

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

2-7-2004

The Theological Principles Underlying Parish Records with Particular Application to their Role in the Design and Evaluation of Computer Software

Chris Hinkle

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, pastor@stpaulwapello.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/dmin>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinkle, Chris, "The Theological Principles Underlying Parish Records with Particular Application to their Role in the Design and Evaluation of Computer Software" (2004). *Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project*. 80.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/dmin/80>

This Major Applied Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

THE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING PARISH RECORDS
WITH PARTICULAR APPLICATION TO THEIR ROLE IN THE
DESIGN AND EVALUATION OF COMPUTER SOFTWARE

CHRIS NELSON HINKLE

FEBRUARY 07, 2004 Concordia Seminary

Saint Louis, Missouri

Advisor Glenn A. Nielsen

DATE

2/11/04

Reader David J. Peter

DATE

2/11/04

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
David J. Peter

DATE

2/11/04

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. THE GOSPEL, THE CHURCH, AND CONGREGATIONAL RECORDS ..	8
The Nature of the Church and Church Membership	14
The Gospel and the Church's Life and Mission	19
Congregational Records That Support the Church's Ministry	23
2. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT MEMBERSHIP RECORDS	30
Introductory Issues Related to the Gathering and Use of Information.	30
Issues Encountered When Categorizing Relationships Between People and the Local Congregation.	33
Worship and Communion Attendance Records	45
Stewardship of Time and Talents	46
Family Relationships and Women's Issues	51
Denominational Reporting Requirements	56
3. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT CONTRIBUTIONS AND FINANCIAL RECORDS.	59
The Principles of Individual Stewardship	60
Encouraging Growth in Financial Stewardship	64

Pledging	69
Special Appeals and Designated Gifts	73
Accounting Methods and Terminology	76
Conclusion	80
4. AN OVERVIEW OF COMPUTERIZED RECORDS	81
The Early Adopters	81
The Seventies	83
The Early Eighties	86
The CCUC and LCIS	87
The Next Step: LCIS 2000	93
Recent Developments	96
5. THE EVALUATION INSTRUMENT AND ITS USE	101
Membership	103
Contributions	110
Financial Accounting	113
Summarizing the Results	115
6. EVALUATION OF THREE RECENT PRODUCTS	117
Method of Analysis	117
Findings	119
Noteworthy Strengths	137
Conclusions	138

7. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK	140
Summary and Suggestions	140
Benefits of the Project	143
APPENDIX	
A. SOFTWARE COMPARISON	145
B. REVELATIONS	152
C. SHEPHERD'S STAFF	161
D. LUTHERAN CHURCH WINDOWS	170
E. SAMPLE LCMS CONGREGATIONAL REPORT	179
BIBLIOGRAPHY	181

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAL	Aid Association for Lutherans
AC	Augsburg Confession
AELC	American Evangelical Lutheran Church
ALC	The American Lutheran Church
AP	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
CCUC	Consultation on Congregational Use of Computers
CD	Compact Disk
CD-R	Compact Disk—Recordable
CD-ROM	Compact Disk—Read Only Memory
CPH	Concordia Publishing House
CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations
DOS	Disk Operating System
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FASB	Financial Accounting Standards Board
IBM	International Business Machines
LCA	Lutheran Church in America
LCIS	Lutheran Congregational Information System

LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
MB	MegaByte(s) (1,048,576 bytes)
MIS+	Ministry Information System Plus
MS-DOS	Microsoft's Disk Operating System.
PC	Personal Computer
SQL	Structured Query Language
UCSD	University of California, San Diego

INTRODUCTION

This project assumes that principles guide our actions. In particular, there are theological and pastoral principles behind the records that we keep in our churches. Further, those principles ought to be applied to the selection and use of church software.

My interest in the principles behind church records grew naturally from my work on behalf of the church. From 1983 until 1992, I managed the computer products department at Concordia Publishing House, the official publisher for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. While there, I oversaw the publication of the *Lutheran Congregational Information System*¹ and its successors. I managed programming, support, and training on behalf of all the Lutheran publishers. I also managed software marketing for Concordia Publishing House. This position gave me a unique opportunity to understand the purpose of congregational records and to discuss their use with hundreds of lay people and professional staff.

Although the first commercial software for congregational use dates back to 1968, it wasn't until the introduction of personal computers that it became feasible for most

¹Version 2.35 was used for reference during the preparation of this paper. Lutheran Congregation Information System Version 2.35, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis; Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis; and Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee; 1988.

congregations to computerize their records. Early attempts to utilize PC's were generally amateur attempts that generated a great deal of frustration for congregational staff. Nonetheless, a few good quality, but functionally limited, systems were created and marketed for the Apple II and other early microcomputers.

As interest in utilizing computers for administrative purposes grew, six Lutheran church bodies formed an ad hoc committee, the Consultation on Congregational Use of Computers (CCUC). With financial assistance from Aid Association for Lutherans,² the CCUC evaluated the software that was then available. They concluded that none of the packages were suitable for Lutheran congregations and submitted a proposal for a grant to develop a truly Lutheran system. Soon after, work began on LCIS, the *Lutheran Congregational Information System*.³

Why did the CCUC find other software unacceptable? What made the *Lutheran Congregation Information System* Lutheran? When it came time for me to design a replacement for LCIS, what factors had to be preserved for our congregations? The answers to these questions have more to do with pastoral theology than with computer science.

Lutheran pastors have their own unique ways of speaking about issues like stewardship and church membership. How they talk about such things reflects their theological understanding of what it means to be a church member or give an offering.

²Now Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

³Hereafter the acronym LCIS will frequently be used.

Lutheran pastors are also interested in keeping different kinds of records than fundamentalist, Reformed, or Roman Catholic pastors. This, too, reflects their theology. Everyone keeps a mailing list, but not everyone cares when their members last attended Communion. Even the struggles of Lutherans to come to grips with church growth and women's issues were reflected in the design of our software.

This paper will document the theological and pastoral underpinnings of LCIS and its immediate successors as a reminder that how we say things and what we do should flow from what we believe. However, these theological and pastoral considerations have more than historical importance. For, although the forms and programs congregations use to keep their records may change, unless our beliefs change, the principles behind their selection and use will remain the same. Clarifying these principles should be helpful to those who wish to understand how they can best utilize their current system for keeping records. Understanding them will help congregations that are selecting new software to pick something that will work well for them, both theologically and practically, so that the software will be a help rather than a burden in their service to Christ's kingdom. Finally, since many newer programs allow users to adjust their terminology, these pages will provide guidance as to the sorts of terminology that would be most appropriate.

Project Description

There were two specific objectives for this project: 1) to describe the theological principles that affect the design and use of church records and 2) to demonstrate how

these principles can be used by congregations when evaluating computer software designed for keeping church records.

Fulfilling the first objective required me to revisit many of the decisions that were made over the years as LCIS and its successors were developed. Doing so has enabled me to give coherence and structure to decisions that were often made piecemeal, to explain why certain choices were made, to question others, and to make plain how the character of the software reflects our Lutheran heritage and theology. The first three chapters set out the results of this reflection in a way that can be generalized to other computer programs or even to manual records.

The second objective was accomplished by creating a form that helped me keep track of the kinds of records various programs kept and the terminology they employed. Issues such as security and the purpose of the various data fields were also considered. Finally, the form notes how effectively some of the pastoral needs identified in the first three chapters can be met by the programs that were evaluated. The form, its use, and my results are discussed in chapters five, six, and seven.

The structure of this document follows the overall flow of the project. The foundation is laid in chapter one. Beginning with the Gospel that gives the church life and purpose, chapter one discusses the nature of the church and begins the exploration of what it means to be a church member. It also explores some of the ways that church records can support the work of the Gospel and will show why the Gospel must always lie at the heart of our evaluation and use of church records.

Chapter two of this document will explore how these general principles can be applied to a number of issues that affect the records we keep for members and prospective members. It will also show how a congregation's position on various issues will effect their records. Both the kinds of information kept and the terminology used within those records are determined primarily by such decisions. Chapter two will explore various ethical issues, go over the multitude of possible relationships between individuals and a congregation, and even touch on the principles of denominational fellowship. Then it will discuss the role of the means of grace in the life of the congregation and show how pastoral concerns in that area shape our records. Family relationships, women's issues, and the stewardship of time and talents will all be addressed. Finally, it will take a quick look at denominational reporting requirements and how they affect the local congregation's records.

Contributions and financial records are the center of focus in chapter three. Chapter three shows some of the ways that contributor records can be used to encourage growth in financial stewardship. It also discusses the kinds of records that may be needed to handle designated gifts, pledges, and the special appeals that are becoming increasingly common in some church bodies.

Chapter four provides an overview of computerized record keeping systems. The strengths and weakness of computerized systems are explained and the chief advantages of computerizing congregational records are explained. The chapter also includes a brief history of church software and describes some of the ways that computerized records

systems have changed over the years as the capacity and speed of personal computers have increased.

Chapter five describes a sample evaluation instrument that will provide a framework for considering a congregation's pastoral and terminological needs. Chapter six describes how the author used that instrument to examine three programs that are currently being sold to Lutheran congregations: *Shepherd's Staff*,⁴ *Revelations*,⁵ and *Lutheran Church Windows*.⁶ All are third generation, Windows-based products. *Shepherd's Staff* and *Revelations* were of particular interest since they have both been marketed by Lutheran publishers and both desire to be successors to LCIS within their own church bodies.⁷ Chapter six contains the results of my evaluation. The final chapter gives a brief summary of the project's results and provides some suggestions for further work.

It is my hope that this project will help congregations make wise decisions about software and bring about a greater appreciation for the ways our theology works itself into the life of our congregations. It affirms the need for precision in our language and

⁴Shepherd's Staff Version 7.1, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2002.

⁵Revelations: Church Management Software Version 9.02, Icon Systems Inc., Moorhead, MN, 2001.

⁶Church Windows Information Manager 2003, Computer Helper Publishing, Columbus, OH, 2003.

⁷Concordia Publishing House developed *Shepherd's Staff* to replace *LCIS 2000* in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Augsburg Fortress Publishers sold *Revelations* as the replacement for *LCIS 2000* in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

shows how the Gospel gives purpose to a congregation's records and actions. As chapter one will show, such "gospel purposes" are the hallmark of a good system of records.

CHAPTER 1

**THE GOSPEL, THE CHURCH, AND
CONGREGATIONAL RECORDS**

In his famous recording of the “Wedding Song,” Noel Paul Stookey sang “Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again.”¹ This reference to God’s creation could easily be rewritten to speak of Christ and the church: The church draws her life from Christ and gives it back again.

The church is a creation of the Gospel.² Wherever the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed, those who believe are added to the church. The new spiritual life within them begins when God gives his Spirit through the Word of grace to create and nurture faith.³ This new life flows from the wound in Christ’s side and the blood that was shed for their

¹“Wedding Song (There is Love)” (New York: Public Domain Foundation, 1971).

²In discussing the primacy of the Gospel among the marks of the church, Kurt Marquart marshals this quote from Luther, “Truly the Gospel is the one most sure and noble mark of the church, much surer than Baptism and the Bread, *because [the church] is conceived, made, nurtured, borne, trained, fed, clothed, adorned, armed, and preserved only through the Gospel.*” (WA 7:721.12) cited in Robert D. Preus, ed., *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. IX, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, by Kurt E. Marquart (Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 21. Emphasis mine.

³Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 15.

forgiveness.⁴ Believers cleave to Christ and are united with him in Baptism (Romans 6:4-5). They are one with him, part of his crucified and resurrected body (1 Cor. 12:27), and they renew and celebrate that oneness each time they gather to receive the Sacrament of the Altar (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The church gives back her life through service to Christ and the Gospel.⁵ As Christ's helpmate (Eph. 5:31-32, Gen.2:18-24), she proclaims the same Gospel to others so that they, too, might share in the life of Christ (Rev. 22:17). Her work is part of her worship; it reflects the love and admiration she has for the One who died and rose to give her life (Romans 12:1, 1 Peter 2:9).⁶

For these reasons, the Gospel lies at the heart of all we do together as congregations. It is the center not only of our worship, but also of our service. Each

⁴Marquart, 5.

⁵Lutherans often distinguish between the Gospel in the narrow sense—the message that God has forgiven all sins for Christ's sake and accounts as righteous all who believe in him—and a broad sense that includes the preaching of repentance. Within this paper, when "Gospel" is capitalized and used substantively the reference is to the narrow sense. Constructs such as "gospel-reason" refer to those things which in some way provide opportunity or support for the proclamation of the Gospel proper. In this sense, God's Law has a "gospel-purpose" since it is the "tutor that leads us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:24 NASB).

⁶In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (AP), Article XXIV, Melancthon clearly establishes that such a "sacrifice of thanksgiving" is the only sort of worship that is acceptable to God. In so doing, he refers specifically to the proclamation of the Gospel: "The New Testament teaches that there should be a new and pure sacrifice; this is faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and proclamation of the Gospel, suffering because of the Gospel, etc." AP XXIV:30, Tappert, 255. Confessional citations other than the Small Catechism will be from the Tappert edition. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Theodore G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

board, every committee, every position in a congregation ought to have a gospel-reason for being.⁷ Some, such as the evangelism teams or the Sunday school, will proclaim the Gospel directly. Others, like the trustees, do not work directly with the Word and Sacraments but still serve the Gospel. For, properly done, their work facilitates the work and worship of others.

To understand the interplay between such mundane tasks as building maintenance or bookkeeping and more obviously spiritual tasks, such as preaching the Word,⁸ it is helpful to remember that human beings were created from earthly dust and spirit from God (Gen. 2:7). There are, consequently, both horizontal and vertical dimensions to life, and Christians live and work in both dimensions. Charles P. Arand notes,

There are two dimensions to being a human creature. One is a vertical dimension that involves our life with God, especially in the matters of death and salvation. The other is a horizontal dimension that involves our life with God's creatures and our activity in the world. It serves the maintenance and furtherance of life in the world. In the former, we discover our humanity. . . . In the latter, we realize our humanity.⁹

⁷Donald A. Abdon puts it this way, "To organize around the Great Commission means to structure and implement the task of making disciples with a conscious awareness that the *Gospel* is the God-given means for the task.... All of the Church's efforts need to reflect the Great Commission and the Gospel as the motive force behind its efforts." [Emphasis Abdon's]. Donald A. Abdon, Introduction to *Organizing Around the Great Commission*, 2nd. Ed. (Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, 1977).

⁸Lutherans hold that everyday tasks performed in faith and obedience to God are holier and more pleasing to him than many of the supposedly spiritual tasks that are done with a view to winning his approval. AP XV:25, Tappert, 218. For a full discussion, see Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999).

⁹Arand actually derives these two dimensions from two kinds of righteousness: the righteousness of faith and civic righteousness. The argument from creation is a simplification of his thesis. Charles P.

Like the individual Christian, the church also lives in both dimensions.

“In the vertical dimension, the church lives in the presence of God as an assembly of believers created by the Spirit through the Word of God. . . . In its horizontal dimension. . . . the church lives in the midst of human society. It takes on institutional forms as a sustaining community that befits the children of God”¹⁰

Both dimensions are essential. As previously noted, without the vertical dimension there is no church, for it is God who brings the church into being through the Word and Sacraments. The horizontal elements of church life, such as the ways we go about our church-work, flow from the vertical dimension of church life and provide a context for God’s work in and through the church. Arand writes:

The horizontal dimension serves the vertical by providing the context within which the vertical can occur. Times and places for worship provide the settings within which the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. Structures from lectionaries to liturgies provide opportunity for the entire counsel of God to be proclaimed and heard. . . . The church draws upon the resources of creation and society in order to find the forms wherein its life can be expressed. At the same time, the church in its horizontal dimension must draw upon *resources derived from reason* [emphasis mine] in order to serve and give expression to the church as the assembly of believers. Architecture is chosen not only to facilitate human needs, but to accentuate the core values of the church. Polity is based upon what is deemed best (*bene esse*) for organizing people for the proclamation of the Gospel. The same applies to music, administration, and programs.¹¹

Arand, “Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21st Century,” (Unpublished paper presented at the Pastoral Leadership Institute, St. Louis: 3 December 2001), 1.

¹⁰Ibid., 4.

¹¹Ibid., 4-5.

Thus human tools and structures have a legitimate place in the life of the church. To eliminate the methods devised by reason and good sense from the church's repertoire is both erroneous and impossible. Though different congregations in different times and different places may choose different tools and structures, they will use tools and structures simply because they live as part of God's creation.

Waldo Werning has made the same point with regard to the use of principles derived by human observation in parish administration. Arguing from the principles of Christian stewardship, he writes: "It is not man doing God's work, but rather church leaders working by God's grace and the Holy Spirit's enlightenment as they look at *all of God's resources* for the situation [emphasis Werning's]."¹² In principle, everything we are, everything we have, and everything we know are gifts to be used for God's glory. Therefore, they may be used for the work of the church when such use is consistent with God's Word and sound reason.

Though human tools and structures have a place within the church's work, they must never become ends unto themselves, nor must we think they are the primary means through which God's work is done. It is, after all the Gospel, that is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16) and the Word of God that is living and active and sharper than any sword (Hebrews 4:12). Nonetheless, people often fall prey to the temptation to equate their work with God's or to think that they are accomplishing something for God.

¹²Waldo J. Werning, *Vision and Strategy for Church Growth* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1977), 11.

Using Arand's categories, such people are confusing the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the church's life and service.

Martin Luther's theology of the cross is helpful for keeping the horizontal and vertical aspects of our work in their proper relationship.¹³ Luther taught that since humanity turned away from the truth about God that was plainly visible in creation (Rom. 1:18-23), God chose the hiddenness of the cross as the means of his self-revelation. As a consequence, it is only through Christ and his cross that the God of glory may be approached or known by men. This part of God's work and the theology of the cross are well known, but a theologian of the cross also recognizes that God applies a cross to the lives of believers. God puts them to death and raises them up with Christ (Rom. 6:4). Luther writes,

Under this King's reign [Christ's] all the things you hoped for in the law are condemned and all the things you feared are to be loved. He offers the cross and death. . . . You must die if you would live under this King. You must bear the cross and the hatred of the whole world.¹⁴

This cross is not merely a symbol: it is a painful reality. The dying is real death, but the rising is just as real. Human reason would never select such a road. Human power is insufficient for such work. Therefore Luther writes,

Because this is the wisdom of the cross, God alone knows the way of the righteous. It is hidden even to the righteous; for His right hand leads them in such

¹³For a brief summary of Luther's distinction between the theology of the cross and the theology of glory see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 25-34.

¹⁴Martin Luther, *WA* 5, 68; *LW* 14, 342. Cited in a note by Althaus, *Ibid.*, 31.

a wonderful way that it is not the way of the senses or of reason but of faith alone, which is able to see in the darkness and behold the invisible.¹⁵

Thus, the reality of the cross underscores the limitations of anything people or congregations can accomplish with the tools of reason. The reader will do well to keep these limitations in mind throughout the discussion that follows. The heavy work, the work of the cross, is God's. It is part of the vertical dimension of the church's life and service. The lighter work, of speaking, organizing, and interacting with the people around them, belongs to the people of God. Such work follows from the Great Commission and is the appropriate place for men and women to apply their sanctified common sense and the other gifts which God has given.

It follows, then, that congregational records have a limited, but proper, place within the life and work of the church. Since the records are meant to serve the people, boards, and committees as they work in service to the Gospel, these records must serve the same ends. In fact, as will be shown later, there are a variety of ways in which good records support the work of the church; but first, it will be worthwhile to review the nature and character of the church.

The Nature of the Church and Church Membership

What, then, is this thing we call "the church?" What does it mean to be a member of the church? What relationship exists between the church and the local congregation?

¹⁵Martin Luther, *WA* 5, 45; *LW* 14, 309. Cited in a note by Althaus, *Ibid.*, 31.

Is membership in one, the same as membership in another? In his book *Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration*, Alvin J. Lindgren notes that those who would lead the church must understand its nature.

The contemporary church administrator faces many concrete decisions as to proper activities and programs to be encouraged or rejected in the life of the local church. His decisions will be reached by evaluating each as to whether or not the proposed activity (1) is in line with objectives of the church as he understands it, and (2) would be effective in reaching the objectives. The first practical question confronting a church administrator is thus a clear understanding of what he is trying to do. He simply must have a clear knowledge of goals and objectives as a basis of determining acceptable programs and activities in the life of the local church.¹⁶

Lindgren goes on to underscore that one's understanding of the church's goals and objectives must be derived from what the Scriptures teach about the nature of the church.

The nature of God and the Christian gospel has *already* determined the goals and objectives toward which the church should be moving as it seeks to fulfill its mission. This fact requires of every administrator and congregation a serious study of the nature and mission of the church. Such a study is necessary to keep the church from accommodating herself to cultural patterns and expectations and thus actually ceasing to be the church and thereby losing her own uniqueness.¹⁷

What Lindgren says about programs and activities can also be applied to the business of keeping church records. There are endless possibilities for record keeping within any organization and one can easily be lost in a sea of detail and meaningless paperwork. Discernment is required to distinguish between those records which will

¹⁶Alvin J. Lindgren, *Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), 28.

¹⁷Ibid.

facilitate the unique mission and ministry of the church and those which do not. To acquire that discernment, one needs to understand the nature of the church.

To aid our understanding, the New Testament uses several figures, such as the “body of Christ” (Eph. 1:22-23) and the “bride of Christ” (Eph. 5:25-27) to describe the church. More commonly, it is simply called the *ἐκκλησία* or assembly. This previously political term was adopted by the early church to distinguish it from the Jewish synagogue and from the mystery cults.¹⁸ Its use reflects the Spirit-imbued habit Christians have of gathering around Word and Sacrament. Luther was referring to this work of the Spirit when he wrote that the Spirit “calls, *gathers*, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth” (emphasis mine).¹⁹

Thus, the church is the assembly of believers.²⁰ Over the centuries Lutheran dogmaticians have asserted that unbelievers are not part of the church even if they have professed the name of Christ and associated themselves with a congregation.²¹ Although

¹⁸Marquart, 4.

¹⁹Luther, *Small Catechism*, 15.

²⁰See Walther’s first thesis concerning the church. C. F. W. Walther, *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry* in *Walther on the Church*, trans. John M. Drickamer, Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, ed. August R. Suelflow, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 17.

²¹Pieper cites the Lutheran Confessions as well as Luther, Gerhard, and Baier. Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Walter F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), vol. 3, 398-402. C. F. W. Walther omits Baier and adds quotes from Calov and Quenstedt. *Church and Ministry*, 17-22.

in love, we are willing to count anyone a Christian who professes the name of Christ (as long as his confession and behavior do not belie his claims),²² we know that there are those who call Christ Lord who will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). The works of these people belie their professions of faith and Christ casts them out saying, “Depart from me you evil doers, I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23). Likewise, outwardly righteous lives may hide corrupt and rebellious hearts, as Christ’s frequent denunciation of the Pharisees shows (e.g., Luke 11:39-44).

Only those who have been justified through faith in Christ are actually part of the church. In our day, many different gospels are preached in the name of Christ. Some preach a gospel of works; others may preach a gospel of universal salvation apart from faith or Christ. The apostles preached the Gospel of salvation through faith in the atoning, vicarious sacrifice of Christ. It is those who hold this apostolic faith who are part of the true church.²³

Likewise many christs are preached in our day. Some preach a “demythologized,” “historicized” christ who was little more than a clever teacher divinized by later generations.²⁴ For others he is a prophet or an angel.²⁵ For many he is

²²Pieper, *Dogmatics*, vol. 3, 409.

²³Luther said it most memorably, “A seven year old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd.” SA III.XII, Tappert, 315.

²⁴See David P. Scaer’s discussion of the theories of Lessing, Strauss, Bultmann and others in *Christology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. VI, Robert D. Preus, ed. (Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989), 16-20.

“a son of God.” But for all true believers he is God incarnate, who offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins.²⁶

The church, therefore, is seen to be much smaller than the sum of all those who hold membership in the various church bodies that lay claim to the name “Christian.” All profess Christ, but for many that profession is false, either because they do not know the truth about Christ, or because they do not believe it. Because it is faith and faith alone that determines who is and who is not part of the church, the precise size of the true church cannot be humanly known, nor can the precise boundaries of the church be seen.²⁷

What is true for the church in general is also true for specific congregations. Even in congregations where all members have publicly professed faith in Christ Jesus, the visible boundaries of the congregation’s membership and the invisible boundaries of the local church are not identical. Within the visible boundaries, but outside the local church, are those whose profession was false or who have since fallen away from the faith.²⁸

²⁵E.g., Islam and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. John Alden Williams, ed., *Islam* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 31-35 and *Make Sure of All Things: Hold Fast to What Is Fine*, (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1965), 288.

