please briefly describe that event and how it was handled.</p>
<p>9. Has there been a time in your GO! setting when a conversation proved to be very encouraging or instrumental in your ongoing work together? If so, please briefly describe that event.</p>

Appendix C

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW GUIDE

<p>1. A common theme from the initial interviews revolved around emphasizing the core beliefs of Christians as we work together in GO! and other multi-denominational settings. What were your initial thoughts or feelings about this as the retreat topic?</p> <p>Did you expect that as the topic? Why or why not?</p>
<p>2. Since the retreat, have you had any multi-denominational experiences? If so, please describe those settings. Multi-denominational settings can be defined as a situation in which the common bond of Christ is overtly acknowledged.</p>
<p>3. If you had any multi-denominational experiences since the retreat, how did the retreat shape your perspective or engagement in that multi-denominational setting?</p>
<p>4. If you haven't had any multi-denominational experiences since the retreat, in thinking back to prior GO! experiences, what is your perspective on that experience in view of the retreat?</p>
<p>5. How might the retreat clarify your understanding of the level of comfort people have in your GO! setting as you talk about your faith experiences with one another?</p> <p>How do you think the retreat may help you in your comfort level in talking about your faith in a multi-denominational setting?</p>
<p>6. Based on the conversations at the retreat, how do you view the basis for Bethel's decisions regarding being involved in GO! Together?</p>

7. What have you taken away from the retreat that may help you encourage collaboration with other Christians—whether encouraging other Bethel members and/or being instrumental in developing cooperation in a multi-denominational setting?
8. At the retreat, which learning exercise did you find most helpful for you? Why?
9. At the retreat, which learning exercise did you find least helpful for you? Why?
10. How important was it to you that the pre-retreat interviews helped shape what we focused on at the retreat?
11. Would you recommend a similar retreat for other Bethel members who are considering what it means to be in multi-denominational settings? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D

COMMON THEME QUOTES FROM INITIAL INTERVIEWS

- If you believe, you believe.
- Respect.
- We're talking to family—God's family.
- Similar belief.
- It should be seamless.
- Common purpose.
- Common faith in Christ.
- Common bond of belief.
- Still among faithful people who are forgiving.
- More tolerant of each other's differences and doctrines.
- Working together to be the unity, the church, the Holy Christian Church.
- Part of the whole thing God made.
- Christ is there.
- We're all Christian.
- Our "commonology".
- Something that holds us together.
- I didn't feel the "you're wrong, I'm right" type of thing.
- More similarities than we have differences.
- Here's Jesus Christ and that's the most important thing. The 80%.
- Most of what we believe is the same across the denominations.
- We have the same core beliefs throughout all the denominations.
- I don't think Bethel needs to go get more Bethel people.
- As long as they're happy in another church, it's a good thing.
- I see and appreciate some of the things that they're doing and saying.
- The differences in the churches involved, not anything that [leads] to damnation.
- At start, group was overly sensitive of stepping on toes from that multi-denominational perspective.
- Be extra special careful of the Lutherans.
- We really knocked down those walls.
- There is way more common ground than uncommon ground.
- You're not alone; you're not by yourself.
- You're not just some crazies off by yourself.
- The things that aren't common are more the little things.
- You start mincing words, and it's not always helpful.
- There's going to be differences, and that's not what we want to emphasize.
- Is Christ going to say you're not my child because you went to this building rather than that building?

- Get past all these little traditions we have here.
- It's about doubling the number of Christians in Gurnee.
- Realization: "[Bethel] is not the only group of Christians meeting on Sunday mornings."
- More comfortable in my reception of what they're saying, while still trying to be discerning as to what the differences are.
- You don't look for attack points; you look for common points and friendship points.

APPENDIX E

RETREAT SESSIONS

Retreat Sessions

1. Sharing of GO! Experiences

Participants have brief opportunity to talk about how they've been involved in GO!

2. How We Got to GO!

I share with participants the decision tree I made about making the decision to be involved with GO! and how there are multiple places where our witness to the wider Church may have been compromised depending on the decisions we made. I will also share my definitions of 3 principles (see below for both of these). Finally, this is where I will make reference to the common thought in the interviews that GO! is important because it works from a place of celebrating that we have much in common with these other Christians rather than "majoring in the minors." The problem/goal for our time together: what can build us up in this approach that is both Scriptural and in agreement with our theological position?

3. Armstrong Session #1 – Your Church is Too Small

1st of 3 sessions based on John Armstrong's book, we will read brief portions of the book together (everyone with a copy of the book), discussing questions as we go. This first session will delve into the introduction and Armstrong's basic premise. The conversation will spend time reflecting on how Armstrong's thoughts relate to the decision tree, the participants' experiences in GO!, and building a foundation for our multi-denominational involvement.

4. Morning Prayer

Use a brief liturgy especially drawing upon John 17 and the desire of Jesus that His disciples be one—which is a pivotal Scripture in Armstrong's book and for GO!

5. Room of Quotes

This will be the first session in the morning. I will have placed copies of quotes from a wide range of sources about the LCMS' view of inter-Christian relationships. They will be pull-quotes, with the original sources also available. I will ask each participant to choose around 4 quotes and become familiar with them during the session (individual work), re-reading, rewriting, or briefly discussing them with other participants. I will also be available to provide assistance. The goal: the group has a wide set of foundational quotes related to how LCMS as a Synod, professors, pastors, and authors have talked about a faithful way to be involved in inter-Christian relationships. Note: In the morning I will have taped up on the wall of our room the decision tree and 3 principles enlarged to help us keep them in mind during the day.

- 6. Armstrong Session #2 – *Your Church is Too Small***
Armed now with the decision tree, our own experiences, and LCMS quotes, this session will mainly focus again on reading sections of Armstrong and using his questions in the book for discussion. However, it will be encouraged to sometimes relate the conversation back to the quotes, etc., as we see how these various sources relate to one another.
- 7. Armstrong Session #3 – *Your Church is Too Small***
Moving further into book with same approach as session #2.
- 8. Work Session**
Divide participants into 3 groups (3-4 people). Using the quotes they have had since the morning session, and quotes they take from Armstrong, the group places quotes on the decision tree (on the wall) where they line up to support that portion and/or places quotes near the definitions of the 3 principles.
- 9. Large Group Session**
Review together the decision tree and 3 principles with quotes in place. Lead into asking participants to share about how this helps with understanding, anticipating, encouraging, or being supported in GO! experiences. Conclude with brief instructions regarding keeping this in mind during the next few weeks, especially during any multi-denominational experience, as that will relate to the follow up interview.
- 10. Sending Prayer**
Similar to the Morning Prayer liturgy.

Appendix F

SOURCES FOR “ROOM OF QUOTES”

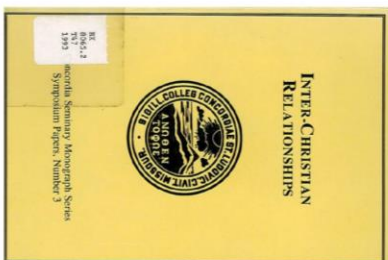
“A Confessional Lutheran Theology of Fellowship in the Modern World: Problems and Challenges”
Ralph Bohmann, President Emeritus, LCMS
Published: 1994

The Christians in China are worshipping in house churches and identifying themselves as Christians. Some are worshipping in congregations, but they are not Lutheran, Baptist, or Methodists. They confess Jesus Christ as Lord. They are bonded together in unique and powerful ways, one of which is the conviction that we do not want a repeal of Western Christian denominationalism as they go about the task of proclaiming Christ in their homeland.

Does the Missouri Synod want to be a part of the mission to one-fourth of the world's population? I do, I am, you are, and your church is. But it is not easy. You simply cannot write off Christians in China, the tasks they face, or the obligations under which they work in old-fashioned ways. Look at Eastern European Lutherans. It was two years ago this month that the delegation from the Missouri Synod visited, for the first time in the history of the Synod, the bishops and leaders of several Eastern European Lutheran churches. Churches in Slovakia, Silesia, Poland, Hungary, there are others in Russia and the other republics, all belong to the Lutheran World Federation. For the most part they all ordain women to the office of the Holy Ministry and probably have a number of other confessional points or principles or doctrines with which we would have some serious disagreement. But they do confess Jesus Christ. They have lived 40 years in a deep dark night and they turn to people like us and say, can you help us? You have had the freedom to confess Christ in a free land and you do it so well. We have heard about you in the Missouri

Synod. You believe in doctrine, the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus Christ as the hope of the world. Can you help us? Of course we can. We have been supplying all the Sunday school literature for the Lutheran Church of Slovakia and teaching their teachers how to teach. I submit to you that in this real world you do not stop the mission of the church by saying we are not yet fully in a recognized confessional fellowship and therefore must stand back from it until we first agree in all doctrines. I am very sorry. That is not a confessional position and it is not faithful to the Scriptures.

pp. 96-98



²²⁸ *Inter-Christian Relationships, Concordia Seminary Theological Symposium* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1993).

“Quo Vademus? Where Are We Going with the Doctrine of Church Fellowship?”
A.L. Barry, President, LCMS

Published: 1994

#1

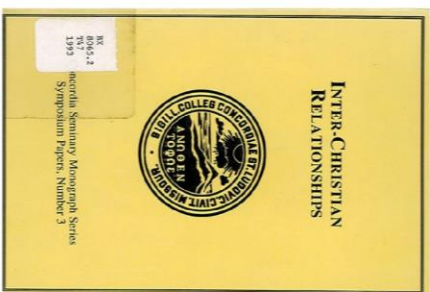
Some have looked at our history and noticed that we have seemingly been given over in some instances to a sort of “inferiority complex.” It seems as though we Missourians are presently going through some type of an “identity crisis,” with the result that we have become overly conscious of what others may think or say of us in Christendom. Charles Porterfield Krauth, the great theologian of the old General Council, put matters this way with a warning that we need to take to heart today:

The Lutheran Church can never have any real moral dignity, real self-respect, or real claim on the reverence and loyalty of her children while she allows the fear of denunciations around her, or the desire of their approval, in any respect to shape her principles or control her actions. It is a fatal thing to ask, not, What is right? What is consistent? but, What will be thought of us? How will our neighbors of the different communions regard this or that course? Better to die than to prolong a miserable life by such a compromise of all that gives life its value.⁹

To me, these words ring with the truth. We today in Missouri need to say before the world, “This we believe, teach, confess and practice.” There is no need to be bashful or apologetic for this

confession. Rather, by God’s grace and blessing, we are able to bring the message of the unadulterated Gospel to a world lost in sin. We need to move forward boldly, yes boldly, in our mission efforts while at the same time grasping firmly, with equal boldness, our Scriptural and Confessional commitments. We have nothing to fear by so doing, in fact we anticipate with great hope God’s rich blessings.

⁹F. Bente, *American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), p. 204.