²⁶The Nicene Creed, Tappert, 18.

²⁷“The church in the proper sense of the word is invisible.” Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 22.

²⁸Walther wrote that even in orthodox congregations “there is always an admixture of false Christians and hypocrites, and at times even public sinners.” C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Congregation Independent of the State: A Collection of Testimonies from the Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and from the Private Writings of Its Orthodox Teachers*, in *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther*, ed. August R. Suelflow, *Walther on the Church*, trans. John M. Drickamer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 125.

Outside the visible boundaries, but within the local church, will be those catechumens who have true faith in Christ and lapsed members who have been recalled to faith, but have not yet been publicly restored to congregational membership.²⁹ Consequently, our records are only a rough approximation of the Book of Life kept by Him who weighs and judges the human heart (Rev. 20:12, Prov. 21:2).

The Gospel and the Church's Life and Mission

Since only those who believe in Christ Jesus are part of the church, it follows that the church is a daughter of the Gospel. "Faith comes by hearing," writes Paul, "and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Christ himself called people to faith with his preaching (Mark 1:15). Those who learned from him preached the same message, bringing still more to the faith and into the fellowship of those who have been justified by God. Christians today have also heard that message and believed and have become part of the same fellowship, the same assembly of believers, the church.

Hence, the Gospel calls the church into being, and the church in turn preaches the Gospel. The believers gather around the Word that gives them life. They celebrate the Sacraments which make that Word tangible. So wherever the church gathers, the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's command.³⁰

²⁹Pieper, *Dogmatics*, vol. 3, 397.

³⁰"The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly." AC VII [Latin], Tappert, 32.

Likewise, wherever the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's command, a church will come into being. For God's Word does not return void, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent (Is. 55:11). Through the Gospel, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar, the Holy Spirit creates and strengthens the faith that makes one part of the church.³¹

This dynamic has led Lutherans to identify the Word and Sacraments as the marks of the church. If there is a church, the Gospel will be preached. If the Gospel is preached, there will be a church. So these marks or signs³² indicate the presence of the church—not outward organizational affiliation, apostolic succession, or anything else.³³ The pervasiveness of the marks is due, first of all, to the grace of God, but also to the nature of the church's mission.

That mission is to make disciples of all nations. Christ himself gave this command (Matthew 28:18-20) and it was reiterated in various ways by the apostles (1 Tim. 2:3, Romans 10:11-15, 11:32, 1 John 1:3, 2:2). Christ also gave his church the

³¹AC V, Tappert, 31.

³²Marquardt recommends calling these "signs" instead of "marks," suggesting that they correspond to the signs wrought by Jesus and the sign given the shepherds. They point to the presence and work of God among the people of this world. Marquardt, *The Church*, 19-21.

³³Marquardt, *The Church*, 21-22.

power to accomplish this mission when, on the day of Pentecost, he poured out the Holy Spirit upon the waiting assembly (Luke 24:46-49).

The church's principal tool for accomplishing this mission is the Gospel proclaimed in Word and Sacrament. The Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation for all who believe" (Romans 1:16). Through the Gospel, the Spirit gives ears to hear and faith to believe (Romans 10:17).

For the sake of this Gospel and for the sake of his church, Christ has appointed various servants to proclaim the Word (Eph. 4:11). Foremost in this regard were the apostles and prophets. Under the Spirit's inspiration, they spoke and wrote with divine authority concerning the truth that had been revealed to them. They set the pattern for sound words and godly teaching that preserves and builds up the church.

Following in their footsteps have been countless pastors and teachers who have faithfully proclaimed the same Gospel. These, too, are gifts of Christ to his church (Eph. 4:11). Through his Spirit he calls them to their work (Acts 20:28) of preaching, teaching, and administration of the Sacraments (1 Cor. 4:1). Through their service, the church is built up and grows to maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13), even as she carries the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth (Eph. 4:12, Matt. 28:18-20).

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the Gospel and the command to proclaim it have only been given to those who labor publicly in the service of the Word. The entire church has been called to "proclaim the praises of him who has called them out

of the darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Every believer is called as a royal priest who proclaims the forgiveness of sins to others on behalf of God.

Thus all Christians share the power of the keys. The night after he was raised, Christ gave the authority to forgive and retain sins to all who received the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23). Since the Spirit has been promised and given to all who believe, all believers share this authority.³⁴ Each may exercise that authority in ways that are consistent with his or her vocation. The pastor does this by his preaching and teaching and through private confession and absolution. The people of the congregation use this authority when they encourage one another in the faith and when they speak to outsiders. For this authority is really nothing else than the authority to call people everywhere to repentance and faith in the Gospel.³⁵ Sin and grace, Law and Gospel, have a place on the lips of all God’s people.

So pastor and people find themselves working together to accomplish the church’s mission. Here the body imagery utilized so often by the apostle Paul comes to the fore. The church is one body, with one head, and one purpose (Col. 1:17-19). But each of the parts of the body have differing functions and differing abilities that suit them for those

³⁴Some Lutherans, such as Joh. Ylvisaker assert that this bestowal of the Spirit was unique to the apostles and prepared them for their unique ministry. However, since they establish the granting of the keys to the congregation from Matthew 18, they end in much the same place. *The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with Explanatory Notes*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1932, Reprinted by Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 1977), 426, 770.

³⁵Luke’s description of the events that evening highlights the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel (Luke 24:45-49).

functions (1 Cor. 12). Ideally, these diverse parts work together smoothly under the direction of the Christ, the head. When they do, their work will center on the Gospel, for Christ's purpose and command remain unchanged.

This section has shown that the Spirit, who calls us to faith and gathers us into one body, equips us to continue the proclamation that gave us life. This Gospel ministry is the church's most important task. Through this work the lost are saved. By it, believers are strengthened and grow toward maturity. Christ's purpose is accomplished.

While such work sometimes proceeds haphazardly, the church throughout the centuries has found certain kinds of records to be valuable aids to her work. Indeed, the Bible presents heaven itself as keeping records for judgment and a book with the names of those who will inherit eternal life (Rev. 21:12,15). The last section of this chapter will show why records can be helpful and how they can truly serve the congregation's ministry of the Gospel.

Congregational Records That Support the Church's Ministry

Good records support the local congregation's ministry in various ways. The most basic records are those that record the official acts performed by the congregation's pastor. Records can also be kept of other activities, such as pastoral visits. These records can be used to track what has been done, for whom it has been done, and when it was done. This kind of information is useful for coordinating the work of several people and helps insure that all are aware of what should be done next. Various auxiliary

information, such as a person's age or sex, can also be kept. Computers can be especially helpful for searching these records for opportunities for ministry. The following paragraphs will provide a first look at each of these different types of records.

Records of Baptisms, weddings, and funerals have been kept for generations. These quasi-legal records are kept by many churches and in some cases can replace missing or damaged state records. Pastors through the centuries have tracked these official acts and recorded what was done, who was involved, and when the rites were performed. These elemental records need to be carefully preserved and often survive in denominational archives even after the congregation itself is gone. Besides the interests of the state, these records represent the church's concern for her children, her desire that they spring from sanctioned unions, and the value that she and her Lord place on the lives and deaths of her members.

Other records of the "who, what, when" variety include lists of accessions and removals from congregational membership. The church has always been conscious of her Scripture-defined boundaries. There have always been people who were in the church, and those who were not. In fact, this sense that some are within and others without the fellowship was present already in first century Judaism. John 9:22-23 indicates that the synagogue distinguished between insiders and outsiders and that those who confessed faith in Christ would be put out of the synagogue. In similar fashion, Paul speaks in First Corinthians about the need to remove one who was having sexual relations with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Within a small community a sense of membership can be easily maintained without the use of formal records. For example, within a small house church each member would be known to all the others. However, as time progresses and the community grows, keeping track of the boundaries of the community and those who are moving across them becomes more difficult. The inherent sloppiness of human relationships begins to exert its influence. There are nonmembers who may attend faithfully for years without ever joining the congregation. Others become members but are rarely seen because of ill health, travel, or less worthy reasons. These may be unknown to most of the community, yet they are part of it.

The boundaries of many Christian communities are most apparent at their celebrations of Holy Communion. From ancient times, congregations have had standards for admission to the Sacrament. Werner Elert has established that it was the desire to maintain the sanctity of the Lord's Supper that gave rise to the practice of closed Communion rather than a need or desire for secrecy.³⁶ These Christians understood the Sacrament as holy things given for God's holy people. They were not to be shared with unbelievers, gross sinners, or heretics.

Elert also describes letters that were given to Christians so that they would be able to participate in the worship and sacraments of other orthodox churches as they traveled. Such letters are mentioned already by Paul in Second Corinthians 3:1. In later centuries

³⁶Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. Norman E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 76-77.

it became standard practice for travelers to carry with them letters of recommendation from their bishop. These letters would be presented to each Bishop along the way and would remain with him while the traveler was in his care. In doubtful cases, the receiving Bishop would write for confirmation of the letter's validity and fellowship might be withheld until it was received.³⁷

The existence of such letters and such care about the church's boundaries suggests that a system of church records existed in many of the large dioceses. Certainly, in our day and age, such matters ought to be committed to writing, for we live in a society where both pastors and people are highly mobile. Further, in this day of "mega-churches" there are congregations of sufficient size as to make it impossible for the pastor to know every member of the congregation.

In all these situations, well-maintained membership records are of great help to the pastoral staff. As pastors come and go the established membership records enable them to identify the people to whom they are to be ministering. Lapsed or straying members are not forgotten. Those who have been excluded but continue to identify themselves as members of the congregation can be unmasked. The congregation's boundaries are plainly marked.

A congregation's records do more than mark the boundaries. They also help coordinate the work of ministry by enabling everyone to learn what anyone knows.

³⁷Elert, 125-134.

When a new pastor uses the congregational records to determine its boundaries, he is coordinating his work with that of his predecessor. Other kinds of records are also kept to coordinate the work of several people. For example, many congregations keep careful records of their various visitation ministries. By keeping track of who was visited, when they were visited, and noting important elements of the discussion, it becomes possible for visitors to refresh their memories when making return visits. It also becomes possible for different people to make visits without repeating large parts of the discussion.

Suppose that the staff of a large parish decided they would visit every household in the space of few years. In order to accomplish this task, it would be necessary for them to keep track of which households had already been visited. The records would not have to be complicated. A church directory with a date and the initials of the visiting person would be sufficient to prevent redundant visits and to identify those who still needed to be visited. By scribbling some notes in the margins about occupations, significant dates and events, ages of the children, and the like, the pastors could use their record as a reminder of things that had been discussed. They would also be moving toward another use for congregational records—searching for opportunities for ministry.

Often new ministries take the form of new groups within the congregation. Because the social networks in which people live and work are often inaccessible to us, we sometimes create groups of like-minded or like-needed individuals. Church records can be helpful to those who are trying to identify people who are likely to have similar needs or interests that might be profitably addressed through the Word.

As an example of such a use, consider an informal study that was done a few years ago when the author was the administrative pastor at St. John Lutheran in Luverne, Minnesota. The associate pastor, who was widowed, began to suspect that there might be enough single adults in the parish to establish a viable singles ministry. After reviewing the congregational records, he informed the author that fully one third of the congregation's adult members were widowed, divorced, or never married.³⁸ He found more than 200 people, a much larger group than either of us had expected. The next step would have been to consider what such a ministry might look like and how that ministry would support the church's mission. Unfortunately, both pastors left before a program could be established. Nonetheless, this anecdote serves to illustrate that congregational records may contain latent information that could benefit the congregation if properly used.

The latency of many connections between the Gospel and church records is one reason why those connections are frequently overlooked. Nonetheless, the connections do exist. Whether they are used for pointing out opportunities for work, helping to coordinate the efforts, or tracking the results, a well-designed system of records supports the efforts of those who proclaim the Gospel. Some will use them as they seek to build up the existing church by strengthening her members through the Gospel. Others will use them as they seek to take the Gospel to those outside the congregation's boundaries. Still

³⁸This unpublished study was done by Rev. Iver Possehl in 1998. He simply used the congregation's administrative software to list and count the single members over the age of 21.

others may use their records to provide logistical support to those on the front lines. In any case, it is the intended use of the records that provides the Gospel connection and gives them their Gospel reason for being. The next two chapters will explore some of those Gospel connections as they set forth the theological and pastoral issues that affect the contents and use of congregational records.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

As the previous chapter noted, there are many different kinds of information that could be gathered for a parish's congregational records, but some may lack the necessary connections to the Gospel. That is, they cannot or will not be used to further the congregation's ministry. Thus, every congregation needs to give serious thought to how various kinds of information will be used before investing the time and effort to gather and record it. The information gathered should assist the church as it ministers to the people who provide it. It is also important to ensure that the information gathered is not used in a way that harms the person who provides it.

Introductory Issues Related to the Gathering and Use of Information.

The first principle for the church in the information age is that information that will not be used should not be gathered. This basic principle should be followed for both practical and ethical reasons. Practically, gathering and recording information requires time and effort. That time and effort should not be wasted gathering useless information just because it appears on a form or computer screen. Few pastors, church secretaries, or

volunteers complain about having too little to do. They do not need busywork. They prefer to spend their time accomplishing useful tasks that are related to the congregation's mission.

Ethically, whenever one asks people to share information about themselves, one has the responsibility to use that information in a way that will benefit them or that furthers a shared purpose. This may be considered a variety of social contract. People provide the information not merely to satisfy the curiosity of the pastor or staff, but because they believe that the information they provide will in some way help them or that it will assist the church with its mission. Consequently, a congregation should be prepared to explain to its members how each piece of information it gathers will be used, how that use will further the proclamation of the Gospel, and how it will benefit the member that provides it. If these connections cannot be made and explained, the information should not be gathered.

Second, the congregation has a responsibility to ensure that the information it gathers is not misused so that it causes harm to some of the congregation's members. The responsibility not to use information in a way that harms others flows from the fifth, seventh, and eighth commandments, which teach us not to do physical or financial harm to our neighbor, nor to divulge another's secrets.¹ Although pastors and congregations rarely abuse the information they gather themselves, the possibility that others may do so

¹Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, 10-11.

must be considered. Thus, another issue that congregations must face is that of confidentiality.

Many congregations encounter this issue when they begin publishing a church directory. There may be some in the congregations who have very good reasons for keeping their street addresses or phone numbers confidential. For instance, the member may be a famous person who has difficulty finding privacy, a breadwinner teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, or a woman who is hiding out from an abusive ex-husband. This latter case shows how even ordinary information that is rarely considered sensitive must be handled carefully. For such a woman, keeping her address confidential may be a matter of life and death.

Yet the pastor and staff will have good reasons for wanting to know the addresses and phone numbers of their members. They will be used for visitation, mailings, and various kinds of notices. Most of these contacts will be intended to encourage the recipient in faith, bind them more tightly to the community of believers, or facilitate communication within the body of Christ.² Such uses are legitimate and benefit the one who provides the information as well as furthering the church's mission. They are the gospel reasons for gathering the information. Further, such reasons are usually sufficient to convince those who wish their addresses to be kept confidential to provide them to the congregation's pastoral staff provided they are assured that the information supplied will not be given to others.

²Lindgren, *Church Administration*, 138-142.

Practical issues, like whether or not information will be used, and ethical issues, like confidentiality, concern every organization. Businesses as well as churches have a responsibility to use the information they gather in ways that are helpful, not harmful. However, there are record keeping issues that are unique to the church. Some of these issues are terminological; most are also theological. The next section will be the first of several to examine such issues. It focuses on the different sorts of relationships that can exist between people and a congregation and the terms used to describe them.

Issues Encountered When Categorizing Relationships Between People and the Local Congregation.

The fundamental relationship between a person and a congregation is that of membership. This word, *membership*, reflects the biblical idea that the church is the body of Christ. To be a member of the holy Christian church is to be a part of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Likewise, those who are part of Christ's body are also joined with one another (Romans 12:5). This means that congregational membership and membership in Christ should be the same thing.

Keeping this identity in mind would do much to lessen the confusion among America's churches as to who should and who should not be a member of the local congregation. A 1998 article in the *Reporter*, a periodical published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, highlights the confusion. Citing an article from *The Parish Paper*, the article asks us to consider two congregational patterns:

In Parish A, an adult can't be a member unless he or she has been a regular worshipper and has attended Bible class or a study group for a year; tithes with at

least one-half of the person's tithes going to the congregation; takes part in a training program meant to prepare people for volunteer ministry; and graduates from a fairly long orientation class.

In Parish B, a person becomes a member by attending a two-session orientation class, producing written records that attest to baptism and affirmatively responding to membership vows made in front of the congregation during a Sunday-morning worship service.³

Parish A is often called a "high expectation" parish. Such congregations are likely to have worship attendance in excess of their official membership. Congregations like Parish B, often referred to as "low expectation" parishes, usually have attendance that is less than half their official membership. The *Reporter*, though it did not approve the membership policies of Parish A, does ask us to consider whether we don't get what we expect from our congregations' members.⁴

Unfortunately, though Parish A has high expectations of its members, it has become quite confused about the nature of church membership. Scriptural and sacramental realities have been replaced by organizational expectations and congregational membership has become something other than a localized membership in the holy Christian church.

Similar confusion is sometimes shown by Lutheran pastors. When the Lutheran publishing houses first began to market computer software for church use, many

³Bruce Kueck, "Ideas: Scatter Those You Can't Use," *Reporter* (January 1998): 14. The *Reporter's* citation was incomplete and the author has been unable to locate the original *Parish Paper* article.

⁴*Ibid.*, 14.

computers were quite limited in storage capacity. Consequently, it was necessary to ask how many people each congregation would be including in its records when helping them to select an appropriate computer and software. At first, we simply asked how many members the congregation had. However, we soon changed our question. Too many pastors were giving us the number of communicants rather than the total number of baptized people who were part of the congregation. Since a child's record took up just as much space as an adult's, congregations that fell into this trap sometimes purchased computers that lacked sufficient capacity to hold all the necessary records.

Baptism and the faith that receives its benefits make us part of the body of Christ and, therefore, members of the church and its local manifestation, the congregation. In First Corinthians 12:12 the apostle writes, "for by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body." His reference, of course, is to the church, the mystical body of Christ. Thus, it is Baptism that makes us part of the church, not confirmation or any other humanly instituted rite or covenant.

On the other hand, it may be legitimate to distinguish between various kinds of members for administrative purposes. The most common distinction among Lutherans is between baptized and communicant members. This distinction arises from the belief that not everyone is to be admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar. One requirement is that those who are admitted be able to examine themselves as the apostle Paul instructs in First Corinthians 11:28. In addition, they should believe in the real, sacramental presence of Christ's body and blood within the bread and wine, so that they do not bring judgment upon themselves through unbelief (1 Cor. 11:29-30). Finally, many Missouri Synod

congregations also require their communicants to publicly profess the congregation's faith and doctrine in the rite of confirmation.

In many places, the distinction between baptized and communicant members is equivalent to the distinction between baptized and confirmed members. However, there are many Lutheran congregations, particularly within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), that admit children to the Lord's Supper before they have been confirmed. Many of these congregations also confirm at a later age than the traditional eighth grade. As a consequence these congregations have a three-tier system of membership: baptized members, communicant members, and confirmed members.⁵

Congregations also commonly make other distinctions between their members. Within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, congregations are governed by a voters' assembly consisting of interested members who meet certain requirements. These folks are often called "voting members." The model constitution for congregations of the ELCA speaks of baptized, confirmed, voting, and "associate" members. Associate members are members of other congregations that are under the care of the local congregation and participate in its life and mission, or they are persons who wish to retain a relationship with a congregation even though they are active members of another

⁵The rationale for separating confirmation and first Communion is based upon the theories of child development, especially the change from concrete to abstract thought that occurs during the junior high years. For a complete discussion see *Confirmation and First Communion: A Study Book*, Frank W. Klos (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968). Chapters 7 and 9 deal directly with this issue.

congregation. Such persons are granted all the rights and privileges of other members, except they cannot vote, hold office, or serve on the congregation's council.⁶

Although all of these distinctions have some practical value, only the distinction between baptized and communicant members has any basis in Scripture. Even confirmation is a human tradition. Though some have seen a precedent for the rite of confirmation in the visit of Peter and John to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), there is no corresponding command that their actions be repeated in all churches for all time.⁷ Further, Peter himself ties the promise of the Spirit to Baptism (Acts 2:38-39), not the imposition of hands by the apostolate.

Why is this important? It is important because James warns against distinctions between members that result in favoritism (James 2:1-9). Since such favoritism will often seem very practical, congregations need to be think twice about embodying such distinctions in their records. They will need to be even more careful how they use them.

Outside the Lutheran tradition, membership terminology varies considerably from that noted above. Denominations that deny Baptism to infants and young children would

⁶Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Model Constitution*, (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999), section C8.02.

⁷Martin Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent* cites Durandus and Frederick Nausea as examples of those who attempted to establish the rite of confirmation from Act 8:17 and 19:6. Part II, Topic 3, par. 12. Trans. by Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 192-193. The Papal catechism still cites Acts 8 as an example of confirmation in the apostolic church. Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, trans. United States Catholic Conference, Inc. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994. New York: Doubleday, 1995), 366.

not distinguish between baptized and confirmed members. Likewise, since many of these congregations will commune anyone who is present, there is no distinction between members who commune and members who do not. They may, however, distinguish between members and those nonmembers who are under the congregation's care.

The way congregations classify their membership has a profound impact upon their records and, by extension, upon the design of the software they use for record-keeping. One requirement for the *Lutheran Congregational Information System* and its successors was that the system be capable of dealing with the distinction between baptized and confirmed members.⁸ This distinction is deeply ingrained in the Lutheran churches in the United States and Canada. Congregations and pastors make frequent use of it. The national church bodies also require it in their various statistical reports. Although the precise understanding and use of the term "confirmation" has varied from generation to generation and place to place, it is an important part of heritage of every church body involved in the original design.

If there are various ways of categorizing the membership of Lutheran congregations, it should come as no surprise that the CCUC had to deal with differences among Lutherans with regard to the terminology for receiving and removing members. Most of these differences were relatively minor and simply reflected the different terminology on the annual reports used by the various church bodies. However, in a few

⁸EduSystems, Inc., *Membership*, Vol. 1, *User Reference Manual for the Lutheran Congregation Information System*, Version 2.2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), M-68.

places, the terminological differences reflected genuine differences in theology—especially in the doctrine of church fellowship.

Within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, transfers of membership only occurred between Lutheran congregations that were in altar and pulpit fellowship with one another and those boundaries excluded many other Lutherans.⁹ Persons from congregations outside the bounds of fellowship were normally received either by affirmation of faith or by adult confirmation. Although the practice was similar within the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the boundaries of fellowship were much broader. Historically, the congregations of the LCA had freely exchanged members with any congregation that subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.¹⁰

Different boundaries resulted from differences in the way the church bodies used and interpreted the Lutheran confessions. Unlike the Missouri Synod, the LCA held that the Augsburg Confession itself prohibited requiring anything more for pulpit and altar fellowship than agreement in the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments—a

⁹A description of the traditional practice in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod along with the reasoning behind it is presented in C.F.W. Walther, *Walther's Pastoral that is American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. and abridged by John M. Drickamer from the Fifth Edition, 1906 (New Haven, Missouri: Lutheran News, Inc., 1995), 261-262.

¹⁰E. Clifford Nelson describes this difference in practice between the church bodies that were members of the National Lutheran Council and the Missouri Synod. Four of these bodies, the United Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Suomi Synod, and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church merged to form the Lutheran Church in America. E. Clifford Nelson, "The New Shape of Lutheranism: 1930—" in *The Lutherans in North America*, ed. E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 496, 502.

condition that they considered satisfied by any communion that subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.¹¹

Therefore, the LCA also had a different view of the role of the rest of the Lutheran confessions in the life of the church. The doctrinal statement approved by the bodies that comprised the LCA described the Scriptures as “normative for the faith and life of the church,” the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Catechism as “true witnesses to the Gospel,” and the rest of the documents in the *Book of Concord* as “further valid interpretations of the confession of the church.”¹² In other words, these later writings were recognized as valuable parts of the history and tradition of the Lutheran church and were not to be rejected, but they did not necessarily bind pastors or congregations.¹³

In contrast, the Missouri Synod would not enter into fellowship with pastors or congregations that did not share their unconditional subscription to the entire *Book of Concord*. Doing so would have rendered their subscription meaningless. Their refusal also reflected their belief that unless there was full agreement in doctrine and practice, the

¹¹Ibid., 529-530.