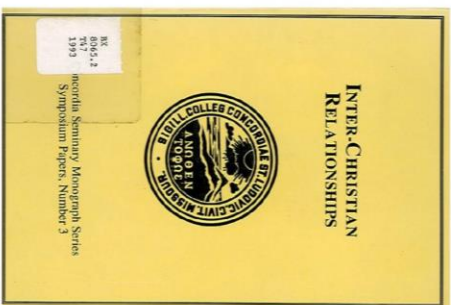
pp. 125-126

“Quo Vademus? Where Are We Going with the Doctrine of Church Fellowship?”
A.L. Barry, President, LCMS
Published: 1994

#2

Observation #2: We also need to keep intact the old Lutheran distinction between cooperation in externals (*cooperatio in externis*) and cooperation in the sacred things (*cooperatio in sacris*). In other words, we have always recognized that there is the possibility for cooperation in matters *not* pertaining to the marks of the church and thus not touching upon the Gospel itself. Insofar as this cooperation lies *outside* of the marks of the church, it does not concern church fellowship. There has never been any question among us that it is possible to cooperate in external activities with other Christians. Questions have arisen in regard to what extent such participation indicates a full consensus in the Gospel. For example, if we share with other Christian groups an interest in feeding the hungry or opposing abortion, we may join in efforts to accomplish our common interest. We do not join together to do this because we wish to announce that we have achieved a consensus in the Gospel. If, on the other hand, we are asked to join in such efforts as expressions of our unity in the Faith, then we would have to refuse, since we must first achieve this unity before we can express it visibly through any such joint work together.

pp. 111-112



230 Ibid.

“Quo Vademus? Where Are We Going with the Doctrine of Church Fellowship?”
A.L. Barry, President, LCMS

Published: 1994

#3

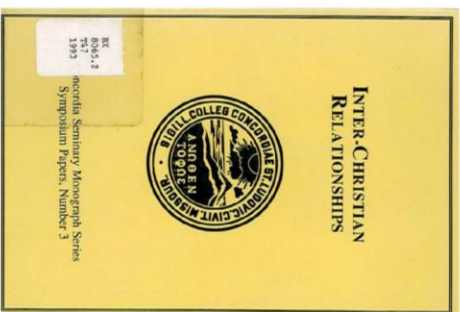
The second reason we practice our principles of church fellowship is for the sake of being able to witness to the truth. Now, what do I mean by that? First of all, the witness dimension to our own people which is very important. To act as though there are no serious theological differences among the various Christian denominations in our nation is a lack of faithfulness on the part of God's undershepherds. Our people need to know that there are these very serious theological differences. They also need to know that these differences can and will erode the truth of the Gospel if we allow them to go unchecked and unnoticed. Consequently, our fellowship principles have a very practical aspect for our people. With them we are able to say, "Here in this church body we find the truth, but here we find error. We thank God for the truth where it is present, but we need to be aware of the error."

But the same would be true as we use our fellowship principles to witness to other Christian denominations. We rejoice and thank God for what we hold in common. In many cases, together we confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. We may

even confess a common creed, such as the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. We say together that we believe in "the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints" and we dare never lose sight of this fact. We need to thank God regularly that we are able to make this common confession. But the other side of the coin is also true and that is likewise that we have the responsibility to say to erring church bodies that this teaching or that teaching we find among them is not in accord with Holy Scripture. To deviate from Scripture is a very serious matter which, if left unchecked, can erode the Gospel in their midst. We cannot shirk this duty to speak out against error in other Christian church bodies as we carry out our duties as pastors in the church.

When we refuse fellowship with other Christians, it is indeed a bitter pill to swallow. It is a word of law and judgment on that person's confession of the Faith. But this is the way of the Gospel. Law first, then Gospel. We do not wish to mix the two. We will use the opportunity to witness to the truth. Our love for the truth of God's Word is what leads Missouri to say no for the time being, so that hopefully there can eventually be a yes to the full truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

pp. 120-121

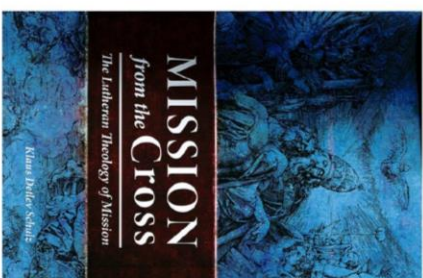


THE GOAL OF MISSION: ECUMENICAL YET AUTHENTICALLY LUTHERAN

Perhaps the answer on whose behalf mission is done may help to clarify some of the questions above. No mission would ever claim to further a particular denomination. Every preaching activity occurs on behalf of the Church of Christ, the Church catholic or *una sancta ecclesia*, comprised of believers all over the world. The mandate for mission is a universal one, and it represents the service for the one Church on earth across all denominational lines. To affirm this unity of the Church is an article of faith; Christians believe in such unity despite divisions and the great multitudes of the wicked within the Church. And through mission, God collects His redeemed community across all denominations far beyond the borders of what we may believe to be the particular righteous and true visible Church. Missionaries work for the one Lord Jesus Christ and for His catholic Church.

At the same time, the missionary also represents his own denomination. Lutheran mission must serve the one true Church, and it exists for the very reason of upholding the purity of the Gospel throughout the world. Lutheran mission is thus not selfishly arguing for its own validity apart from the Church catholic. Lutheran mission exists because it harbors a deep soteriological concern for the salvation of the world and the truth being preached in its true biblical form. As missionaries seek to speak the truth, they are concerned that nothing be placed in the way of the Spirit's work. They also wish that new believers would learn to distinguish the Gospel from doctrinal aberrations and not repeat mistakes that have already been addressed.

pp. 221-222



²³² Schultz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission*.

“Living the Paradox: Western Cultural Tolerance and the Lutheran Religious View of Faithful Confession”
Ronald Feuerhahn, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Published: 2003

from Martin Noland:

The meaning of both terms has shifted. “Tolerance” under John Locke³ meant not persecuting for religious reasons, but did not mean “tolerance” of any sort of morality, or the restriction of free speech by religious people. “Faithful confession” for Christians used to apply to every area of life, and particularly a consistent witness and identity in every context. Today, who knows what it means?⁴

Tolerance

Definition

I would define tolerance as an attitude or ideology with many cognates such as relativism, liberty, democratization. To be a little more precise, tolerance can be described as:

Refraining from acting against that which is disapproved of, or politically opposed, or alien. Toleration in religious matters is one of the central planks of the modern democratic state: Locke’s *Letter on Toleration* (1689) is the basic authority, although Locke himself exempted Roman Catholics from the umbrella of protection, on the grounds that their primary allegiance would be to the Church and not to the government.

Consequences

In America today, therefore, we should not be surprised to learn that tolerance is a predominant force. For many Americans “religion is mainly, and sometimes exclusively, a matter of spiritual experience.” Thus “doctrine (apart from the teaching of unlimited tolerance) and moral rules (apart from prescribed stances on issues in cultural dispute) are sharply subordinated.”⁵

Such emphasis on tolerance is stated particularly in terms of love. The problem is that this is a confusion about love and truth. It is easy to confuse love of neighbor with tolerance of error, simply because, in such a culture, renouncing error, or even calling attention to it, will often be labeled as “unloving.” We should not be surprised then that Pope John XXIII in calling for the Second Vatican Council did, for the first time in history as far as I know, prohibit the use of the *anathema* or *damnamus*, the condemnations which were deemed so necessary in an earlier era to avoid ambiguity in the church’s confession. The greatest love (charity) for our neighbor, however, is best expressed in a clear proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

One of the most widespread problems today is the confusion of love and toleration. The greatest part of the problem is that love, or tolerance, is often espoused at the expense of truth or at least without reference to it. One example is within the modern ecumenical movement where one often hears, litany-like, reference to Jn 17:21: “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” This word of our Lord is frequently cited as the reason for the ecumenical effort.⁶ But it is never, in my reading, cited in the context of Jn 17:17: “Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth.”

Being tolerant can be the opposite of loving. When, for instance, we “rebuke” a brother for his error, we are expressing the greatest love to him in the hope of recalling him from error. To “rebuke” or “condemn” someone is painful. But St. Paul has indicated that it also is a responsibility of the shepherd toward the flock.

He [the bishop, pastor] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message [πιστον λόγον] as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine [βασίκαν διδασκαλίαν] and refute those who oppose it. This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply [ανεργασίαν], so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth [1 Ti 1:9, 13–14, emphasis added; for “encourage” and “rebuke” see also 1 Ti 2:15 and 2 Ti 4:2].

3. E-mail: Martin Noland to Daniel Price (February 26, 2000).
 5. Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 379.

22 Richard John Neuhaus, “One Nation under Many Gods” (The Public Square), Review Article of Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Has Become the World’s Most Religious Diversity Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), first Zhang 116 (October 2001): 72.

pp. 71, 75, 76, 78



²³³ *Contemporary Issues in Fellowship: Confessional Principles and Application*, Congress on the Lutheran Confessions (Bloomington, IL: Luther Academy, 2003).

“A Prayer for America: An Analysis”

Rev. Charles Henrikson

Published: 2003

Article VI, “Conditions of Membership”

2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
 - a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;
 - b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
 - c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.¹¹

Among the requirements for being a member of the Synod, as a minister or congregation, is “renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description.” Unionism is joining in religious activities with heretodox Christian groups, with which we are not in fellowship. Syncretism takes it a step further: it means taking part in religious activities with non-Christian religions.

In *Kirche und Amt*, which is an official doctrinal statement of the Missouri Synod, Walthers presents the witness of our orthodox Lutheran teachers and says this is the position of our synod:

“Whoever regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true and certain cannot stand in one stall with others who teach false doctrine or are agree-

11. LCMS Handbook, Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Article VI, “Conditions of Membership,” <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/2001handbook.pdf>

12. C. F. W. Walthers, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 118, 125–26, 130.

able to it, nor can he continue to speak sweet words to the devil and his followers. A teacher who is silent over against error and nevertheless pretends to be a true teacher is worse than an outspoken enthusiast and by his hypocrisy does greater harm than a heretic, so that no one should put confidence in him. . . . He does not desire to offend anyone; he wants neither to confess Christ nor to hurt the feelings of the devil and the world” (Luther) . . .

“We gladly will be united with them in secular matters; that is, we are willing to keep bodily or temporal peace with them. But in spiritual matters we will avoid, condemn, and reprove them as long as they live as idolaters, perverters of God’s Word, blasphemers, and liars. . . . But to yield to their blasphemies, ignore and approve them, that we neither can nor want to do” (Luther) . . .

“Nevertheless there are cases in which someone may attend the worship of unbelievers or heretics. In the first place, in order to observe it, attending it only that one may hear better and surer witness against the ungodly nature of the unbelievers or heretics. . . . But here great care is needed in order not to make it appear as though we agreed with the opponents. Therefore, we must refrain from the opponents’ acts of worship . . . we must rather make it publicly known by some signs that we do not agree with them. . . . Where it is impossible publicly to show that we do not agree with them, it is better to remain away from such worship. . . . Here is no place for hypocritical dissimulation, for this offends both God and man” (Balduin [1575–1627, professor at Wittenberg]).¹²



pp. 62-63

from *Churches in America*
Thomas Manteufel, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

#1 The Christian Approach to the Study of Denominations

What do Episcopalianians teach? What is the difference between the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ, if any? Does it matter if I join the Presbyterian Church or the Methodist Church, or the Roman Catholic Church? What is a Word of God? Should I marry a Quaker? Why are there so many church bodies, if Jesus Christ set up only one church? If I go to a church body that just calls itself by the name Christian, isn't that the simplest, least troublesome way to arrange my religious life? Or do they all teach more or less the same thing anyway?

Throughout church history controversies have existed involving differences of teaching between religious groups. These have arisen from sincere, though often fierce and angry, disagreements over points of Christian teaching and practice. A typical example is the story of the two ministers arguing over the positions

of their respective denominations. At last, one said that they had the same Lord but that each worshipped Him in his own way. The other replied, "You worship Him in your way—and I in His way."

This brings up a question that must be asked in the midst of all the conflict of teaching in Christendom: Is there indeed an approach to doctrine and life that can be called "His way," that ought to be followed, and that can be identified by a norm to be applied? This question will receive a yes in the pages of this book.

Why We Should Deplore Divisions

Christians everywhere deplore the divisions that have torn visible Christendom apart. They remember the biblical truth that all who have saving faith in Jesus Christ are one body (1 Cor. 10:17). They are aware of the difficulty in reconciling the disruption of the churches with what the apostle says in Eph. 4:4-6:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called, and one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Published: 1994

The Teaching Task of the Church of Christ

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:18-20)

God directs the leaders and people of His church to teach the whole truth of God faithfully and to guard and warn against departures from it.

We are to have a love for whatever belongs to sound doctrine and its expression in a Christian life and a hatred for whatever jeopardizes that. So, for example, we find St. Paul denouncing the errorists in Gal. 1:8-9 and those who denied the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. See also Titus 1:9-11 and 2 Cor. 11:13-14 for expression of this theme.

The Lord desires that His church continue steadfastly in His Word (John 8:31-32) and be careful about doctrine. He compared false doctrines to yeast:

"Be careful," Jesus said to them, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ... They understood that He was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matt. 16:5, 12)

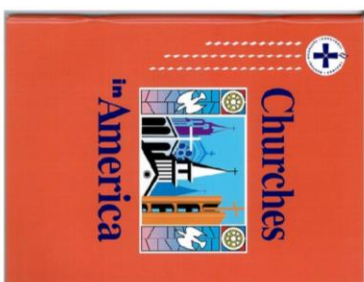


The church is right to fear that erring doctrine will spread and become more and more damaging. Paul explains, "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" (Gal. 5:9).

Not only the pastors and teachers, but all the members of the church have the obligation and privilege of professing, defending, and using the truths of their faith. Paul exhorts the Thessalonian Christians, "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you" (2 Thess. 2:15).

All believers should be growing in right knowledge of their Savior and of sincere repentance and the Christian life of obedience. Pastors have the awesome responsibility of leading and strengthening their people in this and helping them avoid spiritual harm. This is the aim of the Lutheran church. Its Confessions state that it explains the Word of God so that well-meaning Christians who are really concerned about the truth may know how to guard and protect themselves against the errors and corruptions that have invaded our midst. (Formula of Concord, Tappert edition, p. 503)

pp. 9, 11



#2

from *Churches in America*
Thomas Mantefel, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Published: 1994

When we try to find out what people believe, we should avoid a spirit of prideful belittling or loveless contention. Rather, we should have a sincere desire to know one's neighbors better and to be able to speak with them about matters important to them. Occasions may arise to agree heartily with them when they state a truth about God and the Christian life. Occasions may also arise to warn against some danger we see in their belief.

As you learn to know what your neighbors believe, you are likely to make different kinds of discoveries.

You may often find points of agreement, where the traditions you honor say the same thing. You can rejoice together about this as fellow Christians and talk profitably about the biblical basis for the common beliefs and hopes.

You may find individuals that agree with you that their doctrinal heritage is wrong in some teachings. Again, you can strengthen each other from God's Word.

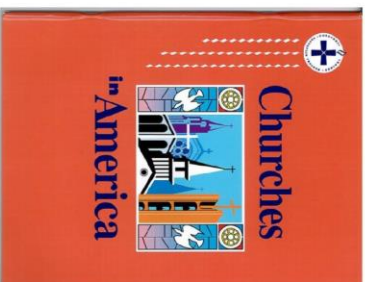
You may find some who disagree with a point in their own tradition that you recognize as truly Christian. You can use the opportunity to urge them to reconsider and return to the truth, an approach described by Dr. Hermann Sasse, an Australian Lutheran. He pleaded with a Roman Catholic friend to have faith in the resurrection of Christ on the basis of the Word: "Father, you believe that. You have believed all your life. You will believe it again. But there is a superhuman power that tries to destroy your faith."

You may become convinced that friends are being led astray by some parts of their tradition. You can warn them against the danger.

You may find a case of the old Swedish saying: "A man may be better than his doctrine." That is, he may state harmful errors about Christ or grace or the Gospel—statements that

conflict with saving faith. But he believes otherwise; he does have saving faith. In theology this is called "the happy inconsistency."
You may find that the heritage that molds your neighbor's thinking is so perverted that it cannot be recognized as truly Christian. It and they have lost the trinitarian Gospel. Again, you have an opportunity to witness.

pp. 15-16



from *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals*
Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

At different times in my life I have embraced liberal theology, accepting whatever is progressive and crusading for social justice, and I have been a raving, miracle-expecting fundamentalist. My liberalism proved spiritually vacuous, while my fundamentalism proved shallow. I have sat zazen, until I found the most that Buddhism promises, namely, emptiness. Mysticism and activism were both bitter disappointments.

What I needed was a spiritual framework big enough to embrace the whole range of human existence, a realistic spirituality. I needed a spirituality that is not a negation of the physical world or ordinary life, but one that transfigures them.

I found it in Christianity, a religion that is not about God as such, but about God in the flesh, and God on the cross. There are many varieties of Christianity, many spiritual traditions within this one historical faith, but they all hinge around this mystery of incarnation, atonement, and redemption.

C. S. Lewis, a major influence on my faith, wrote about "mere Christianity," focusing on what all Christian theologies have in common. This lowest common denominator, he said, was like a hallway, a vestibule from the outside into the house of faith. He went on to point out, however, that to actually live in Christianity, one must leave the hallway and enter one of the rooms. "It is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals."¹ That is to say, Christians must join some church.

This is where some of the frustrations come. In my own case, none of the local congregations I knew quite measured up to the Christianity I had discovered in books. Part of this was sheer immaturity on my part. Many Christians are often disappointed in actual churches because they hold to impossible ideals and have

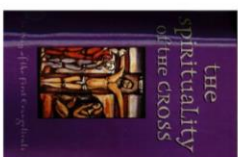
an inadequate theology of ordinary life. As Lewis says elsewhere, new Christians often think of the church in terms of togas and sandals, rather than everyday human beings like themselves.² But it is sometimes true that those "rooms" in the house of Christianity back fires and chairs and meals.

Each of the varieties of Christianity represents some spiritual tradition, an emphasis or distinctive teaching. It would be naïve to deny that each also has its problems and distortions. This is where the search for Christian spirituality often runs aground.

Another rather ironic problem today is that many of these traditions, however valuable, are now hard to find. The diverse Christian traditions—such as those of Aquinas, Calvin, Wesley—all very different but bracing in their own ways, have been merging into a single generic pop Christianity. It is as if many of Lewis's rooms turn out to be not different at all, serving the same styro-foam-packed fast food, playing the same Muzak, with the same plastic flowers and shag carpeting. This new popularized Christianity seems bland and one-dimensional, full of good feelings, but rather empty of content. In the meantime, the riches and insights of the historical Christian traditions are all but forgotten.

This book is about one of those Christian spiritual traditions, one in which I finally satisfied my own longing for a relationship with God. This book is an introduction to the Lutheran spiritual tradition. This is a faith particularly centered in the cross of Jesus Christ, one that offers a framework for embracing, in an honest and comprehensive way, the whole range of the spiritual life, and whose insights have a profound resonance in ordinary, everyday life.

pp. 10-11



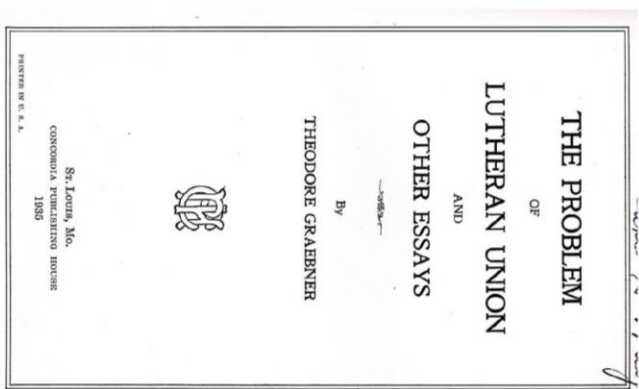
²³⁷ Gene Edward Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999).

Theodore Graebner, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
quoting Rev. B.D. Wessinger, Tennessee Synod pastor, *Lutheran Church Visitor*, Jan. 28, 1915

Published: 1935

238

“The Tennessee Synod does not believe in an exchange of pulpits with the denominations around us. Her rule is that Lutheran pulpits should be for Lutheran pastors. To many this appears narrow. Even some who subscribe to the Confessions and are proud of the name and history of the Lutheran Church are not willing to admit the correctness of this position. But let us look the matter fairly and squarely in the face. Protestantism is divided into a number of denominations, each having a distinct name and each standing for certain distinctive doctrines. Because of their avowed belief in these things they have withdrawn and formed a separate organization. The Baptists believe that only those who are immersed have been properly baptized. The Methodists believe the Sacrament to be only a memorial service, in which the bread and wine symbolize Christ’s body and blood. So might others be mentioned. Each one stands for certain teachings which others cannot accept. They demand from their pastors an adherence to their doctrines, and one would hardly be retained who is at radical variance with their position. To act consistently, they cannot ask us, nor can we ask them, to exchange pulpits; for they know they are not going to preach our doctrine, and we know we are not going to preach theirs. Nor could we agree to maintain silence regarding the differences. If we really believe that the truth of God’s Word has been rightly interpreted in our Confessions, this faith is not such a trifling affair that we can dispense with it to suit the occasion. It is rather such conviction of mind, heart, and conscience that we stand as living confessors and examples of always and everywhere, Luke 24, 48.



p. 102

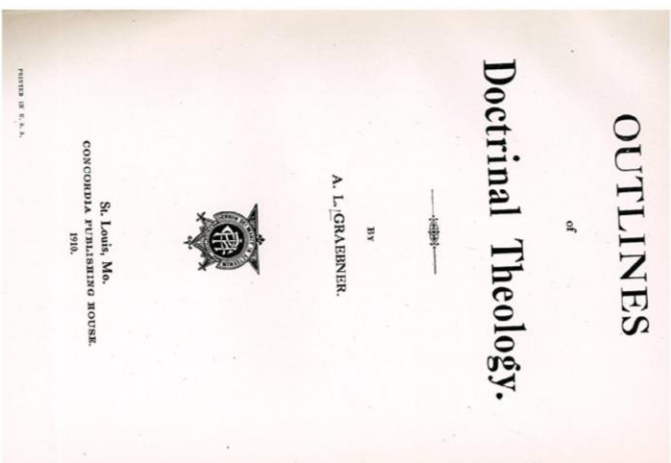
238 Theodore Graebner, *The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1935).

from *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*
A. L. Graebner, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Published: 1910

ERRING CHURCHES.

§ 170. Since an erring church, or a church contaminated with erroneous doctrine, is still a church¹ as long as it has and sets into operation the essentials of the Gospel,² the ministers called by such church are still ministers of Christ and of the Church of God,³ and their official acts are valid as far as their performance is an administration of the means of grace.⁴



p. 219

²³⁹ A. L. Gräbner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1910).

“A Lutheran Stance Towards Ecumenism” Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS (1974)

C. On the Congregational Level

When congregations become members of the Synod they voluntarily accept certain limitations of their autonomy. For the sake of good order and the benefit of all, congregations consent to regulate the exercise of their rights according to a compact freely entered into and mutually accepted. Congregations, for instance, agree to be served only by such pastors as have been certified for placement by the Synod’s seminary faculties and who are members of the Synod. Similarly, congregations agree that they will practice fellowship only with those congregations which belong to a church body with which the Synod is in fellowship. Once such an agreement has been made, confusion and disorder result when congregations act independently by practicing *selective* fellowship. The Synod has, therefore, on several occasions stated its position on selective fellowship. Key sentences from a resolution adopted in 1969 give the Synod’s position:

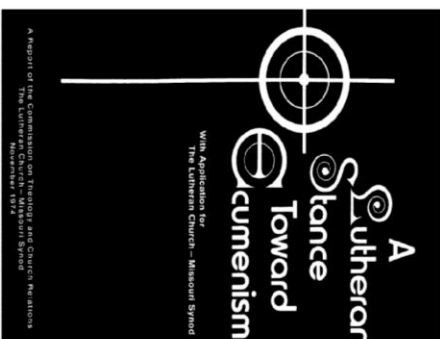
WHEREAS, The members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have voluntarily united in a fraternal agreement to determine fellowship relations with other church bodies or congregations, not individually but through convention action (*Handbook* 1.21) . . .
Resolved, That the Synod urge all its members to honor their fraternal agreement with all members of the Synod by refraining from practicing altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations of church bodies with whom the Synod has not yet declared fellowship.⁶

D. On the Individual Level

1. In the exercise of their office pastors will follow synodical policy. Except in emergency situations and in such cases where their action cannot rightfully be construed as disregard for pure doctrine, for the responsibilities of their office, or for the concerns of their brethren in the ministry, pastors will ordinarily commune only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a Lutheran church body with which the Synod is in fellowship. Pastors will not participate in joint worship services with pastors of denominations with which the Synod has not established fellowship relations. When pastors affiliate with ministerial alliances or associations, they will participate in such activities and service opportunities as do not imply ecclesiastical fellowship where it does not yet exist.