¹²Ibid., 506. Quoted items are from the statement itself and were taken by Nelson from Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 554-556.

¹³When the LCA merged with the ALC and AELC to form the ELCA, its position on fellowship and confessional subscription was adopted by the new church body. The required wording for congregational constitutions uses the same phrases, except that Luther’s Small Catechism is classed with the other writings in the *Book of Concord* rather than with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. ELCA, *Model Constitution*, sections C2.05-C2.06.

Gospel was not being taught purely and/or the Sacraments were not being properly administered as article VII of the Augsburg Confession required.¹⁴

What have these differences to do with church records and software design? Most of the church bodies were interested in tracking the sources of new members and the type of church that former members join. The question then became, “How are members received or sent to or from other Lutheran church bodies and what should those movements be called?” In this case, full agreement could not be reached.

In LCIS, some of the options were labeled with slashes to reflect these terminological and theological differences. For example, the options for coding why and how members were removed included “Released/transferred to a congregation of another church body in the same denomination.”¹⁵ In the products that eventually replaced LCIS, a second method of meeting these differing needs was offered: congregations could edit the wording on the options to reflect their own preferences or to conform to their own denominational reporting requirements.

It’s a small step from keeping track of how people join the congregation to maintaining some sort of prospect file. Such records serve as memory aids when

¹⁴The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism: With Application for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), 12.

¹⁵*User Manual*, M-17.

repeated visits are required. They also help congregations plan their evangelism visits and enable the congregation to use mail and telephone to provide prospective members with information that will be of potential interest to them. The gospel reason for all this activity is to create opportunities to share the Gospel and incorporate the prospective members into the body of Christ.

In paper-based systems, the prospect file is usually separate from the file that contains the records of the congregation's members. Computerized systems often combine them. The reason for this difference lies in the ability of computers to quickly sort through irrelevant information to find that which is needed. People sort files much more slowly and keeping manual records in separate files makes it much easier for those who use the records to find what they need.

Manual records have had one other advantage when it comes to prospect files: they are portable. Visitation teams can take written information with them and add to them easily. Taking the information along makes it possible for the teams to make several stops in one evening. They can briefly review the information before each stop, reducing the likelihood that they will become confused or forget important details.

Unfortunately, portable records are sometimes misplaced. Consequently, most manual systems require that a safety copy of the information be kept in a permanent file. Copying the information from one card to another can be a laborious process. Some congregations enter their backup information in appropriate computer files. Doing so

doesn't save much labor, but it does make the basic information available for producing mailing lists or various kinds of computer-assisted searches.¹⁶

No matter what filing system is used, the prospective member files need to contain such basic information as the addresses of the people to be visited, their names, brief summaries of previous visits and pertinent information about their church background and their relationship with the visiting congregation.¹⁷ As was the case for the basic membership records, one's theological presuppositions will also affect the terminology used for the records of prospective members. For example, Christians from revivalist traditions will be interested in tabulating decisions for Christ. Lutherans will rightfully be uncomfortable with such terminology because of their belief that conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit rather than a choice made by the strength of our natural reason or will.

At this point, it should be plain that the records congregations keep relating to both members and prospects are heavily influenced by their theology and heritage. The terms that people use to describe their relationship with a congregation and the meanings of those terms have been shown to vary considerably from denomination to denomination

¹⁶Portable and pocket-sized computers could provide a helpful solution to both problems. They can be easily carried along and referred to when visiting. Software is also available to automatically synchronize the files between the portable and a desktop computer.

¹⁷For appropriate samples see the "Resources" section of Lyle Muller, ed., *Dialog Evangelism 2 Teacher's Manual*, (St. Louis: Board for Evangelism Services, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1991[?]), 18-24.

and church body to church body. Even the most basic questions, such as “Who is a member of our congregation?” are answered differently by different congregations.

Because of these differences, it is unrealistic to assume that forms or software that work well for one congregation will work well for congregations with a different theological heritage. True, they will keep a lot of the same information, and they will sometimes use that information in similar ways, but they are also likely to do those things in different ways and to mean different things by their terms. Chapters five through seven of this paper will present ways that congregations can determine whether systems they are considering utilize appropriate terminology and whether they do so in a way that is consistent with sound theology.

Now that the existence and extent of these fundamental differences has been established, the next three sections will look at some other cultural and pastoral issues that effect our records. The section entitled, “Worship and Communion Attendance Records” will focus on how appropriate records can help pastors watch the fringes of their flock and identify strays. The following section, “Stewardship of Time and Talents” suggests ways that congregations could do a better job of utilizing people’s talents and abilities if appropriate records were kept. That section also takes a look at the recent interest in “spiritual gifts” and offers some reasons for retaining more traditional terminology. The last section “Family Relationships and Women’s Issues” will provide examples of the way secular culture influences church records. Exploring these issues will provide a more complete view of the factors that must be considered when designing or selecting a system for congregational records.

Worship and Communion Attendance Records

Lutherans confess that the Holy Spirit grants faith through the Gospel expressed in Word and Sacrament. He also strengthens faith through these means of grace. For this reason Lutheran pastors have historically been interested in how often the people in their care attend worship services and partake of the Sacrament of the Altar.

When Christians stop attending worship services or cease coming regularly to the Lord's Supper, faithful shepherds see this change of behavior as an indication of possible problems. The member may simply have been ill or traveling, but often the member's relationship with God and/or the congregation has been damaged. Such damage often manifests itself by a reluctance to join the congregation for worship.

When these things occur, a timely word from the pastor can help to correct the situation. To make that possible, many congregations have made a practice of regularly recording worship and Communion attendance. The pastor can then review the people's attendance, noting any changes that have occurred and take appropriate action.

In most congregations, these records also reveal people who have not participated in either worship or the Lord's Supper for many years. Sometimes such people have grown up without the blessing of faithful, God-fearing parents. Often there are long-standing issues that have resulted in a loss of faith or estrangement from the congregation. In any case, the pastor and congregation face a long period of encouragement in the Word if the member is to be restored.¹⁸

¹⁸James W. Hollis, Jr. *Beyond the Walls: A Congregational Guide for Lifestyle Relational Evangelism*, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1993), 21.

Thus the gospel purpose of Communion and attendance records is to identify those who need the kinds of encouragement mentioned above. At a minimum the pastor will need to be able to determine the frequency with which people usually attend worship and Communion as well as when someone last participated. The ability to easily identify people who have missed a certain number of weeks or who have not communed during a given time period can be very helpful in this regard.

Stewardship of Time and Talents

Through the means of grace God assures us of his love. Stewardship is our response to His love. Later chapters will speak of the congregation's financial stewardship. This section will focus on how we use our time and talents in service to God and his kingdom.

Such stewardship begins when, in response to God's mercy, we present ourselves to him for service. The apostle Paul taught that making a thank offering of our very selves and sacrificing ourselves to God's will and purpose was the sort of spiritual worship that God sought (Rom. 12:1-2). He also taught that we had been created in Christ Jesus to do those things which God had prepared beforehand that we might walk in them (Eph. 2:10). Whatever one is, and whatever one has, is made available to God for service to his kingdom.

C. Peter Wagner and others involved in the church growth movement have been speaking of these things in a different way, emphasizing the stewardship of spiritual gifts.¹⁹ These authors search the New Testament (and sometimes the Old) for various ways that the Holy Spirit manifests himself through individuals for the purpose of building up the church.²⁰ These lists have been dubbed “spiritual gifts” following our English translations of Paul’s term *charismata*.

This emphasis has been useful in so far as it has caught people’s attention and taught them that the Spirit of God wishes to work through all Christians to build up Christ’s church. However, this new way of speaking has also caused some confusion as people try to sort out whether their gifts are “spiritual” or not. Others have become confused as they set out to discover their gifts as a precondition for serving God.

This confusion became particularly acute when various authors began publishing written instruments designed to help people discover their spiritual gifts.²¹ The tests themselves are suspect because they are little more than unvalidated personality tests. If

¹⁹See, for example, Wagner’s book, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow: How to Find Your Gift and Use It* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1974). Wagner’s role in the development of this trend is documented on pages 13-14.

²⁰The most commonly cited passages are Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-19, 28, and Ephesians 4:11.

²¹According to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (CTCR), the “Modified Houts Questionnaire” developed by the Fuller Institute for Evangelism was the first to gain widespread popularity. Within the LCMS similar or derivative inventories were developed by David Hoover and Roger Leenerts, Kent Hunter, and the Board of Stewardship. *Spiritual Gifts: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1995), 8.

a few questions indicated that a person had a natural sense of order and attention to detail, they might be told that they had the gift of administration. If people indicated they were uncomfortable leading, they would be directed to a gift such as helps.²²

One of the difficulties with this sort of approach is that it leaves no room for the Spirit to manifest himself in unlikely ways. For example, if Moses had taken one of these tests he would have undoubtedly found that he did not have the gift of prophecy or leadership (Ex. 3:11, 4:10, Numbers 12:3). One can almost hear him saying, “Lord, I not only have a speech impediment, this spiritual gifts test suggests that I’m more of helper than a leader. Why don’t you ask my cousin Korah to do this? He’s a born leader.”

In some cases this confusion became particularly acute. The Hoover and Leenerts test that was widely used within Lutheran circles gave a numeric score to each of the listed gifts. People were then asked to identify the three gifts with the highest score. Those who took the test were encouraged to try tasks within the church that would benefit from one of those gifts. Unfortunately, some congregations were completely unaware of the test’s limitations and started looking for ways to include “first, second, and third” gifts in their church records. The test’s tentative identifications and ranked scores had been taken as objective truth and were being used in inappropriate ways.²³

²²Ibid., 63-64.

²³This issue arose at several LCIS training seminars conducted by the author. See David W. Hoover and Roger W. Leenerts, *Enlightened with His Gifts: A Bible Study on Spiritual Gifts* (St. Louis: Lutheran Growth, 1979).

Actually, the Scriptures give us no way to distinguish natural talents from spiritual gifts except that the latter manifest God's work among his people to spread the Gospel and build the church (Acts 1:4, 8; 1 Cor. 14:12).²⁴ Moses's gifts are quite obviously of the Lord, because he otherwise lacked them (Ex. 4:1-17). On the other hand, the craftsmen who oversaw the work of building the ark and tabernacle were already known to the community as skilled artisans (Ex. 36:1-2). God's Spirit then blessed their talents as they were put to work in His service. Though Moses and the craftsmen differed in the way their gifts were given and developed, the same Spirit worked through them and blessed their service (Ex. 35:30-35, 1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Since the Spirit manifests himself through service, and since he sometimes manifests himself through natural abilities and at other times through gifts given supernaturally, trying to identify "spiritual" gifts in advance may not be wise. Another approach is simply to ask two questions, "What needs to be done?" and "What can I do with God's help?" This latter question invites God's people to look for two things. First, they should look at the various abilities that they have already developed and be ready to use them in service to God. The question also invites God's people to step out in faith, for it is quite plain that those gifts which are given supernaturally are received by faith and used by faith. Ideally, all the believer's gifts, no matter how or why they are given,

²⁴Unlike Wagner and other advocates of church growth, the CTCR found that the main purpose of spiritual gifts is to strengthen the church. *Spiritual Gifts*, 20, 43-44.

are welcomed and exercised by faith,²⁵ for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The righteous live (and serve) by faith (Hab. 2:4, Rom. 12:6).

For purposes of church records, then, congregations are not interested exclusively or even primarily in spiritual gifts. They are interested in knowing of any abilities that might be useful for serving God or the church. Further, this functional approach is superior to the more common approach of thinking primarily in terms of boards or committees.²⁶

A few examples will make this plain. One simple way to hamper a congregation's evangelism program is to take those who have shown promise for communicating their faith and put them on the evangelism committee. Often, instead of spending their time calling upon prospective members and new residents, they find themselves attending constitutionally required meetings and performing a variety of administrative tasks. The result is often misdirected energy.

On the other hand, a congregation's evangelists need administrative and clerical support. This paper has already pointed out how good records can support a calling program. The person who keeps those records does not need to be a trained evangelist. He or she simply needs some basic clerical skills, good self-discipline, and a desire to

²⁵As Luther explains, "for all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him." *Small Catechism*, 14.

²⁶Leith Anderson, "Motivating and Recruiting Volunteers" in Don Cousins, Leith Anderson, and Arthur Dekryter, *Mastering Church Management* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1999), 132-133.

serve. In similar fashion it is probably more important that the chairman of the evangelism committee be good at running meetings and coordinating the work of others than that he have had outstanding success at sharing the Gospel. Such a person can keep the committee's meetings focused on action and can do much to empower the various evangelistic ministries of the congregation.²⁷

The purpose, then, of the congregation's records of people's abilities and prior service is to enable the congregation to recruit and train people to do the types of things that they do best in service of the Gospel. This process is difficult enough that there will be ample opportunities for both surprises and failures. However, over time, as people become aware of the ways their abilities can be used to further the kingdom and as they do those things which the Spirit blesses, the whole congregation will work more effectively and smoothly as it seeks to fulfill the great commission.²⁸

Family Relationships and Women's Issues

One of the design decisions that generated a large number of complaints with respect to LCIS was its use of traditional forms of address and the term "head of household." Both were frequently questioned.

²⁷Harry G. Coiner identifies the ability to initiate action as one of the most important requirements for those who have been given administrative responsibilities within the congregation. "The Pastor As Administrator of the Christian Fellowship," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, v. 35: 280.

²⁸Anderson, "Motivation and Recruiting Volunteers," 133-134.

In an earlier time, Americans generally preferred to have a man's name at the top of an address where it would be combined with an appropriate courtesy title. John and Jane Doe would be addressed as Mr. and Mrs. John Doe. Mail for Jane would be addressed to Mrs. John Doe. Jane would remain Mrs. John Doe even after John died. Jane's name would only appear on the envelope if she had never married or if she was divorced. In the event of a divorce she became Mrs. Jane Doe. If never married, she was Miss Jane Smith.

These rules were simple and easily understood. Even a computer could learn them. It could construct addresses from the name of a person and a one digit code for a courtesy title. Since less space was required for each household, more households could be stored on the small disks of that era.

Now, however, the rules have changed. In fact, there are no longer any rules except one: ask people what they want to be called and how their mail should be addressed. This new rule rightly recognizes that our society has become more diverse.²⁹ Further, with the larger storage capacity of more recent computers, the extra space required to store this information is readily available. However, some of the values that brought about this cultural change are not entirely consistent with the Scriptures.

²⁹Although the paragraphs to come will address some of the changes that have occurred in mainstream American culture, it should be noted that rigidly traditional addressing could be a liability to congregations that are encountering people of other languages and cultures. For example, in Spanish, the customary abbreviations differ. In Lithuanian, the wife's name takes a different ending than that of her husband and an unmarried daughter's name still another. Leonardas Dambriunas, Antanas Klimas, and William R. Schmalstieg, *Beginner's Lithuanian*, (Franciscan Fathers: 1966; New York: Hippocrene Books, 1999), 90.

The issues involved can be made explicit by two questions. Is the wife's identity properly subsumed under that of her husband and is the husband in any sense the head of his wife or his household?

Some have answered these questions negatively. Women have been encouraged to retain their maiden names as a sign that they retain their individual identity after marriage. Likewise, many have come to see marriage as a partnership without gender-based roles. For them, calling either partner "head" denigrates the other.

Scripture answers these questions somewhat differently. Through marriage man and wife become one flesh (Gen. 2:1). This does not mean that the wife's identity is subsumed under that of her husband. That her individual identity continues is evident from the fact that the union of husband and wife has an end. After that union ends she will continue. She will inherit salvation or suffer wrath apart from him.

Though this is so, she is no longer to live as if she is merely an individual. Neither is her husband any longer an individual. He has become joined to his wife as surely as she has been joined with him. During the time of their marriage, they are really one. However, they are not identical or interchangeable.

Christians are asked to model their marital relationships after the relationship between Christ and his bride the church. As Christ is head of the church, so also the husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:24). The precise nature of his headship need not concern us here. It is sufficient for the purposes of this paper that such a relationship exists and that we understand that this terminology is scriptural.

Putting all this together, we can conclude that the Bible does not require us to hold onto the traditional American forms of address. Though we may question the thinking of those who have insisted on the change, we would also have to question the thinking of those who would deny women any social identity apart from their husbands and fathers. The best solution is simply to adjust our systems to call people what they want to be called.

On the other hand, the term “head of household” is scriptural and may be used when and where it is appropriate. However, the designers of LCIS got the term from the Census Bureau, not the Bible. Like the Census Bureau, they used the term in a gender-neutral sense.³⁰ Further, because of the addressing rules used by LCIS, the term “head of household” quickly became meaningless. In actual practice, the term merely meant “the one whose name appears on the envelope.” The “heads” were not even always adults. Sunday school children whose parents were not members were sometimes recorded as the heads of their households.

Rather than fight over a term that had been emptied of its scriptural content, the publishers chose to abandon it in later products. They also added places for entering the preferred form of address for each household. This latter change was incorporated within LCIS itself and also in its successors.

³⁰*User's Manual*, M-85.

Those who design congregational record keeping systems must also deal with a variety of difficulties that arise from the complexity of family arrangements. In our society, much of this complexity is the result of divorce and remarriage. However, in previous generations living arrangements were at least equally complex. Households were not limited to nuclear families. They often included aged parents or other members of the extended family. Multiple marriages occurred as people who had outlived their spouses married again. In addition, many households included non-family members, such as boarders, hired hands, or apprentices.

Despite the complexity of the possible relationships, many congregational records provide space for only one marriage, one spouse, and “children.” Congregations struggle repeatedly as they try to use simplistic systems to record complex social relationships. Most settle for a useful, but limited accuracy. If the name and address of everyone is stored somewhere and there is a proper record of all the congregation’s official acts, they are satisfied. Unfortunately, the pastors generally do not have accurate personal histories nor will they necessarily be aware of the various family relationships within the household.³¹

³¹Living with such limits has the virtue of reminding us that we are always working with incomplete information. Members of the congregation rarely call to say that they have moved in with their girlfriend. In the author’s experience, even divorce may go unreported.

Whatever one may think about these issues, the diversity of opinions on these issues makes it essential that congregational records be capable of supporting all sorts of combinations of names and titles within a household. They must also be able to record a dizzying array of possible relationships between people. With paper systems these inadequacies can often be overcome by hand-correction or by stapling an addendum to the main record. Computerized systems must have this flexibility built in.

Denominational Reporting Requirements

The previous sections have demonstrated that congregational records can become quite complex. The wide variety of relationships among the congregation's people and the variety of relationships between people and their congregations make such problems unavoidable. The situation becomes more complex when denominational reporting requirements are taken into consideration.

Most church bodies in the United States require statistical reports from their congregations. The types of information required vary greatly from denomination to denomination. So do the meanings of various terms. This paper has already shown how even basic concepts, such as church membership, vary from denomination to denomination as well as from place to place.

The objectives for denominational reporting also vary considerably. Some denominations have been primarily concerned with key membership and financial

statistics that may provide a quick summary of the congregation's condition. Such statistics include total membership, average Sunday attendance, and total offerings.³²

Other national bodies, including some involved with the design of LCIS, wished to be able to compare the ethnic make up of their congregations with that of the communities in which they were located. In this way, they could determine whether or not their congregations were being successful in reaching various ethnic groups, especially in changing neighborhoods.³³ As result of such efforts, many congregations have found themselves keeping still more records.

Although such reports can be onerous, and there may be times when the needed information could be gathered more effectively by sample surveys, it would be wrong to imply that they serve no gospel purpose. Denominational executives have a tremendous interest in discovering those congregations which have successfully overcome common problems. They hope that, by identifying congregations that have achieved various kinds of success, they will be able to discover the reasons for that success and reproduce it in other places.³⁴

³²A sample of the reports filed by congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is reproduced in appendix E. Note that even such simple statistics can be abused if they become a source of pride or false confidence. See the account of David's census in 2 Sam. 24.

³³This information came from conversations (ca. 1983) with Leonard Flachmann of Augsburg Publishing House concerning the reasons for some of the data fields utilized by LCIS. Flachmann was chairman of the CCUC and Augsburg's representative at publishers' meetings.

³⁴As this project was being completed, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was just beginning an effort of this sort. A series of eight "Igniting" events are planned in which selected congregations will compare notes and prepare to communicate what they have been doing with other congregations. For a description of one of these meetings, see Joe Isenhower, Jr. "Third 'Igniting' Event

This brief examination of some of the pastoral and theological principles to be considered when keeping church records has touched lightly on many different areas. Obviously, how we think of church membership will affect our records. Likewise, the objectives we are trying to accomplish also have a profound effect upon what we write down for future reference. Thus our theology and the self-understanding we derive from it will play an important role in determining not only what records we keep, but how we keep them, and what terms we will use within them. Similar, though less pronounced, effects can be demonstrated for the congregation's contributor records.

Looks at Worship Attendance," *Reporter* (December, 2003): 2.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT CONTRIBUTIONS AND FINANCIAL RECORDS.

In the previous chapters, this paper has shown the close connection between congregational records and the Gospel. Up to this point, the focus has been on membership records. Similar connections can be established between a congregation's financial records and the Gospel. Both contributor records and the congregation's bookkeeping can reflect a gospel purpose. Both can assist the congregation or sidetrack it. Both will be most helpful if they use terminology and methods that are consistent with the scriptural understanding of the congregation's mission that has already been presented. Accordingly, this chapter will begin with an overview of the theological principles underlying individual financial stewardship.

Once the foundation of gospel principles has been laid, the chapter will continue with a look at a few methods for encouraging individual, financial stewardship and the kinds of records that support those methodologies. The record keeping capabilities needed to track pledges and handle special appeals will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the kinds of information congregations must keep in order to fulfill their corporate responsibilities for sound stewardship.

The Principles of Individual Stewardship

The Bible's teaching with regard to individual stewardship has often been corrupted by making the Law primary instead of the Gospel.¹ When this happens, stewardship is treated chiefly as a person's responsibility before God.² Likewise, legalistic minds often see their offerings as obligating God in some way, but such views are contrary to the Gospel and the Christian faith.³

Such errors are not new. The narratives concerning David and Saul demonstrate the difference between a relationship with God that is grounded in the Law and one founded upon grace and faith. Although Saul recognized and served the God of Israel, it appears from the scriptural record that his relationship with God was characterized by a sense of mutual obligation rather than faith and love. This would explain why Saul felt compelled to offer the customary sacrifices when Samuel failed to appear (1 Sam. 13:8-12). To his mind, there was a cause and effect relationship between the sacrifices and God's assistance. Saul felt God could not be relied upon unless the customary sacrifices were offered. God rejected Saul as king because Saul did not trust him and therefore did not obey him (1 Sam. 13:13-14, 15:23).

¹T. A. Kantonen warns that when teaching about stewardship, "The greatest danger has been to compromise the gospel through moralism and legalism drawn from the Old Testament." *A Theology for Christian Stewardship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), 6.

²Ibid., 25.

³Ibid., 9, 23.

David, on the other hand, was a man who relied upon God's Word. He was able to face Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47), in part, because he believed God had chosen him to be the next king (1 Sam. 16:1,13). Since David was going to be king, Goliath couldn't win; David's victory was assured. The same faith enabled David to endure during the many years that Saul pursued him. Also, it was because of that faith that he spared Saul's life (1 Sam. 26:9-10).

David's faith in the prophetic Word and his understanding of the relationship between faith and sacrifice were also revealed by the way he received Nathan's word of forgiveness after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam.12:13). The Law of Moses did not provide any sacrifice for such sins as adultery and murder. God could not be propitiated or obligated to forgive by any sacrifice that David could offer (Psalm 51:16). Yet, even though he was under no obligation to forgive, God forgave David anyway (2 Sam. 12:13). David believed God and received that forgiveness. His later offerings for the temple were not given to atone for his sin. They were tangible expressions of the gratitude David felt for God's unmerited grace (1 Chron. 29:14-16).

In a similar way, when the apostle Paul wished to encourage the Corinthians to participate in the offering he was receiving for the poor in Jerusalem, he argued from the grace and generosity of God (2 Cor. 8:9, 9:7-11), rather than from obligations imposed by law or promise. Although he could have marshaled several Old Testament passages concerning the importance of fulfilling one's vows to the Lord (Num. 30:1-2, Prov. 20:25), he continues to treat the gift which the Corinthians had promised as something that will be freely given (2 Cor. 8:6, 9:5). If the circumstance of individuals had

changed, they were to give according to what they had rather than considering their gift as a bill that must be paid even if it caused them financial difficulty (2 Cor. 8:11-12).