2. Lay people will ordinarily worship only with congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or with congregations which belong to church bodies who are in fellowship with the LCMS. Where opportunities for dialogue or for *cooperation in externals* present themselves, lay people will join in such activities according to the policies and principles adopted by the Synod.

p. 12



²⁴⁰ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism: With Application for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*.

“Grass Roots Ecumenism: A Proposal”
Charles Arand, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Concordia Journal, July 1999

Herein then lies a proposal. Why should congregations not also establish boards of ecumenism (or church relations) alongside boards of evangelism. In this way, both aspects of the church are confessed: the extension of the church (board of evangelism) and the unity of the church (board of church relations). In other words, just as congregations have an obligation to share the Gospel with the unchurched, so also do they have an obligation to confess (and not just in a *pro forma* manner) the doctrine of the Gospel with those who are Christians but with whom there continue to be disagreements. If we have an obligation to reach out and bring into our fellowship those who do not believe, do we not also have an obligation to reach out and heal (if possible) breaches between Christians?

Such a board of ecumenism at the congregational level, which would have the responsibility of carrying out a dialogue with Christians of other traditions, could have several salutary effects.

First, it would be a concrete and positive way for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to confess its catholicity. It would also show other Christians that we recognize them as fellow Christians (while they may be herodox, they are not yet apostates) within the boundaries of Christendom. Though dissensions in doctrine exist between us, Christian confession and Christian love obligate us to discuss those differences, and if possible, resolve those differences in accordance with the Word of God and the Confessions of our church. Such dialogue would also show that we care for them, are interested in them, and desire the best for them.

Second, if congregations were to take a more active role in ecumenical dialogue at the local level, it would doubtlessly encourage a renewed theological study at the congregational level. In order to dialogue with Chris-

tians of other traditions, our congregations would find it necessary to explore what our own church believes with its heart and confesses with its lips on any number of issues. This in turn could have the benefit of reinvigorating the congregation as it reappropriates its own theological heritage and rediscovers why we hold it. Here it should also be pointed out that individual members of our congregations are already engaged in such conversations with their friends of other churches. But have we equipped them for such dialogue? This would give us an opportunity to do so.

Third, such dialogue would certainly expose the lie or fantasy that “there really aren’t any significant differences among Christians.” How often have we not heard people say that all Christians basically hold to the same fundamentals and differ only on minor (and certainly not church-dividing) points. As we dialogue with other Christians about doctrinal issues, our own people may well discover that there not only differences, but that these differences are significant and cannot be glossed over. In this connection, such dialogue may offer an opportunity to remove stereotypes that we have of others or that they may have of us. We will probably discover that other traditions hold a very different picture of us than we ourselves do—and vice versa. What a blessed sight it would be to see Missouri Synod pastors, teachers, and lay people “talking theology” with Christians of other church bodies.



pp. 233-234

²⁴¹ Arand, "Grass Roots Ecumenism: A Proposal."

**“INTER-CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS: An Instrument for Study”
Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS (1991)**

#1

One of the most significant changes in American denominational life, including life within Lutheran church bodies, is the factor sometimes called “ambiguous denominationalism.” Contemporary denominations tend to cling to their traditional official formulations of doctrine and confession, but without taking them literally or expecting their constituents to believe, teach, and confess them with any strong degree of consistency. Moreover, one commonly finds as much diversity within a single denomination as between denominations. Not uncommonly, Christians with “Lutheran” convictions hold membership in non-Lutheran church bodies. On the other hand, one finds, all too often, that professing Lutherans hold positions and policies at variance with the official confessional positions of traditional Lutheranism. In contrast to the mid-19th century situation when the Missouri Synod was founded and its church-relations principles were first articulated, we can no longer assume that denominational membership clearly and directly identifies one’s doctrinal positions and convictions. Interchurch relationships that were fashioned in a time of relatively clear denominational identity surely need to be reexamined in terms of this factor.

Individual Christians, congregations, pastors, teachers, and church bodies interact with and relate to a large number of other Christians, religious, and secular groups and individuals, and they do so in a variety of ways. Such relationships include the following: individual, congregational, denominational, church fellowship, partner church, other Lutheran church bodies, Lutheran federations or councils, interdenominational, ecumenical associations, interreligious, and nonreligious endeavors on behalf of ethical or humanitarian needs. Christians have opportunities as well as responsibilities, not only within each level, but in interacting with or participating in activities or programs in the various other relationships.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has not been immune to the changes taking place in both church and society. Commonsense observation, as well as surveys and polls undertaken, clearly support the premise that many members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today are less informed than our forebears on the positions and policies of our church body, together with the reasons that underlie them. We, too, have experienced a diminished sense of responsibility for the whole church, coupled with a sometimes exaggerated individualism and congregationalism. Declining denominational loyalty is a factor of contemporary church life that also affects The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In spite of such factors, however, our Synod continues to display a strong sense of confessional integrity and a desire to remain with the confession of historic, Biblical, Lutheran doctrine even in the face of criticism and contempt.

p. 4



²⁴² Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study*.

**“INTER-CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS: An Instrument for Study”
Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS (1991)**

C. *Membership in Councils, Federations of Churches, and Para-denominational Associations*

Merger, organic union, and the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship are based on comprehensive doctrinal agreement, while federations, councils, or ministerial associations usually represent efforts to provide structures for achieving such agreement and/or for carrying out work and activities consistent with the mission of the church. Membership in such federations or councils is permissible whenever (a) its doctrinal basis is consistent with the Synod's; (b) membership would assist the attainment of doctrinal agreement where it does not exist; (c) the federation, council, or association as such does not engage in activity which would identify it as a church; (d) membership would not imply that member churches are in doctrinal agreement when in fact they are not; (e) membership would not identify member churches with undesirable or questionable positions or activities of the organization as a whole or with any of its member churches. When such concerns are adequately met, membership becomes primarily a question of feasibility.

When contemplating membership in national or international councils and federations, it is imperative that the understandings and concerns of partner/sister churches be considered and respected. On the local and regional levels, similar concern should be displayed for the opinions and sensitivities of other members of the Synod, especially in the immediate neighborhood, and for receiving the counsel of the district president.

Similar considerations as those expressed above apply for membership and participation in a number of para-denominational organizations and activities. To the extent that such organizations are clearly involved in efforts that are compatible with our own principles and policies, our members should be encouraged rather than cautioned about involvement. Similarly, a number of neighborhood, community, or business-related Christian activities, such as Bible study groups or prayer breakfasts, frequently attract members of our congregations. In all such cases, our lay members are encouraged to seek the counsel of their pastors to assist them in making a faithful confession of Biblical doctrine as they meet with other Christians. In offering counsel, pastors will warn against the uncritical acceptance of teachings and materials that are contrary to Scriptural and confessional doctrine, while at the same time urging the kind of witness that will win the respect of those who hear. Such activities often provide a fine opportunity to bear witness both to the truth of the Gospel and to the unity of all Christians within the body of Christ, while also providing informal opportunities to remove caricatures and misunderstandings that have plagued inter-Christian relationships for decades.

pp. 26-27



#2

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²⁴³ Ibid.

**“Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship”
Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS (1981)**

#1

B. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES OF FELLOWSHIP

3. For the church today Holy Scripture is the only judge, rule, and norm of the Gospel

Although the first proclamation of the Gospel preceded the writings of the prophets and apostles, for us today in the post-apostolic church Holy Scripture is the only norm for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart through the Scriptural Gospel. Any qualification of the divine authority of Scripture (for example, through the use of historical criticism as it has been developed over the past two hundred years in the investigation of Scripture) endangers the Gospel in the narrow sense and consequently the unity of the church.

...

5. Love, which heads the list of “the fruit of the Spirit,” always seeks the edification of the members of the body of Christ

Love, which is a response to the Gospel, stands uppermost in the realm sanctification (1 Cor. 13). But because love always seeks the edification of the members of Christ’s body, it manifests itself in a variety of ways, depending on the situation and need. At one time it shows itself in tears, at another time in rejoicing, at yet another time in admonition, but never by compromising the means by which the spiritual unity of the church comes into being.

8. The refusal to affirm church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church) with those who do not confess the faith (*fides quae*) as it is taught in the Scriptures is not an optional matter but a Scriptural mandate

Just as the law of Christian love leads members of the body of Christ to assume that faith (*fides qua*) exists in the heart of all those who profess faith in the Gospel (narrow sense), so it also, in the interest of the Gospel and that faith, forbids the affirmation of church fellowship where there is a lack of agreement in the confession of the faith (*fides quae*). Although the Scriptures do not present a timetable or the specific procedures to be followed in delineating external relational with those who do not correctly confess the faith (*fides quae*), they do clearly teach that separation from them (refusal to affirm or continue church fellowship) is commanded by God.

9. The quest for church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church) as well as its acknowledgment when agreement in confession of the faith has been achieved, are not optional matters but Scriptural mandates

The refusal of church fellowship for any reason other than disagreement in the confession of the faith (e.g., differences in ceremony polity, national origin, language), violates the law of Christian love, even as does all loveless and misguided “concern” for the truth. Separatism (sectarianism) is condemned by God’s Word. The Scriptures command those who are one in Christ both to seek agreement in the confession of faith (*fides quae*) with all those who profess faith in Christ and to acknowledge

Note: “Part 2,” which was to address applying these principles at the congregational, pastoral, and individual levels, has yet to be written.



²⁴⁴ Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*.

**“Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship—Part 1”
Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS (1981)**

#2

B. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES OF FELLOWSHIP

1. Spiritual fellowship with Christ and with all believers is given with faith in the heart (*fides qua*)

All Christians are united in a spiritual unity with Christ by faith in the heart (*fides qua*). As members of the one holy Christian church they are also one with every other Christian who lives or who has ever lived on the face of the earth.

2. Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) comes into being through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel

The word Gospel is here used in its narrow sense (i.e., “the delightful proclamation of God’s grace and favor acquired through the merits of Christ”). Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) is produced not by the teaching that the Bible is a holy book, not by the acceptance of the inerrancy of Scripture, and not by concern for pure doctrine, but only by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, i.e. Word and sacrament.

6. The confession of the apostolic faith (*fides quae*) as it is taught in the Scriptures is mandated by God for the sake of the edification and extension of Christ’s body, the church

Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) continues to be saving faith as long as it has as its object the Scripture Gospel of Jesus Christ. God therefore commands that the church teach and confess the faith (*fides quae*) as it has been recorded by the prophets and apostles in order that the body of Christ may be edified and extended.

7. Church fellowship (in the sense of external unity in the church) is constituted by agreement in the faith which is confessed (*fides quae*) and not by faith in the heart (*fides qua*)

Faith in the heart (*fides qua*) is, to be sure, presupposed in those who confer faith in the Gospel. However, if this faith in the heart constituted church fellowship, it would be impossible to speak of church fellowship in the sense of external unity in the church, since spiritual fellowship in the body of Christ is a matter of faith in the heart and is hidden from human eyes. According to the Scriptures, external unity in the church is a matter of the right confession of the prophetic and apostolic faith.