As he encourages the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving, Paul builds their faith by reminding them of several important principles:⁴

1. They, themselves, belonged to the Lord (8:5).
2. It was not God's will to burden them, but it was good for those with an abundance of material goods to provide for the needs of others (8:13-15).
3. It was enough for their gifts to be proportionate to their means (8:11-12).
4. God rewards human generosity (9:6-7).
5. They could afford to be generous because God is generous (9:8-11).
6. Their generosity would glorify God (9:12-15).

These principles derive naturally from the Gospel and what it reveals about the character of God. Paul places God's grace, mercy, and generosity before the Corinthians and invites them to trust God also in this matter.

Another principle that is set forth in both the Old and New Testaments is that of first-fruits giving. Paul shared this principle with the Corinthians in the sixteenth chapter of his first epistle. There he wrote, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income" (1 Cor. 16:2). The phrase "On the first day" not only encourages first-fruits giving, it also ties their giving to the

⁴Pastors do well to emulate Paul in this regard. Don Abdon writes, "*Stewardship is a fruit of faith.* It is tempting to try and pick the fruit before the tree is planted and watered, but most of the poor stewardship performance in congregation is a result of weak *faith*." (Emphasis Abdon's.) *Training and Equipping the Saints*, Third Ed. (Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, Inc., 1977), 257.

Gospel and their worship, for Paul has just written about the resurrection. This work, too, is one that they may give themselves to wholeheartedly, knowing that it will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

In *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, T. A. Kantonen suggests that a gospel-centered understanding of Christian stewardship should also reflect the new relationship with God which the Gospel brings. We are no longer slaves, but children and heirs of all things. He writes:

When on the basis of our filial relation to God we see our stewardship, not as an administration of something external to us, but as a sharing in God's own life, we learn a second important stewardship lesson; the sources and nature of Christian giving. If as God's children we are to share in his purpose, then what we do is determined by what he does. Our management of his household is patterned on the way in which he manages it.⁵

Far from being a responsibility or obligation, stewardship at its best is a joyous participation in the work of our heavenly Father.

In summary, then, stewardship that derives from the Gospel will be a response of faith to God's mercy and generosity, not an attempt to manipulate God or earn his favor. Pastors who follow the example of the apostle will encourage people to grow in the grace of giving by encouraging them to give themselves fully to God and to trust in his generosity. They will exhort them to reflect God's generosity in their own lives by being generous with others, by giving in proportion to what they have received, and by giving

⁵Kantonen, *A Theology of Christian Stewardship*, 40.

in a regular and timely way that puts God's kingdom first.⁶ The next section will set forth some of the ways that have been suggested to accomplish this purpose.

Encouraging Growth in Financial Stewardship

As the previous section suggested, God-pleasing growth in personal financial stewardship comes as people grow in their understanding of the Gospel and its implications for their use of the money that God has given. Thus the task of encouraging such growth is primarily educational. It is a matter of setting the Word before the people and guiding them in its application.⁷

There are, of course, many ways to accomplish this task. Sermons, Bible classes, visitation and mailings have all been tried. Each of the methods has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, sermons reach large numbers of people, but they have less opportunity for interaction and it is easy for individuals to assume that the preacher is speaking to someone else. On the other hand, they provide the opportunity for repetition. Whatever methods are chosen, those congregations that work intentionally at educating their members about financial stewardship and then ask for commitments have substantially higher income than similar sized congregations that don't.⁸

⁶Abdon, *Training and Equipping*, 260-261, 264-266.

⁷The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Department of Stewardship Ministry, "Ways to Gather Annual Commitments," *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2000), 19.

⁸The LCMS Dept. of Stewardship Ministry cites a study of 1989 congregational data by Ed Uthe

Every member visits grew out of this country's awakening to world missions in the late 1800's and early 1900's. George Salstrand, who has done extensive research on the history of stewardship in the United States, credits the Laymen's Missionary Movement with popularizing the use of "Every Member Canvasses" in the early years of the twentieth century. The lay missionary societies used these visits as an opportunity to raise mission awareness and to encourage the members of their congregations to help support missionary endeavors. They were also instrumental in promoting congregational budgets and weekly offering envelopes.⁹

An every member visit can overcome some of the sermon's limitations—it's difficult for people to assume that you're talking to someone else. Also, they have the opportunity to ask questions. However, such visits require a great deal of time and effort on the part of those making the visits. Visitors must be trained and the congregation's households divided between them.¹⁰

of the ELCA's Commission for Financial Support that showed (1) Congregations that ask members to pledge have average giving levels 30.2 percent higher than those that don't. (2) Congregations that have a stewardship emphasis have average giving levels 23.3 percent higher than those that don't. (3) Congregations that have asked members to consider tithing have average giving levels 19.6 percent higher than those that don't. (4) Congregations that do all three have giving levels 38.5 percent higher than those who do none of these things. No publication data was given for the study. "Ways to Gather Annual Commitments," 4.

⁹George A. E. Salstrand, *The Story of Stewardship in the United States of America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), 50.

¹⁰Dept. of Stewardship, "Ways to Gather Annual Commitments," 9.

Conducting an every member visit requires a certain amount of record keeping. At a minimum, the planners will need a membership directory with up-to-date addresses and phone numbers. Usually congregations will also desire some mechanism for tracking which visits have been completed and any pledges that may have been received as a result of the visits. Simple manual records will suffice for these purposes, but a computer can make it easier to summarize results and follow-up on the pledges received.¹¹

Cottage meetings and Bible studies provide opportunity for extended discussion and greater learning than some of the other methods mentioned here. They require less time and energy than an every member visit. However, they generally reach fewer people than either visitation programs or Sunday sermons. The number of persons attending can be increased with telephone and direct mail invitations. Although not required, these lists will be easier to generate if the congregational records are kept on a computer.¹²

Direct mail programs are generally the least effective. Many people route such mailings straight to the trash and never read them. Nevertheless, many congregations use this method at least occasionally. Its principal virtues are that 1) mail reaches many people who travel extensively or work odd hours; 2) multiple mailings eventually raise

¹¹Ibid., 9-10.

¹²Ibid., 7-8.

awareness through sheer repetition; and 3) it takes only a little more effort to prepare a mailing for a very large congregation than for a small one.¹³

When a computer is used, personalized mailings become possible. With individualized statements, response cards, and letters, it becomes relatively easy to ask people to contribute a little bit more than they did before. Many nonprofit organizations will send an annual gift request that asks each individual for just a little more than was given the previous year.¹⁴ For example, the person who contributed \$100 is asked for a gift of \$125, while the person who gave \$5 will be asked for \$10. Many charities have found this to be an effective way to increase donations, though it has not been used often by congregations.¹⁵

A second option available to congregations with computer capabilities is to arrange for offering envelopes to be mailed to each contributor on a monthly basis. Simple packets consisting of little more than four or five offering envelopes, a postage paid return envelope, and a short stewardship message can increase offerings

¹³Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁴Most often several options are offered on a response card with the lowest option being greater or equal to the donor's previous gift. Con Squires describes several ways to improve the effectiveness of response cards in "The Moment of Actual Giving," *Fund Raising Management*, vol. 28, no. 12 (Feb. 1998): 32.

¹⁵Squires notes that about 20% of donors will increase their gift if the mailing asks them directly to do so. Con Squires, "Recapturing the Lapsed Perennial Donor." *Fund Raising Management*, vol. 28, no. 8 (Oct. 1997): 36.

substantially. The increase more than offsets the cost of the service.¹⁶ To take advantage of this, a congregation needs to be able to create a disk with the names, addresses, and envelope numbers of its contributors and mail it to a service company. Alternatively, they can stuff, address, and mail the packets themselves.

With any of these methods it is important for the Gospel to retain its proper place as the heart and soul of the presentation. Legalism, self-interest, and organizational loyalty have a way of sneaking into the message. One only has to think of books and sermons that charge Christians who give less than a tithe with robbing God or the charlatans that tell people God will return 100 times whatever they give to particular “ministries.” This “hundred-fold” approach treats contributions as an investment while appealing to the greed of the hearers. Pew rentals, dues, “scandal sheets” (publicly posted lists of who gave what), and giving to the budget have all been used at various places and various times. None promote the gospel spirit of generous participation in the work of God. Consequently, congregations will wish to avoid record keeping systems that use terms associated with disreputable ministries as well as business and legal terms like “balance due.”¹⁷

¹⁶Dept. of Stewardship, “Ways to Gather Annual Commitments,” 17.

¹⁷ “Whole-Life Stewardship and Stewardship Summary” printed on the inside cover of each of the booklets comprising the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000* says “We will use only those approaches, strategies, and methods that reflect the Gospel and build up stewards’ faith active in love. We will emphasize God’s love in Christ as that basis and motivation for Christian stewardship.”

So far, this chapter has presented a short overview of the gospel principles behind personal financial stewardship and briefly indicated the kinds of records that could assist congregations with the task of stewardship education. The next two sections will deal with some of the practical concerns of congregations that use pledging and/or participate in special offerings.

Pledging

Congregations use pledges for various purposes. Some use them to determine their budget for the coming year, others use pledges to track the response of members to their stewardship education efforts, but most seem to use them primarily to encourage people to be intentional about their gifts. For each of these uses, certain kinds of information will have to be recorded for later use.¹⁸

This author discourages congregations from using pledges as part of their budget planning process—the percentage of members who pledge is actually quite small and a simple trend line usually provides the needed information with less effort.¹⁹ However,

¹⁸Abdon strongly recommends separating the budgeting process from the stewardship program. *Training and Equipping*, 266.

¹⁹The necessary formulas were built into LCIS and *LCIS 2000*. They are also included in many spreadsheet programs. To use this method enter three or more years of weekly offerings with a week number next to each. (Monthly totals work well, too.) In another column, set up a formula to sum the offerings for one year. Replicate the formula so that it is recalculated every week, giving a moving twelve month total. There will be very little fluctuation in the totals. At the bottom of the second column use the spreadsheet's regression or forecasting function (@FORECAST in *Lotus 1-2-3*) to estimate the total offerings for the coming year.

should they choose to use pledges for this purpose, they will need to have the necessary records available to support the process. At a minimum, they will need to be able to project the overall change in their budget from the change in pledges. Although a simple comparison of the total pledge amount may be adequate for many congregations, those that have recently begun to emphasize pledging and those that have a small number of people who pledge would probably do better to compare each person's new pledge with their pledge and/or contribution from the previous year. This makes it easier to adjust changes in the total for increases in the number of people who pledge or for the departure of members that had pledged significant amounts.

Congregations that use pledging to provide feedback on their stewardship education efforts will also want to be able to compare current pledges to those from the previous year. In addition, they will want an easy method for preparing mailing lists, phone lists, various kinds of checklists, and records of the numbers of people reached. Such information will make it easier for them to keep programs like an Every Member Visit on track.

Congregations that use pledging simply as a means to encourage planned giving sometimes never even open the pledges. Instead, they simply return them to the persons making the pledge at the end of the pledge period. Unfortunately, the returned pledge often becomes a note laden with bad news and guilt. Many well-intentioned people are unaware of how often they have been out of town or forgotten their envelope on Sunday morning. Consequently, when they finally get their statement, they have fallen far short of what they had planned to give.

A more salutary use of pledge information is to use that information to provide regular progress reports to people. It helps if the reports are provided frequently so that people can easily catch up to their promised level of giving. It doesn't matter a great deal if the total pledge or the amount expected to date is reported along with the offerings received so far. What matters is that the person who made the pledge be able to make any necessary adjustments while the amount is still small. Many congregations use quarterly statements for this purpose. At one seminar I conducted, a judicatory executive suggested that a minimum of five reports be sent—the first as soon as the end of February. In his experience this had greatly increased the number of people who gave the total amount that they had pledged.²⁰

To accomplish this task, the congregation will need a convenient way to record people's pledges and offerings. They will also need a way to prepare and distribute the required reports. Paper records that can be torn off and mailed quarterly are readily available. More frequent distribution requires a computer. A computer greatly speeds the process of recording gifts and preparing the reports for distribution.

In addition to the practical needs of congregations that use pledging, there are also some terminological issues. Don Abdon has suggested that the term "faith promise" be utilized instead of the term "pledge."²¹ Abdon argues that the word pledge connotes a

²⁰A final reminder early in December will help people to complete their pledge by the end of the year. This would greatly reduce the problems caused by "catch-up" offerings and help the contributors avoid any negative tax consequences that might result from failing to contribute what they had planned.

²¹Donald Abdon, *Personal Interview Stewardship Training* (Indianapolis: Parish Leadership

legal obligation that should be met even if the giver's circumstances have changed. He uses the change in terminology as an opportunity to indicate that the promises made are made in expectation of a certain level of income. Should that level of income change significantly the person should feel free to adjust their promise accordingly.²² In a similar spirit others have suggested terms such as "intention."

This author prefers to ask people to make a percentage pledge and then, if they wish, to provide an estimate of what the total dollar amount may be. This approach has been particularly appreciated by farmers and small businessmen who have irregular income streams. By pledging a percentage of their income, they are better able to fulfill their promise. Of course, a percentage pledge requires a different sort of record and is more difficult to compare to offerings received. Perhaps for this reason, this author has not seen a computer system designed to record and report percentage pledges.

In addition to "pledge," "faith promise," and "intention," history also provides terms like "vow" and "subscription." Congregations should be certain that the record keeping system they select will use terminology they find comfortable.²³ Because of frequent requests that LCIS use a term other than "pledge," the contributions program was

Seminars, Inc., 1981), 16.

²²Ibid., 15.

²³Perhaps the best solution is to teach the congregation the full biblical meaning and usage of terms like "pledge."

changed to permit congregations to enter their own term. A similar approach was taken with its successors.

Special Appeals and Designated Gifts

In addition to the annual cycle of regular weekly offerings, most congregations eventually need to deal with special appeals and designated gifts. Locally, special appeals are often used to raise money for building programs and endowment funds. At other times, congregations are asked to raise special offerings for regional and national mission projects, anniversary offerings, and other special purposes. At a minimum, such efforts require the ability to record and report offerings designated for special purposes. Usually they will be more successful if specialized lists can be created specifically for the process.

To illustrate how this can work, consider the example of a special offering that a congregation the author once served gathered for missions. In celebration of the Missouri Synod's 150th anniversary, the Minnesota South District asked its member congregations to take up a special offering that would be used for new mission starts, to provide assistance to some of the District's ethnic ministries, and to support selected local initiatives. Ten percent of the total would be sent on to the Synod as an anniversary offering. The congregation participated willingly and gave generously.

The first step in the process was to set up a meeting between district executives and members of the congregation who were generous givers and interested in missions. Using our contribution records, we were able to generate a list of those who gave more

than \$1,000 per year to our congregation. We then scanned the list and selected those whom we knew supported one or more mission agencies or who were active in our congregation's mission societies. These people were given a preview of the information that would be presented to the congregation and asked to consider a large donation.

From there we moved to the congregation's leadership. The pastor and a small, carefully-selected team gathered them, presented the appeal and its purpose, and invited them to participate. After a few weeks, the pledges received were totaled and a series of meetings were held for the rest of the congregation.²⁴

Three features of this process merit consideration when selecting or designing a record keeping system. First, we were very glad that we could simply request reports from our computer system that listed the number of people in our congregation whose contributions exceeded a certain amount. The ability to consult a breakdown that showed the number of people who contributed at various levels was useful for determining the cutoff. Since these reports were prepared from our records of regular, weekly offerings, they needed to be part of our everyday contributions system.

Second, if the pledges and gifts had been received by our congregation instead of the district, we would have needed the ability to record pledges for varying numbers of

²⁴The "Capital Funding" booklet in the *Congregational Stewardship Manual 2000*, outlines a similar process and the kind of preparation that is needed. It also provides references for several books that describe such processes in detail, 7-10.

years that would be given on a monthly, quarterly, semiannual, or annual basis. We also would have desired the ability to send out reminders for the pledges that spanned longer periods and to acknowledge the gifts received—especially those over the IRS limit of \$250.

The third consideration is that at several points during the process we needed a total of all the pledges and offerings received. At first, while the numbers were small, it was easy enough to simply total the checks and pledge cards. As the number of pledges received grew, it would have been helpful to have been able to simply enter the pledges with their various lengths and periods and let the computer calculate the totals. In this case, the District provided us with the final totals since they had taken on the responsibility of receiving and tracking the offerings. However, it was comforting to know that our computer system was capable of handling such complex pledges if we ever undertook such an appeal locally.

Such appeals are a fact of life for modern congregations. They are part of our life together as a church body, and our record keeping systems need to be able to handle such situations. Another fact of life is that the local congregation becomes a clearing house for all kinds of designated offerings. Members give memorials and gifts to many organizations through the congregation's treasury. Such gifts need to be recorded as they are received, then sequestered, totaled, and sent on at convenient intervals to the intended recipients. All this needs to be done and reported in such a way that members can be confident that the funds are being passed along as intended—or, if they were given for local use, that they are being used for the purposes for which they were given.

Consequently, whatever record keeping system is used must be capable of recording offerings for a wide variety of purposes and funds.

In conclusion, it is apparent that any system for tracking a congregation's pledges and offerings must be fairly flexible. The congregation will need a variety of capabilities to fulfill its responsibility to its members and to its sister congregations. Other capabilities will be needed to support its efforts to encourage proper growth in personal financial stewardship. However, underlying all these efforts, they will want a proper understanding of the Gospel and they will want that understanding reflected in the tasks they undertake and in the terms that they use. The next section will show how these same concerns help to determine the features and terminology incorporated into the congregation's accounting system.

Accounting Methods and Terminology

It is probably harder to see gospel connections in a congregation's contributions and accounting systems than it is in its membership records. A congregation's records of its members contributions and its own financial standing are heavily influenced by the responsibilities our society places upon any organization. For that reason they are very similar to the records kept by other organizations that receive donations. However, their usage and terminology will differ in so far as they have been adapted to serve the cause of the Gospel.

Like any secular organization, congregations have a responsibility to provide fair and accurate reports of their income, expenses, assets, and liabilities. They use budgets

and try to control their spending. If they borrow money they must repay it or face foreclosure or bankruptcy. Consequently, those who manage the congregation's affairs will need a good accounting system that will allow them to make sound decisions and provide accurate reports about the congregation's financial health to the members.

Similarly, any organization supported by donations will maintain contributor records. At a minimum these records allow it to thank their contributors and ask for additional money. Usually, the donations will be acknowledged in a way that allows donors to claim a tax deduction for their gifts. All such organizations must be able to satisfy contributors, auditors, and the government that the funds received have been used in a manner consistent with the organization's purpose and the donor's intentions.

Although congregations do many of the same things that secular organizations do, they understand what they do quite differently. Secular managers are accountable to human authority for the way they use the funds entrusted to them. Both congregational members and leaders are accountable to each other and to God, for it is his work in which they are engaged.

Consequently, congregations speak of their work differently than secular organizations. Instead of divisions, departments, and cost centers, congregations have boards, committees, groups, and societies. When speaking functionally, they refer to "ministries" or "programs" rather than "projects" or "operations." These terminological and organizational differences reflect the congregation's gospel-centered task and should be reflected in the congregation's accounts and financial reports.

Congregations also use substantially different account names. The bulk of their income comes from regular and special offerings, not sales. Although, they may have received pledges, these differ substantially from credit granted to customers. To call them “accounts receivable” would be a misnomer. Congregations have no sales or cost of goods sold. They do not exist to provide goods or services in exchange for people’s money. They exist for the sake of the Gospel and the people who have been called by that Gospel.

Likewise, since a congregation’s financial assets are a means to an end rather than the end itself, congregations use a different style of bookkeeping than that used by corporations. Whereas businesses of all kinds use accrual accounting to recognize income as it is earned and to match expenses to the benefits received, congregations usually use cash accounting. They are more interested in accurately reporting the assets that are readily available for use than in accurately reporting profits from their operations.

Since congregations are also accountable for designated gifts and money received on behalf of other organizations, they generally use fund accounting, a form of cash accounting unique to nonprofit institutions. Separate funds are maintained for every category of offerings and contributions. Each has its own assets, liabilities, income, expense, and balance.

Fund accounting is very similar to the sugar bowl accounting that Grandma used to use. When Grandpa was paid, Grandma would divide the cash from his pay into a series of sugar bowls marked “rent,” “food,” “clothes,” and “other.” If the family was saving for something special, like a new car, there would also be a sugar bowl for that.

When one of the kids needed shoes, Grandma would look in the sugar bowl for clothes. If there was enough for shoes, then they bought the shoes, if there wasn't, the shoes had to wait.

Similarly as congregations receive offerings and designated gifts, they add them to the appropriate funds. When it is time to use the money, the congregation knows exactly how much has been set aside. If the money has been set aside for another organization, the treasurer knows exactly how much to pass on. If the congregation has been setting aside designated gifts for capital improvements or choir music, the treasurer can quickly inform them how much they can spend.

One problem that congregations face is that they often have many funds. Consequently, their bookkeeping system must be able to conveniently keep straight many different funds. Many of these funds have little activity. Few require detailed reports. LCIS was able to handle this very conveniently through a special account type. Other bookkeeping systems may handle such tasks differently, but the need exists and ought to be met by the software selected.

To help keep the congregation's focus on its ministry, it can also be helpful if the bookkeeping system has the ability to allocate various administrative costs to the congregation's various ministries. It's useful to be able to answer questions like "Are we spending more on evangelization and missions or on building and other facilities?" When

such questions can be asked and answered it is easier for the congregation to match the priorities of the budget to its God-given purpose.²⁵

So, even though the gospel connections are more difficult to see, they are nevertheless present even in the congregation's accounting records. The features of the accounting system and the names that are used to designate the various accounts will all reflect the congregation's purpose, function, and calling.

Conclusion

With the conclusion of this chapter, the gospel connections for the major records systems within the congregation have been demonstrated. This chapter and the ones that have gone before have shown that a congregation's theology and approach to ministry will and ought to be reflected in the kinds of records they keep and in the terminology they use within those records.

Of course, this is no less true of computerized records than it is of manual records. The next chapter provides a brief history of how congregational records came to be widely computerized. Perhaps more important, it will show that the kinds of concerns that have been presented within the first three chapters played an important role in the decision to produce a system specifically for Lutheran congregations.

²⁵Abdon gives an example of how this can be done by grouping budget items under headings that highlight their spiritual significance. *Training and Equipping*, 266-270.

CHAPTER 4

AN OVERVIEW OF COMPUTERIZED RECORDS

Until now this paper has focused on general principles that apply to congregational record keeping. Although there have been a few instances when the author has taken a moment to indicate the advantages or disadvantages of a particular medium, the principles that have been laid out can be applied to any medium.

This chapter will set forth some of the principle advantages of computerized record keeping systems within a brief review of the history of congregational software. As part of that review, the arguments for denominationally specific systems such as the *Lutheran Congregational Information System* will be given. It is now time to consider the sorts of capabilities that have been sought by congregations as they move their records to computerized systems.

The Early Adopters

Every medium has its advantages. Paper, for example, is highly portable (in small quantities) and very flexible. If a paper form lacks a blank for something you want to record, you simply write in the margin or add a second page.

Computers also have advantages for certain kinds of records. They are able to process large quantities of records very rapidly. They can be very reliable and can increase the accuracy of records by checking them as they are entered. They can also reduce the amount of work that must be put into record keeping by reducing or even eliminating redundant effort.

Computers were originally created to rapidly perform tedious and repetitive calculations.¹ For church records, this accuracy and speed were first applied to mailing lists, contribution records, and bookkeeping. Computers could quickly and accurately sort addresses into the proper sequence for mailing and print the labels. Likewise, as long as the correct offerings were recorded, the computer would add them accurately in no more time than it took to print a contributor's statement. Arithmetic errors were also eliminated from the treasurer's books.

These limited benefits were enough for some very large congregations to begin using computers as early as the late 1960s and early 1970s. Because computers were large, expensive machines, these early adopters rented time on machines that were owned by universities or service companies. Their simple bookkeeping applications and mailing lists could be easier to use than an Addressograph® and paper ledgers, but the amount and

¹The two earliest electronic computers, the Harvard-IBM Mark I and the British Colossus, were used respectively for calculating ballistics tables and cryptography. (Gary Masters, "Computer—History of Computers," Compton's 99 Interactive Encyclopedia Deluxe [CD-ROM].) The first commercial application was a payroll package deployed by General Electric in 1955. John Impagliazzo, "History in the Computing Curriculum, Appendix A: Computer History Timeline," http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/HCLAS/CSC/ComputingHistory/CompHist_timeline.cfm (December 8, 2003), s.v. "1950-1959."

kinds of information that could be stored were very limited. In addition, the punch cards and magnetic tapes used to store the data were far more cumbersome to use than today's personal computers.