Note: “Part 2,” which was to address applying these principles at the congregational, pastoral, and individual levels, has yet to be written.



245 Ibid.

APPENDIX G

DECISION TREE FOR DECIDING ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN GO! TOGETHER

Diagram by the author. See the next pages for explanation.

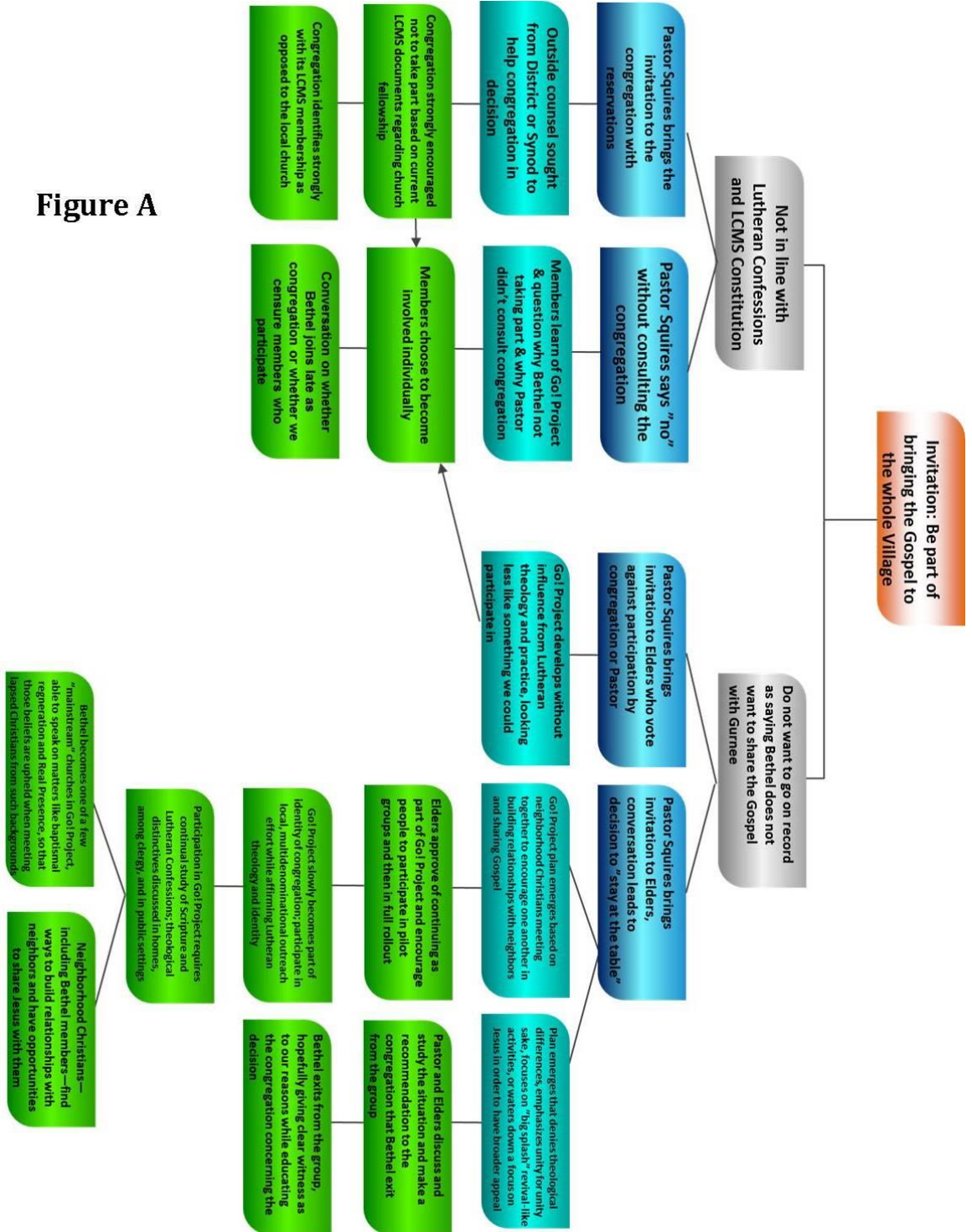
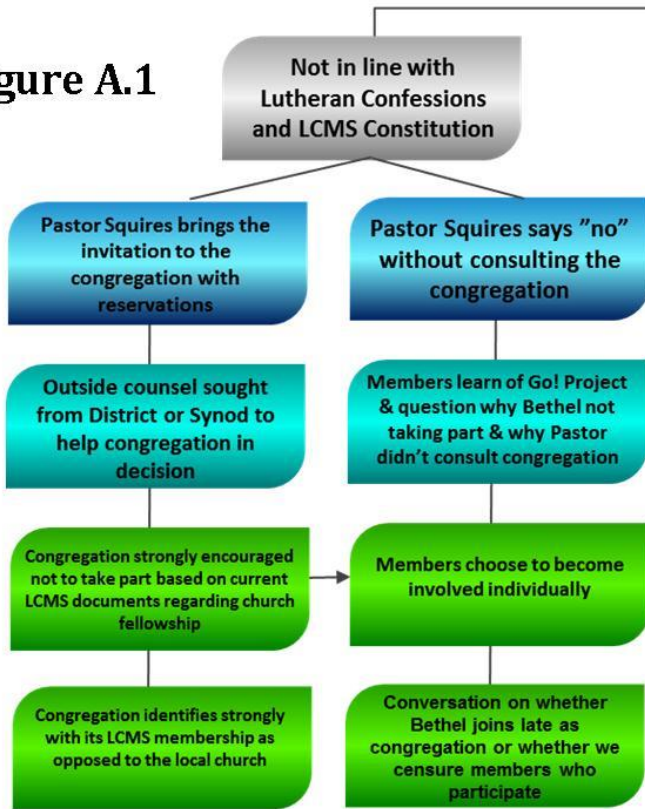


Figure A

The decision process tree (Figure A) outlines the possible avenues of response to the initial invitation for Bethel to be involved in what would become the Go! Project. On the one side of the question (Figure A.1), the cooperative local outreach effort is declared to be out of line with

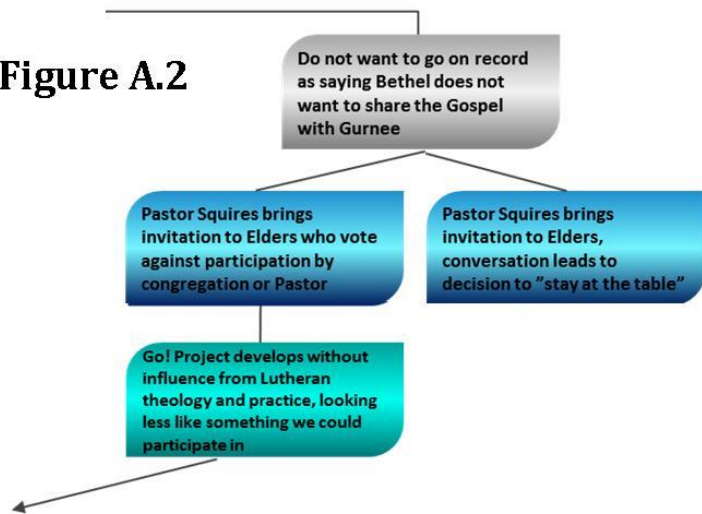
Figure A.1



the Lutheran Confessions and Synodical Constitution. These branches lead to a strengthening (entrenching) of Lutheran identity at Bethel, but also lead to potentially alienating fellow Christians in other congregations and internal strife at Bethel as the leadership considers how to handle individual members taking part in the Go! Project.

On the other side of the decision tree (Figure A.2)—which Bethel ended up following, I first concluded that I do not want to go on record as saying that our congregation does not want to be involved in bringing the Gospel to the village. At that point, in bringing it to the Elders, there was still the potential for the leadership to choose against participating. However, as shown, that could have led immediately over to the left side of the tree with the loss of Lutheran theological influence on

Figure A.2

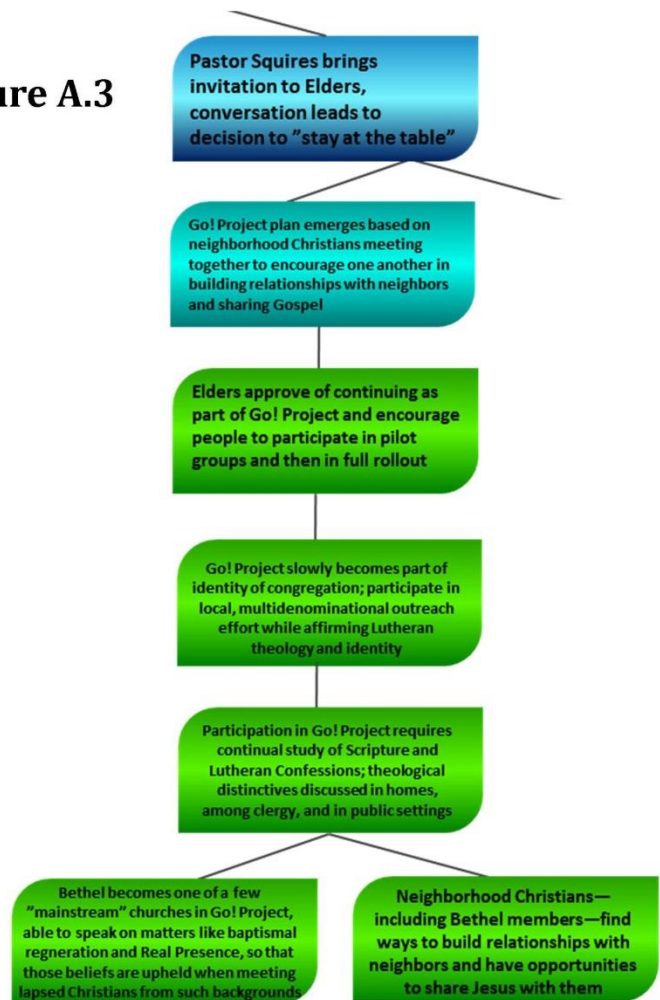


the project, individual members still ending up participating, and those members perhaps being censured by the congregation.

Alternatively, as we have experienced, the Elders chose to have me stay at the table and help shape the project in a form that would not undermine our theology. The conversation, study, and planning that the pastors engaged in while developing the Go! Project in no way tried to diminish our distinctives—the places where our theologies remain divergent. This meant that the plan that began to emerge would not wave a banner of unity for unity’s sake. We celebrate that we are one in Christ, and that the Word of Jesus is heard in each of our congregations. However, there remain plenty of theological reasons why we are separate entities. Our times spent with leaders from our congregations in presentations about the Go! Project would not dispel our theological differences.

As can be seen in that branch of the tree (Figure A.3), participation in the effort actually leads to theological pastoral care. Rather than leading to a watered-down theology, a “sweep it under the rug” approach, or adoption of other theological constructs alien to the Lutheran Confessions, participation has increased our need and interest for Lutheran doctrinal study and conversation.

Figure A.3



The remaining branch of the decision tree (Figure A.4) shows that if the plan that had emerged had gone in a direction that violated any of the above stated theological pastoral care categories, Bethel would have pulled out of the project.

Figure A.4



APPENDIX H

CASE STUDIES FOR RETREAT

1. Fear of the False Witness of Fellowship where there is not Doctrinal Agreement

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has spoken about fellowship over the course of the denomination’s history in multiple official statements and studies. A causal glance through these documents shows an ongoing concern that congregations and individuals would give false witness by “walking with” those with whom we are not in full doctrinal agreement.