The Seventies

The early seventies brought several important developments that helped make it possible for churches to own their own computers. Two important hardware advances were the invention of the microprocessor and the floppy disk.² The microprocessor took a few years to move from specialized applications, to the hobbyist's garage, to corporate and church desktops, but floppy disks were immediately adopted for use with larger computers. They made possible a significant new application, word processing. By the latter part of the 1970s dedicated word processors and minicomputers with mailing lists and accounting applications were finding homes in the country's largest congregations.

Meanwhile, microcomputers were hitting the malls. The Apple II, the Commodore PET, and the TRS-80 were readily available.³ The Apple II and Radio Shack machines even had the ability to do rudimentary word processing. Microcomputers built on the Z80 chip were even more capable, but were

²The first microprocessor was Intel's 4004. First released in 1971, it was the brainchild of Marcian E. Hoff. (Masters, "History.") The floppy diskette was developed a year earlier by Alan Shugart of IBM. Impagliazzo, "Timeline," 1970-1979.

³The TRS-80, Apple II, and Commodore PET all debuted in 1977. Impagliazzo, *Ibid.*

correspondingly more expensive. A good computer with word processing software and a good daisy wheel printer could easily set a congregation back more than \$5,000. Most churches could still only dream, but their dreams seemed more attainable than they had when computers were behemoths running in specially built rooms.

As prices dropped and the next generation of personal computers became available, many of the early units were donated to congregations. They still didn't have any specifically churchly applications. But they did come with a programming language built in, so many volunteers set out to write applications for their congregations. In general, the results were disappointing. Many programs were poorly designed. Most were also full of errors and lacking in safety features. As a result they were difficult to use and prone to crash, often at the worst possible moment.

However, some professional organizations did develop and release programs specifically for churches. EduSystems, Inc. of Minneapolis came out with *CMS*, an administrative system for congregations that ran on the Apple II series of computers. Others also offered solutions. Some were successful, others weren't. IBM became convinced of the potential for congregational software and offered a package consisting of a desktop minicomputer and a nicely done membership application, but the \$20,000 price tag killed it.⁴

Several of these early commercial systems were well designed and well programmed. The chief frustration for the both the developers and the users were the

⁴The author attended a demonstration of this product in late 1981 or 1982.

very tight constraints which the machines placed upon the programs' capabilities and upon the number of members that could be included on a single disk. For example, the Apple's diskettes had room for only about 140,000 characters of storage space.⁵ A computer with two diskettes had room for one small program and about 45 pages of text. That's room for a fairly sizable phone directory, a few hundred addresses, or a few handfuls of membership cards.

Price, of course, was the second frustration: it takes hundreds of man-hours to develop good software and the people who work those hours have to be paid. A large market did not yet exist. Because a lot of dollars had to be spread among a few customers, the programs that were written were almost as expensive as the computers that ran them.

The end result of these two situations was that the congregations that could best afford the software were too large to use it and the congregations that could best use it had difficulty coming up with the money to buy the necessary programs and equipment. Nevertheless, the utility of the software was apparent. Many congregations wanted it. Larger capacities and lower prices could solve the dilemma and open the doors to widespread adoption of computerized records.

⁵Lucas Foljanty, "The Apple Museum," <http://www.theapplemuseum.com>, s.v. "Apple Disk II" (December 10, 2003).

The Early Eighties

Personal computers finally came into their own as serious business tools during the early 1980's. IBM, which had so badly missed the church market with its minicomputers, pushed the microcomputer industry to the next level when it introduced its own line of personal computers. Big, fast, and expandable, the IBM Personal Computer ran the very best productivity software and ran it well.⁶ Word processing and database software were available⁷ along with another application that every manager and accountant in America wanted on his desk: *VisiCalc*, the first spreadsheet.⁸ With these applications and storage capacity large enough to accomplish real work, personal computers moved from TV rooms to desktops around the country.

The new IBM machines also provided enough horsepower to solve the price performance dilemmas that had limited the makers and users of church software. The new double-sided, double-density diskettes provided enough room for the records of several hundred members. Although the largest congregations would need additional

⁶IBM announced the PC in August of 1981 and began shipping it that September. For \$3000 one could get a machine with 64K of memory and one floppy drive. KC's Computer Closet, "Computer Closet Collection: IBM PC 5051," <http://www.computercloset.org/IBMPC.htm> (December 9, 2003).

⁷The first database product for CP/M machines and IBM's PC was Ashton Tate's, *dBase II*. The work of George Tate and Wayne Ratliff, it was first available for CP/M machines and was ported to the IBM PC prior to the machine's release. Impagliazzo, "Timeline," 1970-1979 and 1980-1989.

⁸*VisiCalc* was developed by Don Bricklin and Bob Franston who founded VisiCorp. It was released May 11, 1979 and was later ported to the IBM PC. Impagliazzo, "Timeline," 1970-1979.

capacity or multiple sets of diskettes, it was at least possible to conceive of a system that would be able to meet the needs of a majority of Lutheran congregations.

By 1982, the final technological hurdle was cleared for the very large congregations. Several companies introduced large capacity fixed disks that could be added to a PC, enabling it to hold the records of several thousand members⁹. Cost was still an obstacle for many congregations, but it was possible to develop a system that would enable those congregations that could afford it to move some of their key records to a computer.

The CCUC and LCIS

Though such a system was certainly possible, a number of important questions remained and everyone was asking them at the same time. How could congregations get the greatest benefit from the new, more capable systems? Did programs already exist that could be used or adapted? Were there advantages to a unified approach? Could volume purchase arrangements or national contracts reduce the cost to congregations or enable vendors to better meet the needs of most congregations?

⁹Although various kinds of disks had been used in computers since the 1950's, the Winchester design used in personal computers did not appear until 1973. (Ibid.) They did not become available for personal computers until the early 1980's. The test congregations that were running LCIS when the author joined CPH in April of 1983 used 5 MB drives manufactured by Corvus. Ten MB disks became available shortly thereafter. By the time LCIS was introduced late in 1983, the machine and software capacity were sufficient for any of the more than 20,000 Lutheran congregations in the United States. The single exception was Mt. Olivet in Minneapolis, a congregation that served more than 16,000 people.

To help answer these questions and to be able to provide guidance to their member congregations, representatives of various Lutheran church bodies met in 1981 to explore the capabilities of the then current microcomputer hardware and software and to see how they could benefit Lutheran congregations. This group, the Consultation on Congregation Use of Computers (CCUC), surveyed a large sample of congregations in 1981 and visited a number of congregations that had already begun using computers.¹⁰ They concluded that a joint approach would provide significant advantages to both the congregations and the church bodies and recommended that the following steps be taken:

“1) The publication of guidelines for microcomputer acquisitions. 2) The joint acquisition of the rights to distribute a number of commercial software packages to all Lutheran congregations. 3) The development of turnkey applications software for congregations. 4) The formulation of an all-Lutheran body to oversee the implementation of the aforementioned actions.¹¹”

Items three and four of the report demonstrate that while the CCUC had found a great deal of commonality between the Lutheran synods with regard to their record keeping requirements, they had not found any existing systems that adequately addressed those needs. In part, this was a matter of terminology and in part it was due to the importance of the Sacraments to the ministry of Lutheran congregations. Communion attendance and baptismal anniversaries were important to the Lutherans, but no provision

¹⁰EduSystems, Inc., *User Reference Manual for the Lutheran Congregational Information System: Version 2.2* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), I-1.

¹¹Consultation on Congregational Use of Computers, *Phase I Report* cited by EduSystems, I-1.

had been made for these and other common needs of the Lutherans in the software that they reviewed. Consequently, the decision was made to develop software specifically for Lutheran congregations, and the *Lutheran Congregational Information System (LCIS)* began to take shape.

The software that the CCUC proposed would consist of three major modules: Membership, Contributions, and Finance. A list of thirteen policy-level guidelines for the design and creation of the modules was drawn up. Four touch upon the discussion here.

9. The system should provide the data needed by the church bodies and synods.
10. The system must meet the needs of Lutheran congregations for information about their members and their finances.
11. Within limits of the hardware, applications should be integrated as much as possible so that more and better information will be available for planning and analysis and so that it is not necessary to keep duplicate information in the data files.
13. The applications should be designed to help the congregations minister more effectively, not just more efficiently.¹²

Guidelines nine and ten indicate that the CCUC found that Lutheran congregations have unique information needs. As noted above, some of these needs arise from the way that Lutheran pastors minister to their congregations. Other requirements came from the reports wanted by the various synods. Still others grew out of the Lutheran understanding of financial stewardship and the ways in which that understanding was

¹²Ibid., I-2

commonly applied both to contributor records and the congregation's financial accounting.

Guideline eleven stated the consultation's desire to use technology to reduce the amount of redundant information being kept by congregations. At the time LCIS was developed, it was common for congregations to have a number of files and forms that each contained a member's name and address. There might be a master member record for every person, and a communion card and contributor record for every adult member, and an Addressograph® plate for every household. In addition there would be separate mailing lists for the cradle roll, Sunday school, youth group, men's club, women's circles, and voter's assembly. Most churches also published some sort of church directory. As result, a single family moving across town could result in a hour's work changing addresses in dozens of documents and files. Replacing most of these records with a computer program capable of generating labels, directories, and lists, significantly reduced the amount of clerical time needed and eliminated many opportunities for error.

In order to enter information once and then use it repeatedly in a variety of ways, the applications had to be integrated: that is, they had to share their files with one another. This not only saved effort, it saved space. For example, there was only one address record for each household. Families of any size could share the same address record. Whenever someone's address was needed, LCIS would look it up and get it from the central repository. With LCIS, when a family moved across town only one change had to be made. Thereafter, it appeared on every report, directory, or mailing that involved one of the family's members.

Although LCIS did substantially reduce the amount of time that was spent keeping records up-to-date, the CCUC also hoped that the computer's ability to quickly sort through the congregational records would make it possible to minister more effectively to the congregation's members (guideline thirteen). Attendance follow-up, skills lists, and organizational rosters were among the records that were added in efforts to achieve this goal. While the original design left room for later improvement in those areas, it was a step forward from the manual systems. It was actually possible to use these records without hours of laborious hand sorting.

Although it may sound as if all of a congregation's records and history were moved to computers, that perception would be inaccurate. Because the storage capacity of computers of this era was still quite limited and because character for character it was hundreds of times more expensive than paper, certain kinds of information had to be omitted. Only that information which would change often or which would be compared across large numbers of members was included in the computer records. Things like the names of a person's baptismal sponsors or someone's confirmation verse, were unlikely to be used often. These could be accessed just as quickly from a file drawer on the rare occasions when they were needed.¹³

A different consideration caused the CCUC to shy away from encouraging congregations to keep their records of official acts on computers. Floppy disks and hard

¹³Computers of this era did not have the ability to run more than one program at a time. One had to stop what one was doing and load the new program before one could look up something. Walking to the file cabinet, opening the drawer, and flipping through the files often took less time.

disks of this era were inherently unreliable. Data that wasn't properly backed up could be lost in the blink of an eye.¹⁴ The thought that this could happen to a congregation's record of Baptisms and weddings was too much for the synodical archivists and the members of the CCUC. Therefore, these records continued to be kept in ink in bound volumes. This naturally created some redundancies, but it was felt that in this case a little redundancy was a good thing.

Once the programming and user testing were completed, LCIS was turned over to a consortium of Lutheran publishers for distribution. The author of this paper was brought in to help prepare the product for commercial distribution and to manage its marketing and support. That preparation involved some additional testing, a great deal of work expanding and simplifying the documentation, and, of course, arranging to have the disks duplicated and manuals printed. Telephone assistance also had to be available, since most of the people using the programs had never used a computer before.

After LCIS was introduced, it was apparent that EduSystems and the CCUC had done their homework well. The program was well received and sold rapidly. Though few non-Lutheran congregations adopted it, enough Lutherans purchased the system to make it one of the best-selling products of its day.¹⁵

¹⁴Although failures are much less frequent on modern machines they are still just as devastating
Make regular backups!

¹⁵EduSystems, Inc. released a nondenominational version of the program that did not sell nearly as well. In part, this may have been due to the superior marketing power of the Lutheran publishing houses, but it probably also was due to the inadequate accommodation such a system could make to the close relationship between theology, terminology, and pastoral practice.

The Next Step: *LCIS 2000*

Personal computers continued to evolve and change. The computers got faster, the disks got bigger, and prices came down. The introduction of the Apple Macintosh caused everyone to reevaluate the way people worked with computers and soon even software written for the IBM PC and its cousins was taking on a new look with pull-down menus and mice for pointing and editing. Programmers began to invent ways to enable a computer to switch more rapidly between tasks or even to run two or three programs at the same time. Others found ways to connect several computers together so that they could share information and equipment.

Computer networks proved to be a boon to very large congregations in several ways. In the first place it became possible for several people to work simultaneously on the onerous task of initial data entry. This greatly shortened the time between the purchase of system and the time when it became usable. Networks continued to be useful after the initial setup. Although a single computer can make it much easier to keep the essential office files and lists up to date, networks can ease the process of making up-to-date information available to those who need it. Without a network, copies of things like church directories continue to proliferate in a multiple-staff environment. With their computers connected in a network and running appropriate software, any staff member could find the information he or she needed. They could also enter any address or telephone number changes immediately, without passing it on to someone else.

Printers also changed. At first, many congregations used two printers. An inexpensive, dot-matrix printer could be used for labels and internal reports, but the print

quality was horrible. So, for correspondence, bulletins, and newsletters, those that could afford them used daisywheel printers. They were essentially electric typewriters with extra circuitry so that a computer could drive them.¹⁶ Then, in 1985, Apple introduced the LaserWriter, the first laser printer marketed for use with personal computers, and high resolution graphics could be printed along with a variety of fonts.¹⁷ Other manufacturers soon released similar printers for the IBM PC family of computers.

Some of the changes in software and hardware were easily incorporated into LCIS. Others could have been made. But one change doomed the product to an early grave. LCIS had been developed using the UCSD p-System, one of three operating systems that were initially available for the IBM PC.¹⁸ Although ways were found to make LCIS coexist peacefully with MS DOS, Microsoft's operating system had become so dominant that the day was coming when the p-System and the virtual machine¹⁹ that ran LCIS

¹⁶The first daisy wheel printer debuted in 1970. Impagliazzo, "Timeline," 1970-1979.

¹⁷The LaserWriter was release on March 1, 1985. (Foljanty, "Apple Museum," s.v. "LaserWriter.") Released with Adobe's *PageMaker* software, it originated a new industry, desktop publishing, and gave Apple's Macintosh line of computers a long lasting lead in the graphic arts and publishing industries. Curiously, laser printers were actually invented at IBM in 1975. Impagliazzo, "Timeline," 1970-1979.

¹⁸The UCSD p-System was developed at the University of California in San Diego as an operating system that could be quickly adapted to run on any computer. It had been a good choice at the time because it enabled EduSystems to reduce development costs by using tools they had originally created for the Apple II. Because the system was portable, LCIS could have easily been moved to another line of machines if the IBM PC had flopped.

¹⁹A virtual machine is a computer program that allows one computer to pretend that it is another. The UCSD p-System and its p-Machine (the "p" stood for "pseudo") are gone, but the idea of using a virtual machine for portability is still around. Today, Java works on the same principle and enables programmers to write code for the Internet that will run on any type of computer.

would no longer be available. Although attempts were made to move the programs to DOS, it soon became apparent that preserving the existing programs would cost almost as much as writing new ones. Since replacing the programs would also make it possible to update the design, take advantage of new technologies, and implement new features that our customers had requested, the author recommended that LCIS be replaced with a completely new set of programs. The publishers agreed and work began on *LCIS 2000*.²⁰

LCIS 2000 was much cleaner looking than LCIS, but made few changes in the types of data that had been stored. The larger and cheaper disks made it possible to make several additions that would have taken up too much room to be practical when LCIS had been developed. An alternate address was added for households that wintered in the south and more detailed Communion and attendance records were kept. A large, free-format area was added for notes of various kinds. Perhaps the most significant change to the basic data structure was a provision for creating ad hoc lists of members and the ability to reference those lists either directly or from the member record. This change made it much easier to implement a gift-based approach to offices within the congregation and also removed many of the frustrations congregations had been experiencing as they tried to keep track of who was participating in the various programs they offered.

Another advance introduced with *LCIS 2000* was the replacement of numeric and alphabetic codes with custom lists of meaningful words. This system used more space,

²⁰The author of this paper was the principal designer for *LCIS 2000* and managed the development project for Concordia Publishing House and Augsburg Fortress. It was released in 1989.

but the space was now available. Replacing the codes made the screens easier to understand and it allowed congregations of the various synods to make the terminology of the system match their synodical categories exactly.

Concordia Publishing House had hoped that greater terminological flexibility would enable them to sell *LCIS 2000* to a wide variety of Christian congregations. Although some such sales did result, they never amounted to much. The very process that had given Lutherans a system that they immediately understood (because it spoke their language and matched their style of ministry), produced a system that looked strange and alien to others.

Recent Developments

As work on *LCIS 2000*'s little brother, the *Ministry Information System Plus* was being completed, this author returned to the parish ministry.²¹ Of course, computer hardware and software have continued to change. Processor speed, memory, and disk storage are doubling about every two years²² and the overall cost of new systems has

²¹MIS+ was designed to be a simpler, less expensive program for average-sized congregations. It was the last of the author's designs and was released in early 1993. The author left CPH in August of 1992.

²²This exponential progression of computer power was predicted by Gordon E. Moore, one of the cofounders of Intel, and is known as "Moore's Law." It has held true for nearly four decades and is expected to continue for the near future. Moore's original paper was "Cramming more components onto integrated circuits" *Electronics*, Vol. 38, No. 8, (April 19, 1965), 114-117. It was available from Intel at <ftp://download.intel.com/research/silicon/moorespaper.pdf> (December 9, 2003). See also Bob Schaller, "The Origin, Nature, and Implications of 'Moore's Law:' The Benchmark of Progress in Semiconductor Electronics," Sept. 26, 1996, <http://mason.gmu.edu/~rschalle/moorelaw.html> (December 9, 2003).

been declining slowly. Today, the hand-held computers in many pockets have more storage capacity and greater speed than the computers that ran *LCIS 2000*. Desktop machines are almost a thousand times faster and larger than IBM's first Personal Computer.²³

This new capacity has made it possible to rethink the limitations on the data that is included in the computer files. Unlike twenty years ago, optical media are now substantially cheaper than paper and can be just as permanent.²⁴ As a result it is now practical to record all of the information about a particular person on one computer. Hypertext (worldwide web) links make it possible to connect almost anything to a person's records and empower computers with nearly the same kind of convenience and flexibility that paper and staples have provided for the last several decades.²⁵ These new capabilities ought to reduce the number of different files that are kept.

Likewise, the low cost and relative permanency of compact disks and other optical devices have made it possible to move even the official records to the computer. Many counties and states now make their historical records available on the Internet. Original records are being made and kept, and, in some cases, even signed electronically.

²³As this paper was being completed, personal computers with 3.0 GHz processors had been on the market for several months. The original PC ran at 4.77 MHz. KC's Computer Closet, "IBM PC 5051."

²⁴A 700 MB CD-R has the capacity to store about 235,000 pages of text and sells for about fifty cents.

²⁵For example, it's not too difficult to connect a teenager's church record to his personal web site if the software provides the ability to launch a browser and follow the link.

Doing so requires that appropriate backups exist, but it would now be easy to produce a parish log of births, Baptisms, weddings, transfers, and funerals on the computer and mail a printed copy to the district archivist on an annual basis.²⁶ Furthermore, this log could easily be connected to the member records of the people involved eliminating the problems that name changes cause.

The expanded capabilities of today's personal computers have resulted in even more fundamental changes. Enhanced computational power has been used to change the way people interact with their computers. Controlling a computer is no longer a matter of typing in a series of memorized commands. Thanks to the Macintosh and then Windows, controlling a computer now consists mostly of pointing and clicking. Pictures are used nearly as much as words. Voice control is beginning to appear. Although today's grade school students are learning to type, by the time they reach adulthood, they may well communicate with their computers primarily by voice, just as they do with other people.²⁷

Color and graphics have come to computers and printers alike.²⁸ What you see on the screen is what you get on the paper. For several years now it has been possible to add

²⁶Although the storage life of optical media are measured in decades, acid-free paper and microfilm can endure indefinitely if properly stored. This author suspects, however, that microfilm readers will become increasingly hard to acquire.

²⁷IBM's *ViaVoice* and Dragon's *Naturally Speaking* are two products that give computers limited voice control and the ability to transcribe carefully spoken dictation. *Windows XP* comes with a text to speech engine. However, further progress needs to be made in both speech recognition and synthesis before *Star Trek* style conversations can occur between computers and their users.

²⁸The ink jet printer was also invented at IBM. The first printers were produced in 1976, but it was some time before inks were developed that could be used on plain paper. Impagliazzo, "Timeline,"

family or individual pictures to the basic membership information stored on congregational computers. Digital cameras make getting the pictures onto the computer as simple as taking a snapshot, connecting a wire, and pressing a button.

Network capability is now built into almost every computer sold. All one has to do is connect the wires and even computers of different types can share information with each other. Computers all over the world share information with each other via the Internet. Music and video are exchanged as easily as the written word. All this is only possible because more and more capability has been crammed into the boxes we call personal computers.

As result of these changes, congregational software was redone again. *LCIS 2000* was replaced by *Shepherd's Staff* and *Revelations*,²⁹ both of which run on Microsoft's *Windows* operating system. Other publishers had to make similar changes. At the same time, some software publishers took advantage of these new capabilities to create software that could be easily reconfigured for various denominations and they began offering versions that purported to be "Lutheran."

It's time to look at all this new software to see how well it serves the needs of Lutheran congregations. Does the new software use proper Lutheran terminology? Does

1970-1979.

²⁹This dual replacement occurred because the publisher's consortium disbanded. *Revelations*, was an existing product that had been created by Icon Systems of Moorhead, MN and first released in 1993. Augsburg Fortress chose to act as distributor and began to market it to the congregations of the ELCA in 1994 (Icon Systems Network, "Who We Are," 2003, http://www.iconsystemsnetwork.com/about_us/who_we_are.html, s.v. "About Us" (12/23/2003)). At present, Augsburg Fortress refers all inquiries about *Revelations* directly to Icon Systems. Concordia Publishing House chose to invest in the development of its own product, *Shepherd's Staff*. It was first released in 1994.

it provide the information needed for denominational reports? Does it provide the information Lutheran pastors need to do the kinds of ministry they have been trained to do? Have the new technologies been utilized to make the congregation's ministry more effective as well as more efficient?

In addition, some of these packages are now several years old and the rapid proliferation of cell phones, web pages, and e-mail have created the needs for new kinds of member data. One phone number per household is no longer sufficient. Individual phone numbers, home and work e-mail addresses, and Internet chat contacts are common, especially among younger members. Will the parish staff have what they need to use these new forms of communication to stay in touch with their members? Has the older software been updated to adapt to these new trends?

These questions are all important. The next chapter will present a framework for evaluating administrative software for its terminology and ministry support. Then in chapter six, that framework will be applied to several systems that are being offered to Lutheran congregations.

CHAPTER 5

THE EVALUATION INSTRUMENT AND ITS USE

The previous chapters have laid out the many pastoral considerations that should be involved in the selection and adaptation of congregational software. Some of these considerations are practical and relate to the ability of the software to simplify the mechanics of pastoral and congregational work. Others are theological. These considerations are even more important, for they have to do with the purpose of the records and the heart of our work. This chapter introduces an instrument that will assist the reader in evaluating software that may be considered for use in his or her own congregation. The next chapter will show how the author used the instrument to evaluate three programs for this project.

The instrument that is presented has several limitations. First, it only addresses those factors which are unique to congregational software. Criteria such as appearance, price, quality, and availability of support should be part of the evaluation process, but they are not unique to congregations. The instrument assumes that the reader already has other means for evaluating these kinds of items.

Second, some of the items that are included in the instrument are inherently fuzzy.¹ They cannot be measured, like height or weight, but they can be judged subjectively. An example here would be the ease with which certain tasks can be accomplished. Different ways of working may appear “easy” to different people. For some people and for some parts of the program, “ease of use” may mean that it is immediately clear what should be done and how to go about the task. For others, especially in parts of the program that are used frequently, “ease of use” may have more to do with how quickly a job can be accomplished. When making such an evaluation, it will be vital to consider the opinions of the people who will actually use the software. What looks easy to them? How much time are they willing to invest learning to do various tasks and will that investment pay off— either by saving them time in the future or by enabling them to do things they could not otherwise do?

Finally, this instrument has been designed for use by Lutheran congregations. Congregations of other denominations will probably need to edit it before they use it. The changes needed should be readily apparent.

¹Within the disciplines of mathematics, engineering, and computer science the term “fuzzy” refers to groups of measurements that lack precision or certainty and to sets whose boundaries are imprecise. That is also how it is used here. Interested readers can find further information about fuzzy measurements and their use in Kurt J. Schmucker, *Fuzzy Sets, Natural Language Computations, and Risk Analysis*, (Rockville, Maryland: Computer Science Press, 1984).

Membership

The membership part of the instrument is shown in Table 1. The evaluation criteria for each question are noted and one or more references to the discussion in the preceding chapters have been given.

Table 1
Membership

System _____

Item	Page	Score
1 Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	30	
2 Does the software distinguish those who are part of the congregation from those who are not? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	24, 26	
3 Does the software recognize members of other congregations who are temporarily in the care in your congregation's pastor(s)? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	25	
4 Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? <input type="radio"/> =Missing <input checked="" type="radio"/> =Too much or too little detail <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Just right	23	
5 How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? <input type="radio"/> =Missing or awkward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Easy to use and share	26	
6 Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? <input type="radio"/> =No <input checked="" type="radio"/> =Yes, but difficult <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	27	
7 Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? <input type="radio"/> =No <input checked="" type="radio"/> =No, but unused fields can be hidden <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	30	
8 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	
9 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	

Item	Page	Score
10 Have provisions been made for unlisted phone numbers and street addresses that should not be published? O= No ✓=Yes	32	
11 Does the software differentiate between baptized members and communicants? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	
12 If your congregation permits children who have not been confirmed to commune can they be identified and separated from those who have been confirmed? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	
13 If your congregation needs to distinguish between active and inactive members does the software support that distinction? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	
14 Does the software record when and how individuals became members of the congregation? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	
15 Does the software record when and how individuals were removed from the congregation's membership? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	
16 Are the terms for recording how people joined or left the congregation consistent with your church body's theological principles and reporting requirements? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	41	
17 Can basic information about prospective members be kept and distinguished from those of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	42	
18 Does the system provide a convenient means of recording and reporting visits made by evangelism teams and others? O= missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	42	
19 Can the system be used to produce mailings for prospective members? O= No ✓=Yes	42	
20 Do the prospect records avoid terms such as "decision for Christ" that are not consistent with Lutheran theology?	43	

Item	Page	Score
○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes		
21 Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? ○= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	45	
22 Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	46	
23 Can gifts or abilities that could be useful to the congregation be noted and easily found? ○= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	46	
24 Does the software avoid confusing gifts and abilities with programs and committees? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	50	
25 Will the program produce mailing labels, rosters, and contact lists for your congregation's programs and committees? ○= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	50	
26 Can prior service to the congregation be noted and easily found? ○= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	50	
27 Can the congregation modify the software's built-in categories of gifts, activities, and offices so that they can track those items which are of greatest interest to them? ○= No ✓=Yes	50	
28 Does the software make it easy to prepare mailing labels and contact lists for various groups of members? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	51	
29 Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? ○= No ✓=Yes	90	
30 Are baptismal anniversaries supported? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	88	
31 Does the software provide flexibility for addressing mail to individuals and households? ○= No ✓=Yes	52	

Item	Page	Score
32 Does the software have the flexibility to handle extended family and nontraditional households? O= No ✓=Yes	55	
33 If the software attempts to track family relationships does it have the necessary flexibility for blended families? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	55	
34 How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? O= Some ●= Most ✓=All ✓+ = Ready to send	56, 89	
35 If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? O= No ✓=Yes	93	
36 Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? O= No ✓=Yes	97	
37 Can pictures be included in the membership files? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	99	
38 Does the software provide places to record cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other similar contact information that is specific to an individual rather than shared by a household? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	100	

Instructions for Table 1

The primary source for understanding the table items should be the page references given, but a few general instructions concerning the ratings will be given here.

Many of the questions provide for three possible responses, "Yes," "No," and "Configurable." "Configurable" means that the software doesn't provide this capability right out of the box, but that a field can be renamed or other types of customization can be used to provide the capability. Other options will be explained in the instructions the first time they are used.

The following paragraphs provide some more specific instructions. For the sake of brevity, redundant explanations have been omitted. So, read through the table and comments in sequence. Likewise, no additional instructions have been provided for straightforward questions. If a response is unclear and no explanation has been provided, see the cross-referenced text or look for a similar question earlier in the table.

1. Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? This question may best be answered after the rest of the survey is completed. However, if the answer is immediately apparent and it is “No,” don’t waste time. Move on to another product.

4. Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? The response “Too much or too little” requires some explanation. For these records to be most helpful they need to provide sufficient detail to answer commonly asked questions without wasting time with needless trivia. This may well vary by congregation. For example, a congregation with a cemetery may need to record the plot location for deceased members, others would not. The most common way software developers allow for such needs is to provide predefined spaces for the basic information, (e.g., date of death) and an area for freeform notes. If the program is lacking a few items of lesser importance or if there are many fields your congregation won’t use put a solid circle in the box. Use an open circle if essential items are missing.

5. How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? If keeping records of pastoral care proves to be difficult or time-consuming the records will not be kept. The end result will be the same as if the option were not present. So, unless this feature is quick and easy to use, put an open circle in the box.

6. Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? This feature probably won’t be used often, so it is important that the process be intuitive. Ideally, the congregation’s staff should be able to get the computer to sort through the files and find the names they want. Failing that, they’ll need help and support from the software company’s support staff or from members of the congregation who know how to query a database. If it can be done, but the staff couldn’t do it by themselves, put a solid circle in the box.

7. Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? A screen that has many unused blanks wastes time even if one doesn’t bother to fill them. One has to skip over the unused fields when entering data. They also clutter the view making it harder to see the more important items. A few programs are able to hide unused data items or rearrange the sequence of the fields so that those which are not used are placed at the bottom of the screen. Either approach improves the system’s usability. Mark the box accordingly.

9. Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? Testing this requires some knowledge of computers. The hard part is finding the program’s data files. Copy the main files and open the copies with *WordPad*. Page through each file. If you can read any private information put a circle in the box. Delete the your test copies after closing *WordPad*.²

²A second test was performed for the evaluation in chapter six. The author attempted to open the files with Lotus *Approach*, a general purpose database.

21. Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? This feature will be used every week, so it is important that the process proceed quickly. Unless it's really easy to use, give this item a circle.

22. Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? Different programs may use different methods to track worship and Communion attendance. To create a follow-up list one needs only to identify those who have missed a certain number of Sundays. LCIS and its derivatives used the number of times a person had attended during the year to identify those who had missed an unusual number of Sundays. There may be other methods as well. The important thing is for the list to be prepared easily in a way that makes sense to the congregation's staff. If that's true, give it a check mark and plan to use it regularly.

29. Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? Addresses and other information common to everyone in a household are the most likely source of redundant effort. To avoid this, many programs will be structured so that a household record is linked to each person who is part of the household. Other programs may have the ability to copy information easily from one record to the next. That's acceptable given today's large capacity disks—as long as there is an easy way to change everyone's address when a family moves. Also, look for shortcuts for city, state, zip code and other repetitive items. Add a plus sign or double the check mark if the software provides an easy way to alter area codes, grade levels, and other items that can change for many people at the same time.

34. How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the software would actually file the annual report electronically? It probably won't—even if it's purchased from a denominational publisher—but the closer it comes, the better the congregation's staff will like it. Since this is only done once a year, give it a check mark even if the information is spread over several reports.

35. If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? This ability may be provided in several ways. At a minimum, both computers should be able to add or edit member records as long as they don't both ask for the same record at the same time. Some software may allow two users to edit different parts of the same person's record. Most programs will allow a second person to read the record, but not change it, while it is being edited. Life will also be easier if people can print reports even when others are using some of the records.

36. Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? Software companies sometimes divide their programs into modules. Each module provides different features. On the positive side, this enables congregations to buy only those features they need. On the other hand, it can make it much harder to add or delete members, to pull together all the information needed for a transfer, or to combine information from different modules on a single report.

Likewise, storage costs are now so low that a person's entire file can be placed on the computer. Ideally, a person's member record will provide links to correspondence and notes of various kinds so that they can be found easily. This ability makes it much easier to keep and review contact histories for members and prospects. It also makes it possible to add important but unusual information, like driving directions, to someone's record.

Use a check mark if the program comes reasonably close to this ideal.

Contributions

The questions related to contributor records are similar to those for the member and prospect records. They are incorporated in Table 2. Once again the references provide most of the information required to complete each item. However, one general comment is in order. These items vary greatly in importance. A proper theological foundation and good terminology are vital. The ability to use a variety of approaches to encourage good stewardship is important. However, the presence or absence of any particular approach is not particularly important, unless it is one the congregation has used frequently.

Table 2
Contributions

System _____

Item	Page	Score
1 Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? O= Obligation ●= Configurable ✓= Grace	60	
2 Can the software provide the necessary support and reporting for every member visits? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	65	
3 Will the programs provide the necessary phone and mailing lists for Bible studies, cottage meetings, and the like? O= No ✓=Yes	66	
4 How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? O= Can't be done ●= Outside help required ✓=Easy	66	
5 Can the program prepare files a service company could use to mail monthly packets of envelopes? O= No ✓=Yes	67	
6 Does the software provide a reasonable way to project income without pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	69	
7 Can pledges for the coming year be compared easily with those for prior years? O= No ✓=Yes	70	
8 Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? O= No ✓=Yes	71	
9 Can pledges and contributions for a variety of funds be recorded rapidly and easily? O= No ✓=Yes	75	

Item	Page	Score
10 Does the software avoid business/legal terms like “balance due” or “dues.” Are recommended terms utilized instead? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	61	
11 Does the program avoid other questionable terms like “seed gifts” or “pew rental.” Does it avoid distinguishing between tithes and offerings? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	68	
12 Can contributors be divided into groups by the amount of their gifts or the funds to which they contribute? O= No ✓=Yes	74	
13 Will the program accept special purpose pledges spread over a period of several years and report all the contributions received in fulfillment of the pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	74	
14 Can large gifts be acknowledged separately with appropriate wording? O= No ✓=Yes	75	
15 Can reminders be sent for planned, periodic gifts? O= No ✓=Yes	75	
16 Can hundreds of different designated offerings be received, totaled, reported, and posted to the proper fund in the financial system? O= No ✓=Yes	75	
17 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	
18 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the programs? O= No ✓=Yes	31	
19 Have provisions been made to avoid distributing phone numbers and street addresses that should not be given out? O= No ✓=Yes	32	

Instructions for Table 2

See the chapter and page references for explanations of the items in the table. For descriptions of the ratings themselves see the Instructions for Table 1. Some additional help applying the criteria is given for three items below.

1. Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? Pay particular attention to the contributor statements and reports for the church council when performing this check. The legalistic language of obligation should be avoided in Lutheran congregations. Such language will not be a major problem if it can be removed using the customization features, but bad terminology may be an indication that the software is designed more as an accounts receivable package than it is to support free and generous giving.

4. How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? If this can't be done, the congregation will not have the option of using these methods. If the congregation would have to hire the help it needs to use these tools, mark this question "Can't be done." Direct mail is not sufficiently effective to justify the extra expense of a consultant. If volunteer help would be available or the publisher will provide the assistance you need as part of its support package, put a solid circle in the box.

8. Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? Add a plus sign to the check mark if the statements can be sent more often than once a quarter.

Financial Accounting

Unlike most of the items in Table 2, the first four items in Table 3 are mandatory for a system that will be used for congregational accounting. It is particularly important that the software be able to separate commingled funds (question four), otherwise the council will be flying blind, unable to reconcile its accounting system with the actual bank account balances. The easier these entries are to make, the greater the likelihood that they will actually be made. Special features for designated savings are particularly helpful.

The last item, number five, is an optional feature that would be recommended by many accountants, but which may be beyond the capabilities of many volunteer treasurers. It is included for the sake of completeness.

Table 3
Financial Records

System _____

Item	Page	Score
1 Does the bookkeeping system use churchly terms instead of business terms? <input type="radio"/> = No <input type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	76	
2 Can appropriate account names be used instead of names like "accounts receivable," "sales," or "cost of goods?" <input type="radio"/> = No <input type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	78	
3 Does the financial system support fund accounting? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	78	
4 Can a large number of small funds that share a single bank account be handled easily and conveniently without losing track of their individual balances? <input type="radio"/> = Missing or awkward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Easy to use	79	
5 Can administrative costs be allocated to various ministries? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	79	

Summarizing the Results

If more than one product is being evaluated the results can be compared directly or converted to a numeric score. A simple way to come up with a score would be to add one point for each check mark and subtract one point for each empty circle. Solid circles would leave the score unchanged. It may be the case that some of the items are more important than others to a particular congregation. Those performing the analysis may

wish to increase the positive and negative values for important items to two or, if they are very important, to five. Some of the items may not apply to a particular congregation.

Omit them from the analysis.

Now that the ground rules have been laid out, it's time to put this tool to work.

The next chapter will show how this instrument was used to evaluate three programs that are currently being marketed to Lutheran congregations in the United States.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF THREE RECENT PRODUCTS

Chapter five presented several tables that can be used to evaluate software for support of gospel centered ministry and the use of appropriate terminology. This chapter describes how these tables were used to evaluate three products currently being marketed to Lutheran congregations and the results that were obtained. After a brief description of the methods used, the chapter proceeds to describe some of the more important differences between the products. For the sake of brevity, these comparisons group the table items into general categories without regard for their sequence. Detailed, item-by-item comparisons may be found in Appendices A-D. After the comparison, the reader will find a brief summary of the strengths of each program and the final results of the evaluation.

Method of Analysis

The evaluation used the tables developed and explained in the previous chapter. One system was evaluated at a time. Each item on the checklist was rated as indicated and the marks were totaled. One point was awarded for each check or check minus. One point was deducted for each empty circle. Solid circles were treated as zeroes. Brief

comments were added as needed to indicate the reason for a rating. Totals were calculated for each of the areas evaluated and for each package as a whole.

The products selected for evaluation have all been marketed directly to Lutheran congregations. Two of them, *Revelations*¹ and *Shepherd's Staff*,² have been sold by Lutheran publishing houses. The third, an edition of *Church Windows*,³ is sold by an independent software publisher, Computer Helper. They offer custom editions for several different church bodies. The edition for The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod was used for this comparison. Two other products were requested, but demo copies did not arrive before the project was completed.⁴

As far as possible, the evaluations were performed using the demonstration data provided by the publisher. However, each demonstration disk also had the ability to install a “blank” system identical to the one used by Lutheran congregations that purchase the program. Since the demonstration data is often designed to show the flexibility of the system, it was necessary to use these fresh systems to see how the software is initially configured. This proved to be particularly important for correct evaluation of

¹Shepherd's Staff Version 7.1, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2002.

²Revelations: Church Management Software, Version 9.02, Icon Systems Inc., Moorhead, MN, 2001.

³Church Windows Information Manager 2003, Computer Helper Publishing, Columbus, OH, 2003.

⁴*Membership Plus* by Parson's Church Group and *Parish Manager* developed by Rev. Jerry Doellinger and Duane Flugel.

terminological issues. The author also made heavy use of the help files provided with each system. The individual evaluations, with comments, are given in Appendices B (*Revelations*), C (*Shepherd's Staff*), and D (*Lutheran Church Windows*).

Appendix A provides a summary of the evaluation results. It includes the evaluation items with scores for each of the three programs in parallel columns. The tables in Appendix A also served as a convenient way to identify items that needed to be rechecked for accuracy.⁵ One inconsistency was found and corrected.

The next section of this chapter provides a detailed comparison that expands upon the comments in the appendices.

Findings

The author was pleasantly surprised to find that all three programs reviewed measured up to the pastoral and theological issues set forth in the preceding chapters.⁶ The next section will show that all three programs allow congregations to call things what they should be called. All provide the basic capabilities needed by Lutheran pastors and congregations to *use* their congregational records in support of a gospel-centered ministry. For example, any of the programs can be used to identify people who need to be

⁵The evaluation had taken several weeks.

⁶Although one would hope and expect that the Lutheran publishers would provide materials that were appropriate for their church bodies, it was surprising to see that a “secular” publisher that produced software for several church bodies was able to focus so well on the needs of Lutheran congregations.

encouraged to more regular use of the means of grace. In addition, they can provide reminders of important events like baptismal anniversaries. They all provide tools that support active pastoral visitation and help keep the necessary lines of communication open within the congregation. All of them can be used in appropriate ways to encourage good stewardship of time, talents, and treasures.

Because all three programs provide these essentials, all scored well in the evaluation, especially with regard to the items that were most clearly pastoral and theological. Any of them could be profitably used by an LCMS congregation. However, there were some important differences in how well the programs performed some of the ministry support tasks described in the preceding chapters and included in the evaluation matrix. Most of the following sections highlight these differences. But first, a closer look at terminology is in order.

Terminology

Each of the products evaluated provides its users the opportunity to tailor much of the terminology used for member records. In general, Lutheran congregations will be able to use the screens as they are. With one exception, the names given to the various fields (blank spaces for data entry) are familiar and comfortable. The exception is that *Lutheran Church Windows* uses the word “termination” to name the fields that record when and how people left the congregation.⁷ For this author, the word “termination”

⁷The actual field names are “Reason for termination” and “Termination date.”

carries associations with firing and assassination rather than honorable departure from a congregation.

All three programs provide fields for classifying members and for recording how they joined or left a congregation. These same fields are used for tabulating the annual statistical report. Congregations have two concerns when looking at these types of fields. The first concern is whether the terminology used for receiving and removing members is theologically sound. The second is whether everything needed for the annual report provided.

Curiously, *Lutheran Church Windows*, the system from Computer Helper, does the best job. Although the demo shows several inappropriate values, when the program is actually installed for use by an LCMS congregation, it uses terms that are commonly used within the LCMS and provides options that correspond well to the blanks on the annual report.

Shepherd's Staff, developed and sold by Concordia Publishing House, did almost as well. However, several needed values are missing from its lists of how members are received and removed. There is, for example, no option that corresponds to "Receive from Other Lutheran" [*sic*] on the 2002 Congregation Statistics Report. This value can be readily added, but if a congregation lacks the foresight to do so, it may have to correct the records of many of its members.

Revelations, formerly distributed by Augsburg Fortress Publishers, has a different weakness when it comes to membership terminology. The publishers have slavishly followed the LCMS statistical report.⁸ Unfortunately, the statistical report only asks for changes in a congregation's confirmed membership. As a result, the LCMS configuration for *Revelations* makes no provision for recording how children were received into a congregation or why they were removed.⁹ Since LCMS pastors will want to keep this information, their congregations would be well advised to use the ELCA setup when installing the software. It will meet their needs better than the LCMS version and requires roughly the same adjustments as *Shepherd's Staff* to produce the numbers needed for the annual statistical report.

All three programs could do a better job of handling "snowbirds" and others who attend regularly for a few months out of the year, but who are not actually members of the congregation. *Shepherd's Staff* provides a built-in category of "Associate Member," but to use it, the person must be marked as a member and some sort of date and manner in which they were received *must* be included.¹⁰ It is probably better to classify such people as "Non Member" [*sic*] and to add a participation code such as "Seasonal" to identify

⁸A sample of the report is provided in appendix E.

⁹This is a prime example of the way poorly thought out systems can begin to subvert parish practice. The author can only urge that the synodical form be changed.

¹⁰*Shepherd's Staff* uses the term "Associate Member" as it is used within the model constitution of the ELCA. ELCA, *Model Constitution*, section C8.02.

them. Similar additions have to be made in *Lutheran Church Windows* and in *Revelations*.

Chapter two noted the controversy over the use of the term “head of household” within the *Lutheran Congregational Information System*. Like LCIS, *Shepherd’s Staff* uses this term to designate the first person within the household. The other options are “spouse,” “child,” and “other.” These options cannot be changed in any way, so congregations that use the program must adapt to this census-type terminology.

Lutheran Church Windows also uses the term “head of household.” Within that program it is one of the standard options in a field denoting family relationships. Here the usage is appropriate and theologically sound, but the option can be ignored or deleted by those who find it offensive.

Revelations does not use the term.

In summary, all three programs use appropriate terminology. *Lutheran Church Windows* is a little stronger than the others, because it does not require even minor editing when used by LCMS congregations.

Key Events

Births and deaths, Baptisms, confirmations, and marriages are important personal and congregational events. These get recorded in two ways in most congregations. First, they are recorded in the congregation’s register of official acts. Second, the same information is usually recorded in somewhat less detail in the member records. Item four

in Table 1 of the evaluation instrument was intended to evaluate the amount of detail kept in an individual's record. Evaluated in this way, the records kept by default in *Revelations* were the most complete and the best organized. Further, the "Special Events" part of the member record can be tailored to the needs of the congregation. Some congregations will want to use this feature to add a place for the names of a person's mother and father to the birth record. It could also be used to add a plot location for those congregations that maintain a cemetery. Since most of the information customarily kept in the congregational records has a place, without extraneous details, *Revelations* is easily the strongest in this area.

Lutheran Church Windows takes a minimalist approach to these kinds of records. The default configuration accepts only the dates of these events. If congregations wish to add more detail, such as the place of birth or the names of a child's sponsors, they will need to add fields. Fortunately, this can easily be done.

Shepherd's Staff takes a different approach. This program has a built-in register that is separate from the member records. It corresponds well to the record books kept by many congregations and has spaces for all the information that is usually kept. In addition, the member records themselves contain a middle level of detail. Place of birth and parent's names are recorded, but the names of baptizing and confirming congregations are not kept.

These two sets of records are distinct. In part this is sensible. Congregations usually have much more information about their own official acts than they do of events

that occurred in other places. On the other hand, one could wish for a few carefully crafted links between the register and the member records. Not only could this reduce redundant entry, the ability to move from the register to the member record and back again could make it much easier to find particular people in the register or to verify that little Gracie Blessing was indeed old Grace Morgan. Unfortunately, the effort required to enter historical records and link them to the member records might be greater than the benefit received.

Although all three of the programs reviewed can produce reports that will list birthdays, anniversaries, and the like, *Shepherd's Staff* adds a unique twist. Its reminder feature can check the dates and automatically notify users a few days in advance of the actual date.

Finally, a word needs to be added regarding the ability of these programs to handle incomplete information. Rarely does a congregation have all the information needed to fill the blanks. A person may know that he was baptized or confirmed, but not know exactly when or where. Likewise, some members of the congregation may provide only the month and day of their births or marriages because they don't wish anyone to know how old they are or that they were married after the birth of their first child. For this reason, the software needs to be tolerant of partial dates and be able to determine whether a person is baptized or confirmed without relying upon the date field. Although the approaches vary, all of the products evaluated have some provision for these kinds of problems.

Revelations and *Shepherd's Staff* provide check boxes that indicate whether or not someone has been baptized or confirmed. *Lutheran Church Windows* uses the status code for this purpose. All three programs will accept the month and day of an event without the year. *Revelations* and *Church Windows* will also accept the month and year without the day. These are sometimes useful when recording Baptisms and confirmations from other congregations and the exact date is unavailable.

Although every congregation should have records that indicate when each of its members was received, this author has served two congregations with significant gaps in their registers. Such congregations will find *Shepherd's Staff's* requirement of a date of reception for every member vexing. They may have to select a stand-in date, such as the December 31st of the previous year, that can be used until a better date can be determined. The same strategy could also be of help to congregations that want to begin by simply entering their church directory.

Although the register included with *Shepherd's Staff* is intriguing and the ability to pop reminders of significant dates onto the screen is nice, *Revelations* provides a much better system for incorporating information received into the individual member records. Therefore, it takes the overall honors for these items. However, any of these programs would meet the needs of most congregations.

Attendance

An important part of Lutheran pastoral practice has been the monitoring and follow-up of worship and Communion attendance. All three programs provided the ability help with these pastoral tasks. The capabilities of the three products are similar; however, they go about their tasks differently.