2. Fear that cooperation with other churches will lead to losing people to those denominations

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been afraid for a long time, afraid that our people would be swept away from the truth by the overwhelming power and allure of American Protestantism (“evangelicalism”).

3. Fear of harboring false doctrine

A multi-denominational approach for a local outreach effort, I suppose, could leave a participating LCMS congregation open to the charge of harboring and acknowledging as legitimate heterodox teachers. Yet, what does that really mean? By working alongside brothers and sisters in Christ, does that mean we are harboring (keeping safe) their entire body of doctrine? We consider these brothers and sisters as legitimate believers in Christ based on their confession of the cross and resurrection for salvation, but that does not necessarily give legitimacy to their heterodox teachings. Plus, will working alongside other congregations mean that our congregation also becomes heterodox?

4. You can drive 3 semi-trucks between “altar & pulpit fellowship” and “cooperation in externals”

There seems to be a wide gap in LCMS documents, scholarship, and statements regarding “pulpit and altar fellowship” as opposed to “cooperation in externals.” Purposeful multi-denominationalism in a local outreach effort by a group of distinct yet cooperating congregations does not clearly fit into either side of this divide. Such projects are not attempting to create “pulpit and altar fellowship” for all participating congregations, and, rightly so, can be encouraged to avoid joint worship. However, to limit such purposefulness to “cooperation in externals” actually removes the distinctive nature of the entire Church in which her actions carry with them the Word of grace in Jesus Christ.

5. Refusing to participate could also give “false witness”

The goal of avoiding false witness to a unity of doctrine where it does not exist—while a laudable goal—leads to these branches of the decision tree that then do the very thing the congregation and the LCMS wanted to avoid: give a false witness. In this case, a witness to the wider Church and the community that Bethel Lutheran does not uphold the mission to bring the Gospel to the village. The other congregations—but especially the general community—will not pause to see whether we refrained from participating out of a desire to remain true to our doctrine; they will see it as separatistic, curmudgeonly, and stingy.

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you know, I have been working on my Doctor of Ministry degree. I have completed classes and have entered the thesis phase. The D.Min. thesis is called the Major Applied Project (MAP) which involves both academic study along with field research.

My MAP aims to look at how Bethel's partnership in the Go! Project (recently renamed Go! Together) has effected individual Bethel members and their spiritual growth.

I would like to have your participation in my research as someone who have been in a Go! Group or taken part in the Go! Intensive training. Your participation will be incredibly helpful to my thesis, but I also hope it will be an experience that will encourage and strengthen you in your faith. I am hoping that we will have about 10 participants, so each participant is very important.

Here is a brief outline of what I will be asking from participants:

- In November or December, a brief interview (no more than an hour) with each participant.
- Attend a one-night retreat from Friday evening (7 pm) to Saturday (5 pm). This will likely be held at the Dekoven Center, Racine, WI. The preferred date is January 16–17. If not enough people are available that weekend, the alternate is January 9–10. Due to a grant, this retreat will be free of charge for you.
- The retreat will include a journal assignment to be done over the following weeks.
- We will meet on Wednesday, February 4, 7:00–8:30 PM, for a Group conversation regarding the journals and reflections.²⁴⁶

The findings from this research will be used in my thesis, along with forming recommendations to Bethel's Disciple Care Elders about further opportunities for Bethel's members to be encouraged in their faith and understanding of the Gospel.

Before the research commences, I will be asking for your consent to use brief quotations from your interview or journal, ensuring that any remarks would not be able to be used to identify you. If longer quotes or more personally identifiable information were to be used, I would seek your explicit permission for such use.

I realize this is a big ask—multiple steps for you as a participant in my research. However, I hope that you will see that this is not just about fulfilling a requirement for my degree. Instead, my prayer is that it will be rewarding for you along with helping Bethel to further pursue following God's kingdom mission.

²⁴⁶ The last 2 bullet points regarding the journal assignment and group conversation were eliminated in the revised proposal, replaced by a follow up interview. Participants were alerted to this change when establishing the revised schedule and setting up the initial interviews in November-December.

I look forward to hearing from you about your willingness to participate. Especially critical right now is the timing of the retreat, since I need to confirm our reservation or make the necessary changes. If I have not heard from you by Sunday, September 21, I will be in touch with you.

Thank you.

In Christ,
Pastor Squires

APPENDIX J

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

“Doctrine as Pastoral Care” Research at Bethel Lutheran Church, Gurnee, Illinois Consent for Participation in Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Pastor Ben Squires as part of the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about pastoral care of members of Bethel Lutheran Church, Gurnee, Illinois. I will be one of approximately 11 people from Bethel being participating in this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, other participants will not be given details regarding my decision. Those details will also not be shared with other members of Bethel.
2. I understand that participation involves an initial interview, a one-night retreat with other participants (January 16–17, 2015), and a follow up interview.

Interview Portion of the Research

3. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview sessions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
4. Participation involves being interviewed by Pastor Squires—once prior to the retreat and once after that event. The interviews will last approximately 30–45 minutes each. Pastor may take written notes during the interviews. An audio recording of the interviews will be made. If I do not want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in the study.
5. I understand that the audio recordings and transcriptions will only be used for the purposes of this research. The transcriptions of the audio will be made by a third party who will not have access to my name as connected with the recordings. That third party will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Retreat Portion of the Research

6. I understand that participating involves a retreat with the approximately 10 other participants from Bethel-Gurnee.
7. All information discussed at the retreat is confidential, and my signature below indicates that I agree not to discuss outside of this retreat any personal comments made by the other

participants. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality, but this cannot be guaranteed.

Publication of Research and Retention of Materials Gathered

8. In Pastor Squires' final paper that will be published and available at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and online via dissertation services, my interview answers or comments from the retreat will only be quoted as short phrases that cannot be used to identify me.
9. If Pastor Squires would like to use any lengthy quotations or reference to longer answers or comments, he will first need to seek my further, explicit permission.
10. I understand that Pastor Squires will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from these interviews and retreat, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
11. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
12. Faculty and administrators from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, will neither be present at the interviews nor have access to raw notes or transcripts.
13. Elders, staff, and other leaders at Bethel Lutheran will neither be present at the interviews nor have access to raw notes or transcripts.
14. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Doctor of Ministry Committee and Director at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Doctor of Ministry program may be contacted through Dr. Wally Becker, Director, 314-505-7000.
15. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
16. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Researcher

Date

Pastor Benjamin C. Squires
224-419-5519
pastorsquires@gmail.com

APPENDIX K

“Doctrine as Pastoral Care” Research at Bethel Lutheran Church, Gurnee, Illinois Research Retreat Participant Confidentiality Agreement

This retreat is part of a research project to determine how to provide “doctrine as pastoral care” in preparation for being in multi-denominational settings. Confidentiality at this retreat must be maintained because it makes honest and open sharing possible.

I acknowledge that keeping confidentiality means that group members promise not to pass on personal or private information—whether that information is shared during or between group meetings—without the permission of the person who shared the information.

I recognize the fact that I may hear stories of a deeply personal nature. I also understand this confidentiality is for my benefit, so that I can feel safe enough to be authentic with those around me.

I agree to keep all information heard at this retreat completely confidential. I fully recognize the only exceptions to breaking confidentiality would be if I have reason to believe someone is in danger of committing suicide, or abusing or harming another person. I pledge to alert the police, Pastor, and possibly other authorities should the need arise.

Pastor may take written notes during the retreat. An audio recording of the large group sessions will be made. If I do not want to be recorded, I will not be able to participate in the retreat.

I understand that the audio recordings and transcriptions will only be used for the purposes of this research. The transcriptions of the audio will be made by a third party who will not have access to my name as connected with the recordings. That third party will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

This agreement also acknowledges the previous consent statements regarding the purpose and publication of this research.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Researcher

Date

Pastor Benjamin C. Squires
224-419-5519
pastorsquires@gmail.com

APPENDIX L

“DOCTRINE AS PASTORAL CARE” RESEARCH AT BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, GURNEE, ILLINOIS TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audio recordings received from Pastor Ben Squires related to this research study.

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio recorded interviews.
2. To not make copies of any audio recordings or the transcribed interviews texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher.
3. To save all study-related audio recordings and transcriptions in the password-protected Google Drive folder as administered by the researcher.
4. To delete any copies of electronic files that are saved to my computer hard drive and any back-up devices during the process of transcription.

I am aware that I can be held responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio recordings and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed) _____

Transcriber’s signature _____

Date _____

Signature of the Researcher Date

Pastor Benjamin C. Squires
224-419-5519
pastorsquires@gmail.com

APPENDIX M

BETHEL BOARD OF ELDERS PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

(a)																															
<i>Bethel Board of Elders Meeting Minutes</i>																															
Date and Time:	November 11, 2014 @ 7:30PM																														
Location:	Bethel																														
Attendance: Those present in <i>Bold</i>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Ben Squires</td> <td>Pastor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chris Drager</td> <td>DCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Mike Bandman</td> <td>Et. Candle</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Steve Best</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-David Boyle</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Paul DeLassus</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Tim Faitsch</td> <td>Secretary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Randy Gifford</td> <td>Chairman</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-John Kozlik</td> <td>Wine</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Paul Krueger</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Matt Messmer</td> <td>Music/Hd. Usher</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Bill Oesterich</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Jose Rayos</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Warren Regnier</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-Jack Warneke</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Ben Squires	Pastor	Chris Drager	DCE	-Mike Bandman	Et. Candle	-Steve Best		-David Boyle		-Paul DeLassus		-Tim Faitsch	Secretary	-Randy Gifford	Chairman	-John Kozlik	Wine	-Paul Krueger		-Matt Messmer	Music/Hd. Usher	-Bill Oesterich		-Jose Rayos		-Warren Regnier		-Jack Warneke	
Ben Squires	Pastor																														
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-David Boyle																															
-Paul DeLassus																															
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-Randy Gifford	Chairman																														
-John Kozlik	Wine																														
-Paul Krueger																															
-Matt Messmer	Music/Hd. Usher																														
-Bill Oesterich																															
-Jose Rayos																															
-Warren Regnier																															
-Jack Warneke																															
<p>– New Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A motion was made by Paul to allow Pastor Squires permission from Bethel's Board of Elders to conduct research (interviews, education retreat) as part of his Doctor of Ministry thesis project through Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This will involve a limited number of Bethel members (11). The published thesis will not specifically identify individuals unless explicit permission is granted. Seconded by Steve. All aye. 																															

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Tim Faitsch

APPENDIX N

ANALYSIS BY AUTHOR OF CONGREGATIONS AT CROSSROADS (see above, Ch. 3, Sec. A, “Measuring the Effectiveness of Adult Education in the LCMS)

B. SCALES

ABOUT THESE SCALES: The following tables show the individual items in each of the major scales used in this study. Multiple items are used to measure particular factors because they give a richer, more accurate picture of the factor than a single item would. Whenever multiple items are used, they are created into a scale to come up with a single percentage to represent the total. These scales are presented here to give a greater understanding of what this study entails.