The attendance features incorporated into *Revelations* are flexible and easy to use. Any sort of attendance can be tracked and reported in various ways. The posting process is a straightforward, alphabetical checklist. It's ideal for smaller congregations where the pastor can sit down Monday morning and mark off who attended from memory. While it is possible to jump to particular names, the process works best for congregations that can presort cards or name tags. Multiple services can be recorded individually and combined for reporting. Follow-up lists are available and merge files and labels can be prepared with very little effort.

Lutheran Church Windows requires a little more work. While its capabilities are comparable to those of *Revelations*, marking names requires more steps and will be slower. However, entering names from pew pads will go more quickly for a skilled typist. (Simply type the name and touch enter.) Recording Communion attendance is very intuitive: create the list of those present, then check the box next to the names of those who communed. A nice feature *Church Windows* provides is the ability to record the total offering for the service or class with the attendance. Finally, when entering

attendance for classes or other small groups *Church Windows* simplifies the task by working from a list of class members rather than a list of the entire congregation.

Shepherd's Staff can post attendance quickly from pew pads and efficiently when working from an alphabetical lists. Like *Lutheran Church Windows* it allows you to begin with a short list of people who might be expected to attend. Its follow-up capabilities are comparable to those of the other packages, although it does have one unique feature that it has inherited and extended from LCIS—the ability to identify members who have changed their pattern of attendance. The follow-up reports are quite detailed and have been designed in such a way that individual sheets can be distributed to elders or other lay assistants for follow-up.

Overall these packages are similar in capability. Any of them will perform the pastoral tasks discussed in the previous chapters of this paper, although the nuances of the procedures may make one of the programs preferable for a given congregation.

Now a *caveat*. Each of these programs invites its users to centralize attendance recording for meetings, small groups, and Sunday school classes. This temptation should be resisted. After all, the teachers and leaders should be the ones who follow up with those who are missing. Three by five cards, a pencil, and a class directory will require less effort than any procedure for computerizing the records and reporting the results back to the people who originally wrote them down.

Visitation

Visitation has been a problem area for publishers of church software. Since, by definition, visitation occurs away from the office, anything that is not strictly portable is going to be difficult to use and maintain. *Shepherd's Staff* is to be commended for at least trying to break out of the static model of a visitation log. Its visitation module can be used to schedule visits. These visits can then appear as reminders along with birthdays and other significant events. *Shepherd's Staff* also has the unique ability to "Go Visiting." Member records can be checked out and placed on a portable computer while the pastor or others are out visiting. This allows changes to be made to someone's record during or immediately after the visit.

By comparison, *Lutheran Church Windows* has a limited visitation log. It can record visits that have been made and produce a list of follow-up visits that need to be made. Also, it can easily produce a chronological record of past visits to a person or household, or it can list of all the visits made by a particular individual during the past week or month.

The visitation features in *Revelations* allow users to enter both past and future appointments so it can be used as a log and for scheduling visits.¹¹ Both are easily done.

¹¹During the initial evaluation, the visitation portion of the program crashed repeatedly. However, when the author returned to the program to document the failures more carefully, everything worked perfectly and he was could not get the program to fail. The evaluation was revised accordingly.

Visits can be classified by type and sorted by date, the name of the person making the visits, or the names of those who will be visited. This makes it easy to check appointments for the coming week. Directions to the person's home and detailed notes on the content of the visit each have a place and are easily added. The visitation file can also be accessed from both personal and household records, making it easy to see a history of visits to a particular person or family. However, since there is no conflict checking, new appointments should be scheduled in the general visitation window where all visits for the day may be seen. Visitation logs and lists of scheduled visits can be printed to take along or share with others.

Groups of People

All of the products that were evaluated can do a credible job of keeping lists of people who are involved in various activities or who have skills or experience that could prove useful to the congregations. *Revelations* is the weakest of the three, primarily because its ability to identify people with common characteristics is more limited than those of its competitors. It would be very difficult, for example, to create a list of single people over thirty who were not actively involved in some aspect of parish life. On the other hand, building such lists is a difficult task for most people. Programmers have difficulty making these powerful capabilities easy to use and users have difficulty making them work. An average sized congregation with staff that are a little bit afraid of

computers may never miss this capability as long as they can build the lists by hand and use them for mailings and contact lists. *Revelations* is fine for such situations.

Congregations that need more advanced selection features will have to choose between *Lutheran Church Windows* and *Shepherd's Staff*. The programmers who produced *Church Windows* have put a lot of effort into making it easy to take an existing report and apply various kinds of selection criteria to its contents. Pressing a button turns the report into a merge file for a word processor. The tools provided for designing one's own reports are also surprisingly easy to figure out.

Shepherd's Staff isn't quite as simple, but it has a very powerful and useful feature called "subgroups." *LCIS2000*, the immediate predecessor of *Shepherd's Staff*, had the ability to create a list of names either manually or by specifying selection criteria and letting the computer go through the files looking for people who matched. These lists could then be printed in many different ways. *Shepherd's Staff* has extended this feature in two ways.

First, the list criteria are saved so that the list can be dynamically maintained by the computer. To give an example, once someone figures out how to get a list of women over the age of 65, anytime anyone selects the list for a report, the computer will automatically update it, adding anyone who has recently had a birthday, and removing those who have died or moved away.

Shepherd's Staff can also import list definitions created elsewhere. This second extension makes it possible for the publisher to provide some very useful predefined lists,

such as “Senior Citizens,” “Youth,” and “Contributors.” Additional definitions can be downloaded from the support web site or users can exchange definitions via diskette or e-mail. As a result, it is much easier to take advantage of the advanced selection capabilities built into *Shepherd’s Staff*.

Contributions Terminology

Contributions terminology varies little between the packages used. All use standard terms like “pledge” and “offering.” Only *Lutheran Church Windows* allows users to change any of the wording. It offers the option to replace “pledge” with “estimate.” Making the substitution would be particularly worthwhile for congregations that stress proportionate giving or where the congregation’s history is such that the word “pledge” is associated with harmful, law-oriented stewardship practices.

Pledges, Offerings, and Campaign Support

All three packages provide similar capabilities when it comes to recording and reporting pledges. *Revelations* makes it easiest to compare this year’s pledges to last year’s. Though the mechanics differ somewhat, the three programs have similar capabilities. Ease of use is similar, too. *Revelations’* weakness with regard to selection criteria also effects the capabilities of the contributions module. It would be difficult to use *Revelations* to find the large contributors. However, once they were located, scheduling and tracking visits would be straightforward. In addition, its ability to

produce phone lists, labels, and files for merged letters with minimal effort could be helpful. Congregations will need to consider carefully which features will be most beneficial and adjust the rating instrument accordingly.

Statements and Reminders

There is a bit more variation in statement formats than there are in the contributions capabilities. For example, *Lutheran Church Windows* has the ability to exclude certain funds from contributor statements produced for tax reporting. This makes it possible to use the contributions module for receiving school tuition. (However, there is no ability to generate any kind of bill or reminder, so congregations with schools would be better served by a simple accounts receivable package.)

Revelations is supposed to be able to print reminders for people who have pledged quarterly or annual gifts; however, this feature didn't work in the demo.¹² *Shepherd's Staff* was the only program capable of producing such reminders, but it required the assistance of a word processing program to do so.

Overall, the evaluations showed any of the three programs would do a good job handling contributions for most congregations. *Shepherd's Staff* and *Lutheran Church*

¹²Attempts to print the remittance statement and the extended statement yielded the message "Unhandled script exception: Value of range. EXCEPTION_CLASS_SCRIPT_OUT_OF_RANGE. SCRIPT_CMD_SELECTED."

Windows are somewhat more capable and should be considered by congregations that may be raising funds for a school or building in the near future.

Bookkeeping

A program's bookkeeping module is probably the one of least interest to the pastoral staff and many of the congregation's members. *Revelations* doesn't even have a module for bookkeeping. Instead, the publishers recommend the use of *Quicken* or its small business counterpart *QuickBooks*. Many congregations use these programs because they are so forgiving and so easy to use. Since many people use *Quicken* at home, training is less of a problem. Unfortunately, neither program was designed for congregational use. Neither handles fund accounting particularly well, and neither maintains a proper audit trail. This author cannot recommend their use.

Lutheran Church Windows provides a straightforward bookkeeping module that provides the features needed by congregations with a volunteer treasurer or bookkeeper. Its reports are nicely formatted and capable of providing all the information a congregation may need.

The *Shepherd's Staff* has several advanced features, such as FASB 116¹³ compliance, that would be of use primarily to a professional church business manager.

¹³FASB 116 is an opinion of the Financial Accounting Standards Board, that permits nonprofit organizations to recognize income when a pledge is received instead of when the gift is given. If they follow FASB 116, congregations book the pledges as accounts receivable, a practice this author finds objectionable.

One feature that can be helpful to volunteer treasurers has been inherited from LCIS. It is a special account type called dedicated accounts. These accounts make it much easier for a church treasurer to keep track of the balance in the dozens of special purpose and memorial funds that many congregations accumulate. *Shepherd's Staff* also has the ability to use a historical trend line to project income and expense 12 to 16 months into the future.

Shepherd's Staff takes the honors for bookkeeping. *Lutheran Church Windows* is a close second.

Privacy

Several of the items in both the membership and contributions tables dealt with privacy issues. All of the programs have provisions for unlisted phone numbers and each of them is able to place street addresses that should not be published into an inactive alternate address area or a note. There are, however, some notable holes in the privacy and security features of two of these systems.

Revelations is the least secure of the systems reviewed. Its membership records can be read easily with any word processing program. Getting at someone's contributions requires a little more work since computerized dollar amounts cannot be read in this way. However, a very simple BASIC program could make them accessible. In addition, the password file is easily displayed and though the password is encrypted, its decoder-ring type of encryption can be easily cracked. Finally, the phone numbers

printed on the contributions reports do not indicate which are unlisted. Although people will probably trust those who keep their giving records with their phone numbers, the trusted individual has no way of knowing if it is permissible to pass the number along.

Shepherd's Staff fared somewhat better in the privacy tests. Although some information can be read with a word processor, the file format makes it difficult to uncover anything that's truly private. However, *Shepherd's Staff* is wide open to any program that understands Microsoft SQL and uses its data access components. Microsoft *Office*, Lotus *Smart Suite*, and Corel *Office* all include components that are capable of reading and possibly editing the files. It takes a bit more knowledge to get them open, but once open, everything is available, even the security log.¹⁴ Only the user passwords were encrypted.

Lutheran Church Windows was the only program that passed the privacy tests. Like *Shepherd's Staff*, some information can be read with a word processor, but the file format makes it difficult to uncover anything that's truly confidential. Unlike *Shepherd's Staff*, key files have been locked and cannot be accessed with the office suites. *Lutheran Church Windows* wins this round. Congregations that use *Shepherd's Staff* and *Revelations* need to keep the computers that have access to these records in locked rooms or the information will not be secure.

¹⁴If the fields can be changed it would be possible for an embezzler to alter the user id on incriminating transactions.

Noteworthy Strengths

As the analysis above indicated, each of the products reviewed is stronger than the others in some areas. It is worth taking a moment to recap some of the strengths and to note a few others that were not addressed in the preceding section.

Two of *Revelations* strengths are its flexible and well organized ways of setting up key events and attendance. The developers have also made *Revelations* easy to use with word processing and e-mail programs. Although this author had some minor problems connecting *Revelations* to Microsoft Works 7.0, most users should be able to use these features without difficulty.

Shepherd's Staff is notable for the way its dynamic subgroups make its excellent selection capabilities accessible for less experienced users and for its visitation features that went far beyond those of its competitors.

One feature that has not been mentioned previously will be of interest to very large congregations. This utility, called the "Ministry Position Manager," allows a congregation to specify a mix of skills, training, and experience for a particular office or service position within the congregation and then to match those criteria to the people in the database.

Finally, *Shepherd's Staff* has some unique accounting features that may prove useful to some congregations.

Lutheran Church Windows had the best initial setup. No additions were required for producing the information required for the LCMS annual congregational report. It

was also the only product that allowed congregations to add fields to the data base and to alter their sequence. Also, *Lutheran Church Windows* provides a good accounting module and very nice custom reporting features. The programmers have made it easy to use existing reports and alter the select criteria in order to print them for different groups of people. Finally, the program has several features that speed data entry, especially for slower typists.

Conclusions

A glance at Appendix A will show that overall *Lutheran Church Windows* and *Shepherd's Staff* scored substantially higher than *Revelations* in this analysis. A more careful look at the appendix and the sections above will show that any of these products provide the most important features that Lutheran congregations need and that all of them use terminology that is consistent with Lutheran practice and theology.

Which product will be right for the reader's congregation will vary depending on that congregation's size and needs. The author would encourage readers to take the time to go through the tables to eliminate items that are of little interest to them and perhaps add some that have not been addressed. Significant changes in the scoring can occur as the result of such editing.

In this review, *Lutheran Church Windows* and *Shepherd's Staff* have high, almost identical scores. The decision between these two products may well depend on factors that were not included. (e.g., how expensive each is or what neighboring congregations

are using.) However, the author can offer the following general conclusion. Large congregations, especially those whose pastors do a lot of visiting, those which stress lay involvement, or those that need advanced accounting capacities will be able to take good advantage of some of the groundbreaking features in *Shepherd's Staff*. Smaller congregations that rely primarily on volunteer staff may be happier with *Lutheran Church Windows*. For them ease of use and quicker data entry will probably be more important.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Summary and Suggestions

This project had two specific objectives. The first was to describe the theological principles that affect the design and use of church records. This objective was fulfilled by the material in the first three chapters of this paper. In those chapters, it was shown that even our church records have gospel purposes. Furthermore, those purposes are reflected in the kinds of records we keep, in the terminology we use within the records, and in how we use our records.

In the process of accomplishing this objective, the author had the opportunity to dig into the Lutheran church's rich heritage of practical theology, examining topics like the doctrine of the church, our understanding of the church's mission, and Christian stewardship. Then, standing firmly within that theological tradition, it was necessary to relate what was being learned to the Gospel. If there is one defining characteristic of Lutheran theology and pastoral practice, it is this: the Gospel is the heart and center of all our theology. All our practice should serve its proclamation for the sake of Christ's church and for the redemption of the world.

The second objective for this project was to demonstrate how these principles could be used by congregations that were evaluating computer software designed for keeping church records. This objective was accomplished by constructing a checklist and then using it in a sample study. That process was documented in chapters 5 and 6 and in the appendices. The study matrix was derived carefully from the material presented in the first three chapters and included items that dealt with terminology, theology, and the usability of the records.

Doing this study gave the author the opportunity to become familiar with today's leading products for Lutheran congregations and to compare them with those he had worked on during his years at Concordia Publishing House. It was a pleasure to see that both Augsburg Fortress Publishers and Concordia Publishing House had remained faithful to the principles established by the Consultation on Congregational Use of Computers and to theological and pastoral principles that had been hashed out in discussions between the church bodies involved and by the Lutheran publishers during their subsequent joint work. (Some of that history was documented in chapter four.)

It was surprising to see how well the staff of Computer Helper, the independent publisher that produced *Lutheran Church Windows*, had understood and implemented these same principles in their own product. More surprising was that *Lutheran Church Windows* outscored *Revelations* by a healthy margin in this study.

Since all three products are capable of satisfying the basic theological and terminological requirements for use within Lutheran congregations, most of the

comparison in chapter six ended up being devoted to how easily various pastoral tasks could be accomplished. Since the gospel purpose of the records cannot be realized apart from their use, it was important to examine how well the pastoral needs identified in the first three chapters were met; so, looking at how easily these tasks could be accomplished was part of the original project plan. In retrospect, however, the first objective (demonstrating the importance of the theological principles behind our records) might have been more clearly served if there had been fewer items related to pastoral tasks. Simply combining a number of the items related to stewardship programs and/or the various types of lists that were identified would have amplified the significance of the theological and terminological items in the evaluation instrument and may have resulted in a stronger paper. Nevertheless, despite this apparent weakness, the author is confident that the objectives of the project were met and that congregations that use the instrument or read the comparison in chapter six will find the details presented there useful in making their decisions.

Similarly, the project could be expanded to include additional products or to compare products developed for different denominations. The latter option would establish just how much variation there is between denominations when it comes to congregational records.

In addition to extensions of the basic study, it appears that it would also be worthwhile to address some of the privacy issues that were raised within the study more specifically. Many congregations could benefit from a project or journal article that

would help them secure their computers and the information they contain from misuse and prying eyes.

Benefits of the Project

The project, as presented, should have several positive effects upon the author's congregation and others. In fact, one of those effects has already been realized. Shortly after the third chapter was completed the author was called to a small congregation that had a computer, but no church software. Neither had it the money to buy any. However, it did have a simple, general-purpose, database program. The author was able to use that program to create a minimal record keeping system to replace the 5x7 cards he inherited from his predecessors. Having thought through the principles in the first three chapters made it easier to identify the types of records and reports that were the most important and that would suffice until something better could be purchased.

A second benefit of the study will be realized when the congregation is able to make that purchase. The author will already have a good handle on the capabilities of the various systems, a tool for reviewing the newest editions, and the means to make an excellent decision.

Other congregations will also benefit from this study. Because of his experience at CPH and his ongoing work with computers,¹ the author is occasionally asked by other

¹The author is currently engaged in a bi-vocational ministry and works part-time as the network administrator for a local bank.

pastors to recommend congregational software. Because a whole new generation of products had been released since the author's time at CPH, he had little to offer. Now, having had the opportunity to review these three products, he will be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these systems in a way that should prove helpful and will be able to provide copies of this paper for those interested in further detail.

Finally, it is hoped that some congregations will find the evaluation instrument presented here useful, adapt it to their own needs, and use it to evaluate any products they may be considering.

APPENDIX A
SOFTWARE COMPARISON

Table 1
Membership

System Comparison

Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
1 Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? O= No ✓=Yes	30	✓	✓-	✓
2 Does the software distinguish those who are part of the congregation from those who are not? O= No ● = Configurable ✓=Yes	24, 26	✓	✓	✓
3 Does the software recognize members of other congregations who are temporarily in the care in your congregation's pastor(s)? O= No ● = Configurable ✓=Yes	25	●	✓	●
4 Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? O=Missing ●=Too much or too little detail ✓=Just right	23	✓	●	●
5 How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? O=Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	26	✓	✓	○
6 Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? O=No ●=Yes, but difficult ✓=Yes	27	●	✓	✓
7 Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? O=No ●=No, but unused fields can be hidden ✓=Yes	30	✓	✓	✓

Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
8 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	✓	✓
9 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? O= No ✓=Yes	31	○	○	✓
10 Have provisions been made for unlisted phone numbers and street addresses that should not be published? O= No ●=Phone only ✓=Yes	32	✓	✓	✓
11 Does the software differentiate between baptized members and communicants? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	●	✓	✓
12 If your congregation permits children who have not been confirmed to commune can they be identified and separated from those who have been confirmed? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	●	✓	✓
13 If your congregation needs to distinguish between active and inactive members does the software support that distinction? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	✓	✓	✓
14 Does the software record when and how individuals became members of the congregation? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	●	✓	✓
15 Does the software record when and how individuals were removed from the congregation's membership? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	●	✓	✓
16 Are the terms for recording how people joined or left the congregation consistent with your church body's theological principles and reporting requirements? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	41	✓	●	✓
17 Can basic information about prospective members be kept and distinguished from those of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	42	✓	✓	✓

Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
18 Does the system provide a convenient means of recording and reporting visits made by evangelism teams and others? O= missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	42	✓	✓	✓
19 Can the system be used to produce mailings for prospective members? O= No ✓=Yes	42	✓	✓	✓
20 Do the prospect records avoid terms such as "decision for Christ" that are not consistent with Lutheran theology? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	43	✓	✓	✓
21 Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	45	✓	○	✓
22 Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	46	✓	✓	✓
23 Can gifts or abilities that could be useful to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	46	✓	✓	✓
24 Does the software avoid confusing gifts and abilities with programs and committees? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	50	●	✓	✓
25 Will the program produce mailing labels, rosters, and contact lists for your congregation's programs and committees? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	50	✓	✓	✓
26 Can prior service to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	50	✓	✓	✓
27 Can the congregation modify the software's built-in categories of gifts, activities, and offices so that they can track those items which are of greatest interest to them? O= No ✓=Yes	50	✓	✓	✓
28 Does the software make it easy to prepare mailing labels and contact lists for various groups of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	51	✓	✓	✓

Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
29 Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? O= No ✓=Yes	90	✓	✓	✓
30 Are baptismal anniversaries supported? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	88	✓	✓	✓
31 Does the software provide flexibility for addressing mail to individuals and households? O= No ✓=Yes	52	✓	✓	✓
32 Does the software have the flexibility to handle extended family and nontraditional households? O= No ✓=Yes	55	✓	✓	✓
33 If the software attempts to track family relationships does it have the necessary flexibility for blended families? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	55	✓	✓	✓
34 How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? O= Some ●= Most ✓=All ✓+ = Ready to send	56, 89	●	●	✓
35 If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? O= No ✓=Yes	93	✓	✓	✓
36 Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? O= No ✓=Yes	97	✓	✓	✓
37 Can pictures be included in the membership files? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	99	✓	✓	✓
38 Does the software provide places to record cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other similar contact information that is specific to an individual rather than shared by a household? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	100	✓	✓	✓
Summary Score For Membership		28	32	33

Table 2
Contributions

System Comparison

	Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
1	Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? O= Obligation ●= Configurable ✓= Grace	60	✓	✓	✓
2	Can the software provide the necessary support and reporting for every member visits? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	65	✓	✓	○
3	Will the programs provide the necessary phone and mailing lists for Bible studies, cottage meetings, and the like? O= No ✓=Yes	66	✓	✓	✓
4	How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? O= Can't be done ●= Outside help required ✓=Easy	66	✓-	✓	✓
5	Can the program prepare files a service company could use to mail monthly packets of envelopes? O= No ✓=Yes	67	✓	✓	✓
6	Does the software provide a reasonable way to project income without pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	69	○	✓	○
7	Can pledges for the coming year be compared easily with those for prior years? O= No ✓=Yes	70	✓	○	✓
8	Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? O= No ✓=Yes	71	✓	✓	✓
9	Can pledges and contributions for a variety of funds be recorded rapidly and easily? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	✓	✓

	Item	Page	Rev	SS	CW
10	Does the software avoid business/legal terms like "balance due" or "dues." Are recommended terms utilized instead? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	61	✓	✓	✓
11	Does the program avoid other questionable terms like "seed gifts" or "pew rental." Does it avoid distinguishing between tithes and offerings? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	68	✓	✓	✓
12	Can contributors be divided into groups by the amount of their gifts or the funds to which they contribute? O= No ✓=Yes	74	○	✓	✓
13	Will the program accept special purpose pledges spread over a period of several years and report all the contributions received in fulfillment of the pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	74	✓	✓	✓
14	Can large gifts be acknowledged separately with appropriate wording? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	✓	✓
15	Can reminders be sent for planned, periodic gifts? O= No ✓=Yes	75	○	✓	○
16	Can hundreds of different designated offerings be received, totaled, reported, and posted to the proper fund in the financial system? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	✓	✓
17	Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	✓	✓
18	Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the programs? O= No ✓=Yes	31	○	○	✓
19	Have provisions been made to avoid distributing phone numbers and street addresses that should not be given out? O= No ✓=Yes	32	○	✓	✓
	Summary Score for Contributions		9	15	15

Table 3
Financial Records

System Comparison

Item	Page	Q	SS	CW
1 Does the bookkeeping system use churchly terms instead of business terms? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	76	●	✓	✓
2 Can appropriate account names be used instead of names like "accounts receivable," "sales," or "cost of goods?" O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	78	○ ●	✓	✓
3 Does the financial system support fund accounting? O= No ✓=Yes	78	○	✓	✓
4 Can a large number of small funds that share a single bank account be handled easily and conveniently without losing track of their individual balances? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	79	○	✓	○
5 Can administrative costs be allocated to various ministries? O= No ✓=Yes	79	✓	✓	○
Summary Score Finance		-1	5	1
Total Score All Sections		36	52	49

**APPENDIX B
REVELATIONS**

**Table 1
Membership**

System Revelations

Item	Page	Score	Comments
1 Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? O= No ✓=Yes	30	✓	Complete without excessive detail.
2 Does the software distinguish those who are part of the congregation from those who are not? O= No ● = Configurable ✓=Yes	24, 26	✓	Active, Visitor, Inactive, Delete. Other options may be added. Denomination of other family members recorded.
152 3 Does the software recognize members of other congregations who are temporarily in the care in your congregation's pastor(s)? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	25	●	Add a Status category
4 Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? O=Missing ●=Too much or too little detail ✓=Just right	23	✓	Only thing missing from standard records is parent's names for birth. Can be added. 10 Events, 4 fields in addition to date. Separate "occurred" flag.
5 How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? O=Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	26	✓	Easily schedule appointments and report visits made by individual staff members.
6 Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? O=No ●=Yes, but difficult ✓=Yes	27	●	Filter criteria/sorting are limited to main tables.