1. THE LCMS FAITH MATURITY SCALE (see p.3)

SCALE NAME	ITEMS IN SCALE	ADULTS (%)	YOUTH (%)	
1. Trusts and Believes	17. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again. (Almost always or Always true)	99%	98%	
	26. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world. (Almost always or Always true)	77	57	
	R42. I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world. (Never or Rarely true)	30	30	
	R43. I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved. (Never or Rarely true)	53	44	
	52. I have a real sense that God is guiding me. (Almost always or Always true)	64	48	
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	89	77	
	2. Experiences the fruits of faith	R25. I have a hard time accepting myself. (Never or Rarely true)	37	35
		R36. I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have. (Never or Rarely true)	18	13
		40. My life is filled with meaning and purpose. (Almost always or Always true)	55	50
		44. I am confident I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious. (Almost always or Always true)	43	47
R50. My life is filled with stress and anxiety. (Almost always or Always true)		17	35	
SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)		40	27	
3. Integrates faith and life	18. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day. (Almost always or Always true)	66	42	
	22. My faith helps me know right from wrong. (Almost always or Always true)	86	68	
	37. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people. (Almost always or Always true)	20	10	
	46. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues. (Almost always or Always true)	38	26	
	47. My life is committed to Jesus Christ. (Almost always or Always true)	65	51	
SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	71	48		

Key

- factual knowledge
- emotional complexity
- engaged life

SCALE NAME	ITEMS IN SCALE	ADULTS (%)	YOUTH (%)
4. Celebrates the good news	30. I am thrilled when I see a person's life changed because of Jesus Christ. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	80	67
	41. Telling people that Jesus Christ died for their sins is one of the most important things in my life. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	25	20
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	68	52
5. Seeks spiritual growth	24. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	25	9
	29. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	25	20
	31. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	49	37
	35. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	50	58
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	45	28
6. Nurtures faith in community	19. I help others with their religious questions and struggles. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	16	17
	39. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	43	36
	49. I talk with other people about my faith. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	23	21
	54. I like to worship and pray with others. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	73	40
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	52	37
7. Holds life-affirming values	R20. I tend to be critical of other people. <i>(Rarely or Never true)</i>	11	13
	27. I take excellent care of my physical health. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	37	48
	33. I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	70	73
	34. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	23	23
	38. I speak out for equality for women and minorities. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	20	34
	57. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	82	59
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	55	54
8. Advocates social change	16. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	26	38
	45. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	30	31
	R53. I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues. <i>(Rarely or Never true)</i>	28	39
	56. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	38	23
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	47	43

SCALE NAME	ITEMS IN SCALE	ADULTS (%)	YOUTH (%)
9. Acts and serves	21. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	12	13
	23. I do things to help protect the environment. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	46	34
	28. I am active in efforts to promote social justice. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	8	15
	32. I am active in efforts to promote world peace. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	5	10
	48. I spend a lot of time helping people in my town or city. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	11	10
	51. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	28	22
	55. I am active in making my community a better place to live. <i>(Almost always or Always true)</i>	15	11
	SCALE TOTAL (average of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale)	16	20

2. THE LAW-GOSPEL INDEX

(see p. 7)

To what extent do you believe each of the following statements? (I definitely believe this)

ITEMS IN SCALE	ADULTS (%)	YOUTH (%)
1. The main emphasis of Christianity is on God's rules for how one earns salvation.	22	15
2. I believe I will be saved only if I obey God's commandments perfectly.	6	3
3. The Law-Gospel doctrine means that Jesus' death and resurrection makes the law unimportant.	5	2
4. There is nothing I can do to earn salvation.	48	26
5. God loves me even though I am sinful.	94	95
6. The law of God helps me understand why I cannot make it on my own.	69	43
7. Salvation is a gift which no one deserves.	62	48
8. More than anything else, my salvation depends on how well I follow God's rules.	14	5
9. God's law places obligations on us which no one can completely fulfill.	55	41
10. The Law-Gospel doctrine means that believing in Jesus gives us the power to obey God's commandments perfectly.	8	4
SCALE TOTAL (seven or more correct)	63	53

3. THE ORTHODOX BELIEFS SCALE

(see p. 7)

("Lean toward believing this" or "definitely believe this.")

ITEMS IN SCALE	ADULTS (%)	YOUTH (%)
11. The Holy Spirit is at work in my life.	96	93
12. There is life after death.	92	85
13. Jesus died on a cross and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead.	97	96
14. The devil is a real power in the world.	89	77
15. God created the universe.	96	95
SCALE TOTAL (4.0 or higher on a 5-point scale)	96	92

APPENDIX O

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF PAST SURVEYS OF LUTHERANS AND BELIEFS

Beliefs and Inter-Church Relations, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987

154 questions (including census data), but not one of them could be considered “engaged life” questions. Some were factual, what-do-we-teach questions. Others were information gathering (what is your congregation’s practice?). Finally another set sought the opinion of respondents in terms of their general feelings toward non-LCMS Christian denominations.²⁴⁷

Congregational Ministry, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987

220 questions (not all applicable for each respondent) mainly about their evaluation of the congregation’s environment, priorities, and execution of their responsibilities. No overt questions about the respondents’ individually engaged lives outside of the congregation.²⁴⁸

Families and the Church, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987

172 total questions (including census questions and those not applicable to every respondent) about family life, marriage, parenting, and social issues. Here we see some engaged life kinds of questions. However, upon closer inspection, the engaged life questions are limited in how much the respondents needed to reflect on their own sense of how faith played a role in

²⁴⁷ “Summary | Beliefs and Inter-Church Relations, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987....”

²⁴⁸ Becker, Peter, Elizabeth Becker, and John O'Hara. "Codebook | Congregational Ministry, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives." Codebook | Congregational Ministry, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives. 1987. Accessed April 15, 2015. http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/PANEL862_CB.asp.

their daily experiences. 19 questions (11% of total questions) presented social issues (divorce, living together before marriage, etc.) to ascertain respondents' positions which could be considered seeking to know whether respondents are aware of what constitutes sanctified living. However, these questions only ask the respondents for their opinion on these matters, perhaps a "sanctified opinion," but not necessarily a description of how these respondents are themselves pursuing to live in a sanctified way. 77 questions (45% of total questions) asked respondents if they had experienced a series of personal life changes (divorce, family conflict, crimes, etc.) which allows the survey to paint a picture of each respondent's life situation and compare it to their opinion on issues. The follow up questions within this set sought the respondents' opinion of their congregation's support for them during their personal crises ("great deal of support" to "no support" to "nobody at the church knew about this" to "the situation wasn't one to which the church was relevant"). Again, in terms of seeing engaged life research, these questions do provide insight into people's understanding of how their Christian faith plays a role in daily living, although the congregational focus to the opinion questions seems to be focus on an understanding of the relation of an individual to the corporate nature of Church. In other words, respondents might have said the church is not relevant to the issue they faced, but would they have said their personal faith was relevant to that same issue?²⁴⁹

Ministries By and To Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Men and Women, 1987

458 total questions (including census questions and those not applicable to every respondent). A limited number of the questions begin to point to the role of faith in the

²⁴⁹ Becker, Peter, Elizabeth Becker, and John O'Hara. "Summary | Families and the Church, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives." Summary | Families and the Church, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives. 1987. Accessed April 15, 2015.

respondent's life ("How important are your religious beliefs?" and "How strong a Christian are you?"). These questions are intermixed with assessing the person's attachment to the LCMS ("How many of your closest friends are LCMS?" and "How upset would you be if you moved and there was no LCMS in your new area?"). Interestingly, there is not a corresponding question to see how many of the respondent's closest friends are Christian. In a section of questions related to how one spends their leisure time (23 questions, 5% of total questions), the questions related to who respondents interact with socially on a regular basis asked specifically about members of their congregation, but all other categories (relatives, neighbors, friends) did not follow up to see if people in those categories were Christian.²⁵⁰

By far the majority of the questions in this survey had to do with the roles people have in the respondent's congregation (43 questions, 9% of total questions, related to the individual's own involvement, with 218 questions, 48% of total questions, related to the congregation's enactment related to the roles of men and women and the respondent's opinion regarding those roles). Cross-reference data emerges from the questions related to the respondent's opinion on social issues (37 questions, 8% of total questions), but no section attempts to develop a picture of the person's own engaged faith life.

Young Adolescents and Their Parents: A National Study, 1984 - Father & Mother Components

The LCMS was one of 13 participating denominations/organizations. 386 total questions (including census questions and those not applicable to every respondent). This survey perhaps does the best at describing sanctified living of the respondents (parents) who also are asked their

²⁵⁰ Becker, Peter, Elizabeth Becker, and John O'Hara. "Codebook | Ministries By and To Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Men and Women, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives." Codebook | Ministries By and To Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Men and Women, 1987 | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives. 1987. Accessed April 15, 2015.

opinion of the sanctified life of their children. Around 35 questions (10% of total questions) elicit the parent's opinion on matters related to how the child behaves or is influenced which can be seen to be directly related to sanctified life. This, then, is cross-referenced with at least 48 questions (13% of total questions) which can be said to be examined the respondent's own sanctified living. Helpfully, among these surveys considered here, this study begins to draw connections between a child's engaged living development and a parent's development (and commitment to that development) in the same areas. However, because the survey's data includes respondents from 13 organizations²⁵¹, the correlations drawn to the role of Christian faith in daily living may be less illustrative.²⁵²

²⁵¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Lutheran Church, Baptist General Conference, Churches of God-General Conference, Evangelical Covenant Church, 4-H Extension, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, National Associations of Homes for Children, National Catholic Educational Association, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Southern Baptist Convention, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church.

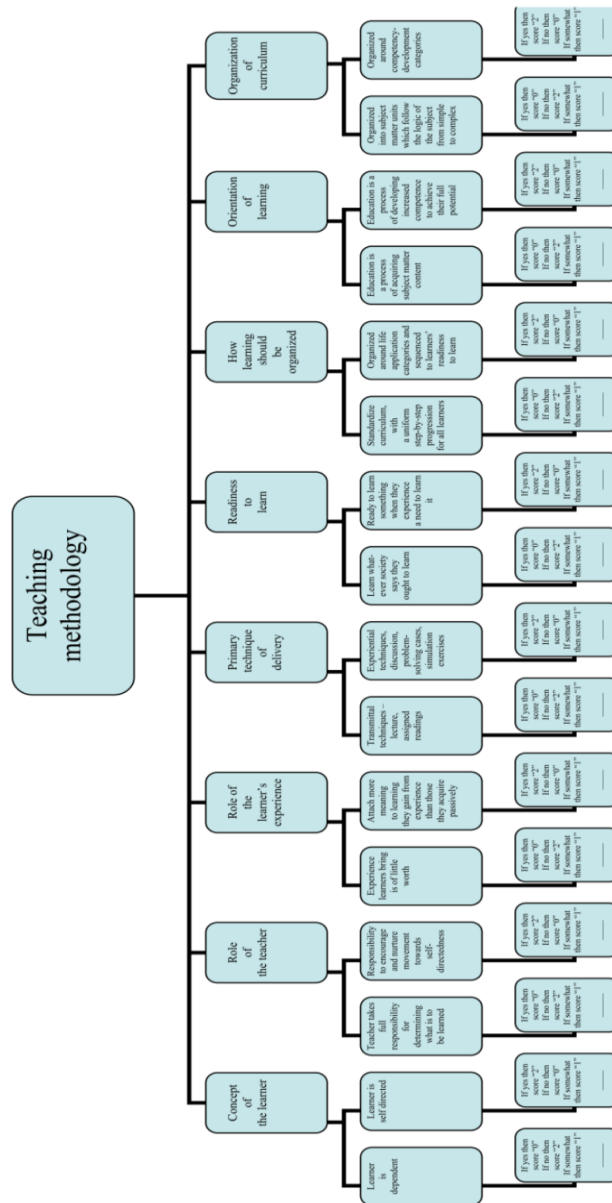
²⁵² Benson, Peter. "Summary | Young Adolescents and Their Parents: A National Study, 1984 - Parent Component | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives." Summary | Young Adolescents and Their Parents: A National Study, 1984 - Parent Component | Data Archive | The Association of Religion Data Archives. 1984. Accessed April 15, 2015. <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/EAFATHER.asp> (<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/EAMOTHER.asp>).

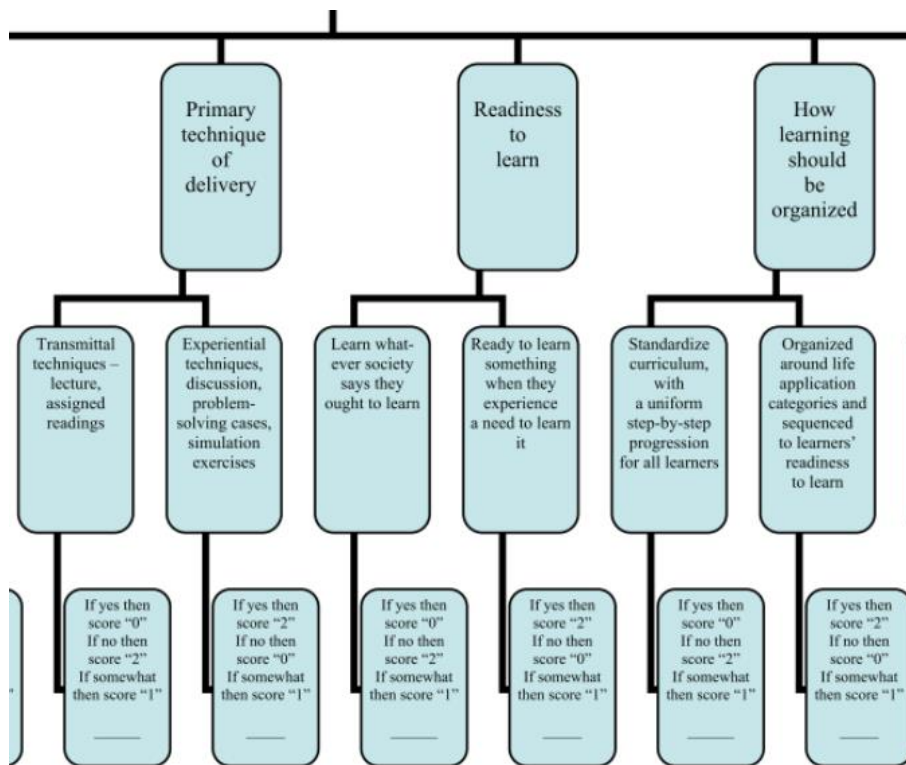
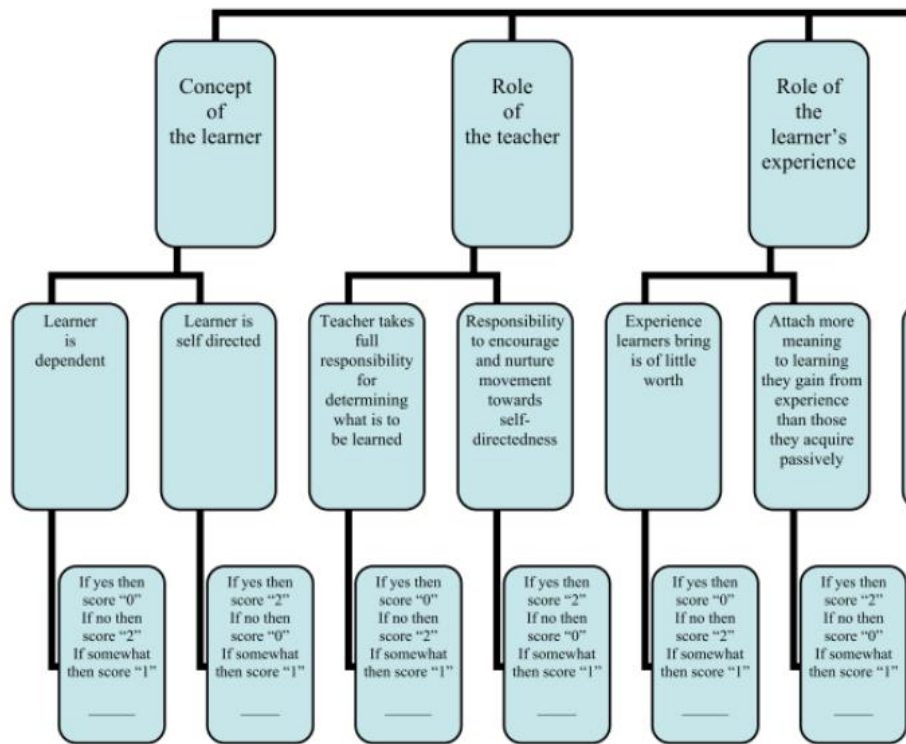
APPENDIX P

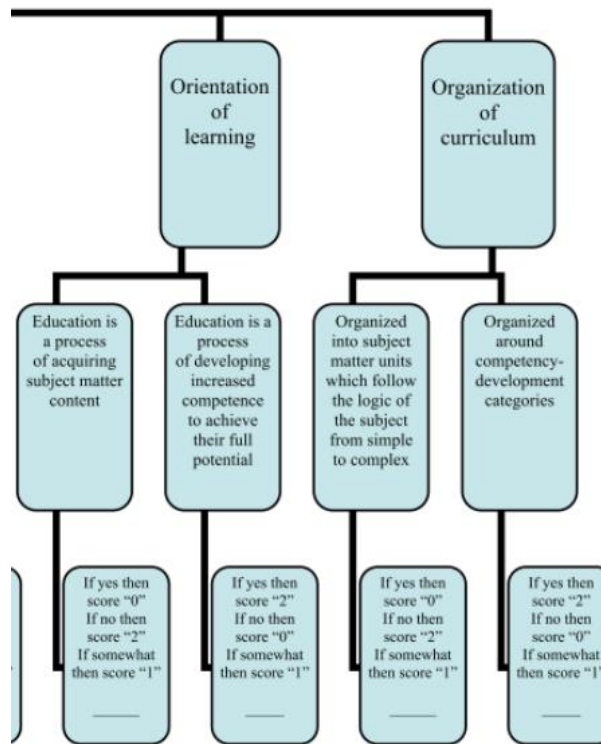
TEACHING METHODOLOGY INSTRUMENT

Taylor, Bryan and Michael Kroth. "A Single Conversation with a Wise Man Is Better Than Ten Years of Study: A Model for Testing Methodologies for Pedagogy or Andragogy." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 9, no. 2 (2009): 43.

See next pages for detail images.



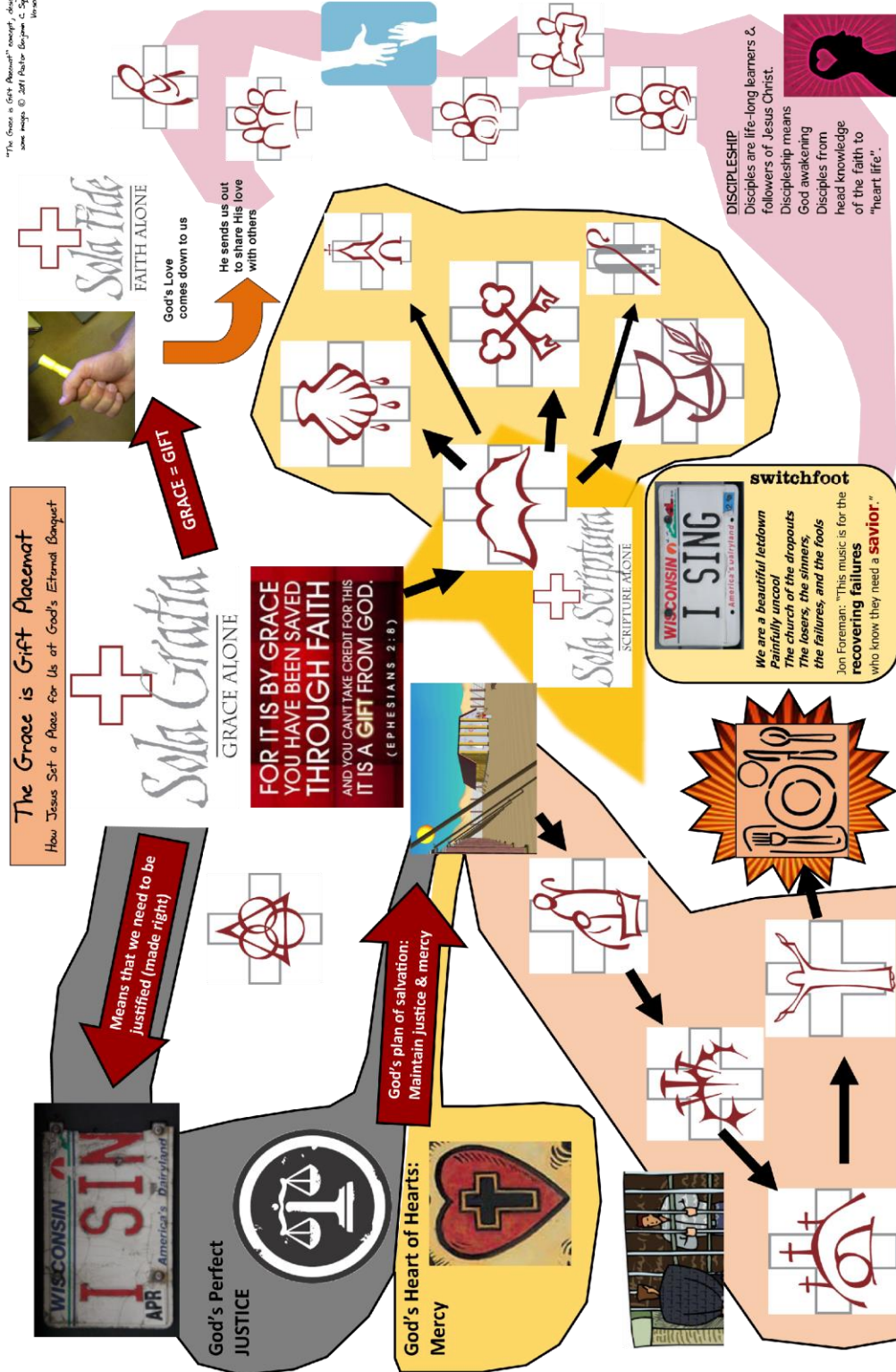




APPENDIX Q

PLACEMAT

Diagram by the author.



APPENDIX R

Bethel-Gurnee's Strategic Initiatives (2012)

What are the Strategic Mission Initiatives?

One of the goals of the reFocusing was to identify *Strategic Mission Initiatives* that will serve as a roadmap for the congregation. These are central unifying ideas to guide us in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There were many possible initiatives suggested by Bethel members, which clustered into three common and interrelated themes:



DISCIPLESHIP

Disciples are followers of Jesus who live out their faith. Their daily lives shine forth with evidence of what they believe about being saved by grace through faith. As a congregation we will intentionally call our members to an ever deepening discipleship—lifelong learning and living in Jesus. We will create spaces that nurture Christian education and growth. We will develop deeper relationships within the congregation that empower us to strengthen relationships in our community. We will lovingly build each other up in our faith and daily living while encouraging one another to speak the truth of God's message to all people.



CARE FOR MEMBERS AND THE COMMUNITY

We will build relationships with others by developing a connection as we serve them or serve together with them. We will provide for people's physical and emotional needs through direct action. We will build a network that will provide resources for people. It means caring for those already at Bethel while also engaging those outside of Bethel. We will provide direct assistance and build a supportive relationship, not just short-term aid. These relationships will provide opportunities for spiritual conversations. It means staying friends with people even if the spiritual conversations do not immediately bring them to faith in Jesus.



INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL OUTREACH

We will intentionally go into our community to provide places to begin, develop and deepen spiritual conversations that lead toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will ensure that conversations not only happen in the church, but in the community as well: homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, coffee shops and pubs. We will work cooperatively with all Christians in our community to build spiritual connections and conversations.

There are other continuing ministries that are very strong and will be supported by the congregation: Youth and Family ministry, Music ministry, Christian education, and others. We will continue these ministries. Adoption of the Strategic Mission Initiatives does not diminish the importance of existing ministries and church management activities.

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