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	7 Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? O=No ●=No, but unused fields can be hidden ✓=Yes	30	✓	
	8 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	Passwords to screen level
	9 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? O= No ✓=Yes	31	○	All character data plainly visible. Contributions are identifiable and could be read with a BASIC program. Passwords easily cracked.
153	10 Have provisions been made for unlisted phone numbers and street addresses that should not be published? O= No ●=Phone only ✓=Yes	32	✓	Alternate address, directions, or notes can be used for secure addresses.
	11 Does the software differentiate between baptized members and communicants? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	●	Special event fields can be used in combination, but are not available for filtering reports.
	12 If your congregation permits children who have not been confirmed to commune can they be identified and separated from those who have been confirmed? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	●	
	13 If your congregation needs to distinguish between active and inactive members does the software support that distinction? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	✓	
	14 Does the software record when and how individuals became members of the congregation? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	●	ELCA setup provides this feature. LCMS setup only tracks confirmed members. Not present for others.

Item	Page	Score	Comments
15 Does the software record when and how individuals were removed from the congregation's membership? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	●	ELCA setup provides this feature. LCMS setup only tracks confirmed members. Not present for others.
16 Are the terms for recording how people joined or left the congregation consistent with your church body's theological principles and reporting requirements? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	41	✓	Terminology from annual report for LCMS.
17 Can basic information about prospective members be kept and distinguished from those of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	42	✓	
18 Does the system provide a convenient means of recording and reporting visits made by evangelism teams and others? O= missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	42	✓	See question 5.
19 Can the system be used to produce mailings for prospective members? O= No ✓=Yes	42	✓	
20 Do the prospect records avoid terms such as "decision for Christ" that are not consistent with Lutheran theology? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	43	✓	Identical to Member records
21 Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	45	✓	Method is easiest for congregations where everyone is known to pastor
22 Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	46	✓	Lists those missing a selected number of events.
23 Can gifts or abilities that could be useful to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	46	✓	

Item	Page	Score	Comments
24 Does the software avoid confusing gifts and abilities with programs and committees? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	50	●	Talents and Groups are completely user configured. Sample in demo confuses issue.
25 Will the program produce mailing labels, rosters, and contact lists for your congregation's programs and committees? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	50	✓	Strength of the program.
26 Can prior service to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	50	✓	Setup groups or talents for past officers, etc.
27 Can the congregation modify the software's built-in categories of gifts, activities, and offices so that they can track those items which are of greatest interest to them? O= No ✓=Yes	50	✓	No built-in categories.
155 28 Does the software make it easy to prepare mailing labels and contact lists for various groups of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	51	✓	
29 Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? O= No ✓=Yes	90	✓	Shared household. Anniversary copied.
30 Are baptismal anniversaries supported? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	88	✓	
31 Does the software provide flexibility for addressing mail to individuals and households? O= No ✓=Yes	52	✓	
32 Does the software have the flexibility to handle extended family and nontraditional households? O= No ✓=Yes	55	✓	
33 If the software attempts to track family relationships does it have the necessary flexibility for blended families? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	55	✓	Relationships can be added as needed. Children can have multiple households.

Item	Page	Score	Comments
34 How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? O= Some ●= Most ✓=All ✓+ = Ready to send	56, 89	●	Several reports must be printed. Some numbers not available, but classes and membership changes are grouped as on synodical report. \$199 additional
35 If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? O= No ✓=Yes	93	✓	
36 Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? O= No ✓=Yes	97	✓	
37 Can pictures be included in the membership files? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	99	✓	Can be collected from albums on disk or pasted from clipboard.
156 38 Does the software provide places to record cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other similar contact information that is specific to an individual rather than shared by a household? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	100	✓	Up to ten types of phone numbers and five e-mail addresses per individual. Program will launch e-mail program to send a message to a selected address.
Summary Score For Membership		28	

**Table 2
Contributions**

System Revelations

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? O= Obligation ●= Configurable ✓= Grace	60	✓	Standard pledge, contributions, difference. Not configurable.
	2 Can the software provide the necessary support and reporting for every member visits? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	65	✓	Must use Membership system
157	3 Will the programs provide the necessary phone and mailing lists for Bible studies, cottage meetings, and the like? O= No ✓=Yes	66	✓	Use Membership to break down into groups.
	4 How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? O= Can't be done ●= Outside help required ✓=Easy	66	✓-	Field names in sample letter were different from those in file and were removed by my Works 7.0.
	5 Can the program prepare files a service company could use to mail monthly packets of envelopes? O= No ✓=Yes	67	✓	ACH deposits
	6 Does the software provide a reasonable way to project income without pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	69	○	
	7 Can pledges for the coming year be compared easily with those for prior years? O= No ✓=Yes	70	✓	Fund List screen allows quick comparison. Separate reports required.

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	8 Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? O= No ✓=Yes	71	✓	Can be prepared for any date range.
	9 Can pledges and contributions for a variety of funds be recorded rapidly and easily? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	Use Enter is tab option and space bar on button. Date repeats. Bar codes. Show last ten would be helpful.
	10 Does the software avoid business/legal terms like "balance due" or "dues." Are recommended terms utilized instead? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	61	✓	
	11 Does the program avoid other questionable terms like "seed gifts" or "pew rental." Does it avoid distinguishing between tithes and offerings? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	68	✓	
158	12 Can contributors be divided into groups by the amount of their gifts or the funds to which they contribute? O= No ✓=Yes	74	○	
	13 Will the program accept special purpose pledges spread over a period of several years and report all the contributions received in fulfillment of the pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	74	✓	
	14 Can large gifts be acknowledged separately with appropriate wording? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	
	15 Can reminders be sent for planned, periodic gifts? O= No ✓=Yes	75	○	Remittance report fails.
	16 Can hundreds of different designated offerings be received, totaled, reported, and posted to the proper fund in the financial system? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	Unlimited number of funds.
	17 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
18	Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the programs? ○= No ✓=Yes	31	○	Offering and pledge amounts cannot be read with a word processor, but would be accessible with to simple programs.
19	Have provisions been made to avoid distributing phone numbers and street addresses that should not be given out? ○= No ✓=Yes	32	○	
	Summary Score for Contributions		9	

**Table 3
Financial Records**

System Quicken (Revelations)

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Does the bookkeeping system use churchly terms instead of business terms? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	76	●	
	2 Can appropriate account names be used instead of names like "accounts receivable," "sales," or "cost of goods?" O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	78	○ ●	<i>QuickBooks</i> requires "Receivables" <i>Quicken</i> does not.
160	3 Does the financial system support fund accounting? O= No ✓=Yes	78	○	Individual funds should be set up as separate files that are separately maintained.
	4 Can a large number of small funds that share a single bank account be handled easily and conveniently without losing track of their individual balances? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	79	○	
	5 Can administrative costs be allocated to various ministries? O= No ✓=Yes	79	✓	Not intuitive.
	Summary Score Finance		-1	
	System Total		32	

**APPENDIX C
SHEPHERD'S STAFF**

**Table 1
Membership**

System Shepherd's Staff

Item	Page	Score	Comments
1 Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? O= No ✓=Yes	30	✓-	Several extraneous fields
2 Does the software distinguish those who are part of the congregation from those who are not? O= No ● = Configurable ✓=Yes	24, 26	✓	
3 Does the software recognize members of other congregations who are temporarily in the care in your congregation's pastor(s)? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	25	✓	Such persons are treated as members with status of associate member.
4 Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? O=Missing ●=Too much or too little detail ✓=Just right	23	●	Register provides a place to record official acts of this congregation. Not tied to membership. Those from other places will not have this detail recorded unless it is in a note.
5 How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? O=Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	26	✓	Most complete visitation features. Reminders of appointments and event dates.

161

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	6 Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? O=No ●=Yes, but difficult ✓=Yes	27	✓	Dynamic subgroups are a real strength. Define once (or import definition) use again and again.
	7 Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? O=No ●=No, but unused fields can be hidden ✓=Yes	30	✓	Some fluff, but tabs keep it from getting in the way.
	8 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? O= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	
	9 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? O= No ✓=Yes	31	○	Accessible through any program that can used MDAC. This includes "security log"
162	10 Have provisions been made for unlisted phone numbers and street addresses that should not be published? O= No ●=Phone only ✓=Yes	32	✓	Unlisted phone option. Use inactive alternate address for street address.
	11 Does the software differentiate between baptized members and communicants? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	✓	First Communion field separate from confirmation.
	12 If your congregation permits children who have not been confirmed to commune can they be identified and separated from those who have been confirmed? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	✓	
	13 If your congregation needs to distinguish between active and inactive members does the software support that distinction? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	36	✓	
	14 Does the software record when and how individuals became members of the congregation? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	✓	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	15 Does the software record when and how individuals were removed from the congregation's membership? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	38, 41	✓	
	16 Are the terms for recording how people joined or left the congregation consistent with your church body's theological principles and reporting requirements? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	41	●	Built in categories need adjustment.
	17 Can basic information about prospective members be kept and distinguished from those of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	42	✓	
163	18 Does the system provide a convenient means of recording and reporting visits made by evangelism teams and others? O= missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	42	✓	Visitation module is best of three. "Go Visiting" feature a good idea. Auto scheduling???
	19 Can the system be used to produce mailings for prospective members? O= No ✓=Yes	42	✓	
	20 Do the prospect records avoid terms such as "decision for Christ" that are not consistent with Lutheran theology? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	43	✓	
	21 Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	45	○	Awkward. Seems unnecessarily complicated to set up.
	22 Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	46	✓	Missed a specific number of weeks.
	23 Can gifts or abilities that could be useful to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	46	✓	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	24 Does the software avoid confusing gifts and abilities with programs and committees? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	50	✓	
	25 Will the program produce mailing labels, rosters, and contact lists for your congregation's programs and committees? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	50	✓	
	26 Can prior service to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	50	✓	
	27 Can the congregation modify the software's built-in categories of gifts, activities, and offices so that they can track those items which are of greatest interest to them? O= No ✓=Yes	50	✓	No initial list
164	28 Does the software make it easy to prepare mailing labels and contact lists for various groups of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	51	✓	Dynamic subgroups are strength of this system. More experienced users can define them and the program automatically updates them when they are used.
	29 Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? O= No ✓=Yes	90	✓	Household/Person structure
	30 Are baptismal anniversaries supported? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	88	✓	
	31 Does the software provide flexibility for addressing mail to individuals and households? O= No ✓=Yes	52	✓	
	32 Does the software have the flexibility to handle extended family and nontraditional households? O= No ✓=Yes	55	✓	Editable list

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	33 If the software attempts to track family relationships does it have the necessary flexibility for blended families? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	55	✓	Editable list
	34 How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? O= Some ●= Most ✓=All ✓+= Ready to send	56, 89	●	
	35 If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? O= No ✓=Yes	93	✓	
	36 Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? O= No ✓=Yes	97	✓	
165	37 Can pictures be included in the membership files? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	99	✓	
	38 Does the software provide places to record cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other similar contact information that is specific to an individual rather than shared by a household? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	100	✓	Personal e-mail and alternate phones
	Summary Score For Membership		32	

**Table 2
Contributions**

System Shepherd's Staff

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? O= Obligation ●= Configurable ✓= Grace	60	✓	Ahead/Behind or remaining balance. Pledge, offering, contribution. Not configurable.
	2 Can the software provide the necessary support and reporting for every member visits? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	65	✓	Dynamic subgroups make it possible for a more skilled user to set up the lists and others to use them ever afterward.
166	3 Will the programs provide the necessary phone and mailing lists for Bible studies, cottage meetings, and the like? O= No ✓=Yes	66	✓	
	4 How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? O= Can't be done ●= Outside help required ✓=Easy	66	✓	Built in report for this purpose
	5 Can the program prepare files a service company could use to mail monthly packets of envelopes? O= No ✓=Yes	67	✓	
	6 Does the software provide a reasonable way to project income without pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	69	✓	In income account budgeting area of Finance module
	7 Can pledges for the coming year be compared easily with those for prior years? O= No ✓=Yes	70	○	
	8 Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? O= No ✓=Yes	71	✓	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	9 Can pledges and contributions for a variety of funds be recorded rapidly and easily? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	75	✓	
	10 Does the software avoid business/legal terms like "balance due" or "dues." Are recommended terms utilized instead? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	61	✓	
	11 Does the program avoid other questionable terms like "seed gifts" or "pew rental." Does it avoid distinguishing between tithes and offerings? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	68	✓	
	12 Can contributors be divided into groups by the amount of their gifts or the funds to which they contribute? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	74	✓	
167	13 Will the program accept special purpose pledges spread over a period of several years and report all the contributions received in fulfillment of the pledges? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	74	✓	
	14 Can large gifts be acknowledged separately with appropriate wording? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	75	✓	
	15 Can reminders be sent for planned, periodic gifts? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	75	✓	Requires advanced user to create subgroup and setup merge file.
	16 Can hundreds of different designated offerings be received, totaled, reported, and posted to the proper fund in the financial system? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	75	✓	
	17 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	✓	
	18 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the programs? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	○	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
19	Have provisions been made to avoid distributing phone numbers and street addresses that should not be given out? O= No ✓=Yes	32	✓	No phone number. Handles addresses as in Membership.
	Summary for Contributions		15	

**Table 3
Financial Records**

System Shepherd's Staff

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Does the bookkeeping system use churchly terms instead of business terms? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	76	✓	
	2 Can appropriate account names be used instead of names like "accounts receivable," "sales," or "cost of goods?" O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	78	✓	Optional FASB 116 feature treats pledges as a receivable.
	3 Does the financial system support fund accounting? O= No ✓=Yes	78	✓	
169	4 Can a large number of small funds that share a single bank account be handled easily and conveniently without losing track of their individual balances? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	79	✓	Dedicated accounts are miniature funds that due their banking with a larger fund.
	5 Can administrative costs be allocated to various ministries? O= No ✓=Yes	79	✓	
	Summary for Finance		5	
	System Total		52	

**APPENDIX D
LUTHERAN CHURCH WINDOWS**

**Table 1
Membership**

System Church Windows

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Does the majority of information gathered serve a gospel purpose? O= No ✓=Yes	30	✓	
	2 Does the software distinguish those who are part of the congregation from those who are not? O= No ● = Configurable ✓=Yes	24, 26	✓	
170	3 Does the software recognize members of other congregations who are temporarily in the care in your congregation's pastor(s)? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	25	●	
	4 Are records kept of official acts such as Baptisms, weddings, and funerals? If so, how detailed are the records? O=Missing ●=Too much or too little detail ✓=Just right	23	●	Additional fields can be added easily
	5 How easy is it to keep records of visits and other kinds of pastoral care? O=Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	26	○	History easily recorded and shared, but no way to schedule a visit. LCIS type follow-up field.
	6 Can the software be used to identify people who may have similar needs? O=No ●=Yes, but difficult ✓=Yes	27	✓	List maker is very easy to use and customize.
	7 Will most of the information in the membership records will actually be used? O=No ●=No, but unused fields can be hidden ✓=Yes	30	✓	No fluff, but fields can be added, hidden, and reordered.

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	8 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	✓	
	9 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the membership software? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	31	✓	Some information visible but most inaccessible.
	10 Have provisions been made for unlisted phone numbers and street addresses that should not be published? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> =Phone only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	32	✓	Alternate address or note can be used for street addresses that should not be published.
	11 Does the software differentiate between baptized members and communicants? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	36	✓	
171	12 If your congregation permits children who have not been confirmed to commune can they be identified and separated from those who have been confirmed? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	36	✓	
	13 If your congregation needs to distinguish between active and inactive members does the software support that distinction? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	36	✓	
	14 Does the software record when and how individuals became members of the congregation? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	38, 41	✓	LCMS codes pre-installed.
	15 Does the software record when and how individuals were removed from the congregation's membership? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	38, 41	✓	LCMS codes pre-installed
	16 Are the terms for recording how people joined or left the congregation consistent with your church body's theological principles and reporting requirements? <input type="radio"/> = No <input checked="" type="radio"/> = Configurable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =Yes	41	✓	LCMS codes setup automatically at installation.

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	17 Can basic information about prospective members be kept and distinguished from those of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	42	✓	
	18 Does the system provide a convenient means of recording and reporting visits made by evangelism teams and others? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	42	✓	
	19 Can the system be used to produce mailings for prospective members? O= No ✓=Yes	42	✓	
	20 Do the prospect records avoid terms such as “decision for Christ” that are not consistent with Lutheran theology? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	43	✓	Initially identical to Member record, however additional fields can be added and unneeded fields hidden.
172	21 Are records kept of Communion and worship attendance? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	45	✓	Easiest of three.
	22 Can the system create a follow-up list for worship or Communion attendance? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	46	✓	Persons who did not attend during a given period. Or summary
	23 Can gifts or abilities that could be useful to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	46	✓	
	24 Does the software avoid confusing gifts and abilities with programs and committees? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	50	✓	
	25 Will the program produce mailing labels, rosters, and contact lists for your congregation’s programs and committees? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	50	✓	
	26 Can prior service to the congregation be noted and easily found? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	50	○	Requires additional groups.

Item	Page	Score	Comments
27 Can the congregation modify the software's built-in categories of gifts, activities, and offices so that they can track those items which are of greatest interest to them? O= No ✓=Yes	50	✓	
28 Does the software make it easy to prepare mailing labels and contact lists for various groups of members? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	51	✓	
29 Is the program structured in such a way that users rarely need to enter the same information twice? O= No ✓=Yes	90	✓	Quick entry. Choose matching items from list on city and zip.
30 Are baptismal anniversaries supported? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	88	✓	
173 31 Does the software provide flexibility for addressing mail to individuals and households? O= No ✓=Yes	52	✓	
32 Does the software have the flexibility to handle extended family and nontraditional households? O= No ✓=Yes	55	✓	
33 If the software attempts to track family relationships does it have the necessary flexibility for blended families? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	55	✓	
34 How much of the information needed for the annual report is provided by the software? O= Some ●= Most ✓=All ✓+= Ready to send	56, 89	✓	Requires multiple reports.
35 If your congregation will have more than one computer does the software enable more than one person to access the files at the same time? O= No ✓=Yes	93	✓	
36 Can a person's entire file be accessed from a single place on the computer? O= No ✓=Yes	97	✓	

Item	Page	Score	Comments
37 Can pictures be included in the membership files? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	99	✓	
38 Does the software provide places to record cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other similar contact information that is specific to an individual rather than shared by a household? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes Summary Score For Membership	100	✓	E-mail only preset. Add a field for cell phone or web URL.
		31	

**Table 2
Contributions**

System Church Windows

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Are the terminology and approach used by the software those of legal obligation or a response to grace? O= Obligation ●= Configurable ✓= Grace	60	✓	Option to use "estimate of giving" instead of pledge.
	2 Can the software provide the necessary support and reporting for every member visits? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use and share	65	○	Phone lists and directories. Visitation feature could be used to record centrally who has been seen.
175	3 Will the programs provide the necessary phone and mailing lists for Bible studies, cottage meetings, and the like? O= No ✓=Yes	66	✓	Create groups or lists/labels report in membership
	4 How easily can the software be used with your word processing program for individualized letters, statements, and response cards for a direct mail campaign? O= Can't be done ●= Outside help required ✓=Easy	66	✓	
	5 Can the program prepare files a service company could use to mail monthly packets of envelopes? O= No ✓=Yes	67	✓	
	6 Does the software provide a reasonable way to project income without pledges? O= No ✓=Yes	69	○	Allows percent adjustment to budget or previous years actual Report for this purpose
	7 Can pledges for the coming year be compared easily with those for prior years? O= No ✓=Yes	70	✓	
	8 Will the software provide regular progress reports to those who have pledged? O= No ✓=Yes	71	✓	
	9 Can pledges and contributions for a variety of funds be recorded rapidly and easily? O= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	Optional automatic division of gifts by pledge.

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	10 Does the software avoid business/legal terms like “balance due” or “dues.” Are recommended terms utilized instead? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	61	✓	
	11 Does the program avoid other questionable terms like “seed gifts” or “pew rental.” Does it avoid distinguishing between tithes and offerings? ○= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	68	✓	
	12 Can contributors be divided into groups by the amount of their gifts or the funds to which they contribute? ○= No ✓=Yes	74	✓	Multiple reports can be created by setting various options
	13 Will the program accept special purpose pledges spread over a period of several years and report all the contributions received in fulfillment of the pledges? ○= No ✓=Yes	74	✓	
176	14 Can large gifts be acknowledged separately with appropriate wording? ○= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	Selection option on statements
	15 Can reminders be sent for planned, periodic gifts? ○= No ✓=Yes	75	○	Does not seem possible to select on pledge type.
	16 Can hundreds of different designated offerings be received, totaled, reported, and posted to the proper fund in the financial system? ○= No ✓=Yes	75	✓	
	17 Is access to confidential information restricted by user or password? ○= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	
	18 Is confidential information encrypted so that it cannot be displayed without using the programs? ○= No ✓=Yes	31	✓	

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
19	Have provisions been made to avoid distributing phone numbers and street addresses that should not be given out?	32	✓	
	O= No ✓=Yes			
	Summary for Contributions		15	

Table 3
Financial Records

System Church Windows

	Item	Page	Score	Comments
	1 Does the bookkeeping system use churchly terms instead of business terms? O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	76	✓	Sample good. Initial account list blank.
	2 Can appropriate account names be used instead of names like "accounts receivable," "sales," or "cost of goods?" O= No ●= Configurable ✓=Yes	78	✓	
	3 Does the financial system support fund accounting? O= No ✓=Yes	78	✓	
178	4 Can a large number of small funds that share a single bank account be handled easily and conveniently without losing track of their individual balances? O= Missing or awkward ✓=Easy to use	79	○	Offerings received for other organizations can be posted directly to liability accounts.
	5 Can administrative costs be allocated to various ministries? O= No ✓=Yes	79	○	
	Summary for Finance		3	
	System Total		49	

APPENDIX E
SAMPLE LCMS CONGREGATIONAL REPORT

ID Number: 944013
 SAINT PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
 WAPELLO IA

2002 CONGREGATION STATISTICS REPORT

December 29, 2003

BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP

- 1. Total Baptized Membership.
- 2. Baptisms During the year
 - a. Baptisms of Infants/Children
 - b. Baptisms of Adults.

CONFIRMED MEMBERSHIP

- 3. Total Confirmed Membership.
- 4. *GAINS*
 - a. Adults Confirmed.
 - b. Juniors Confirmed (Parents Members) ...
 - c. Juniors Confirmed (Parents Non-Members)
 - d. Profession of Faith.
 - e. Transfer from Other LCMS.
 - f. Receive from Other Lutheran.
- LOSSES*
 - g. Deaths.
 - h. Transfer to Other LCMS.
 - i. Release to Other Lutheran.
 - j. Join Non-Lutheran.
 - k. Moved without Transfer.
 - l. Excommunicated.
 - m. Other.

5. WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE _____

6. VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
 Members _____ Non-Members _____

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ENROLLMENT & STAFF

ENROLLMENT

STAFF

	Sunday Bible Classes		Weekday Classes		c. Confirmation Class	STAFF				
	a. Members	b. Non-Members	c. Members	d. Non-Members		f. Pastors	g. Commissioned	h. Lay Teacher	i. Other Leaders	j. Non-teaching Staff
7. Cradle/Nursery	_____	_____	██	██	██	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. 2yr/Parents	_____	_____	_____	_____	██	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Age 2-3	_____	_____	_____	_____	██	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Age 4-5	_____	_____	_____	_____	██	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Grade 1-2	_____	_____	_____	_____	██	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Grade 3-4	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Grade 5-6	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Grade 7-8	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Grade 9-12	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Adult	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Special Class	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 18. RECEIPTS
 - a. Total Contributions. \$ _____
 - b. Total other Income. \$ _____
- 19. DISBURSEMENTS
 - a. At home Expenses. \$ _____
 - b. At Large District/Synod Contributions \$ _____
 - c. Other at Large Contributions. \$ _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Abdon, Donald A. *Organizing Around the Great Commission*. 2d. ed., Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, 1977.
- _____. *Personal Interview Stewardship*. Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, 1976.
- _____. *Training and Equipping The Saints*. 3d. ed., Indianapolis: Parish Leadership Seminars, 1977.
- Althaus, Paul. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Arand, Charles P. "Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21st Century," Unpublished paper presented to the participants in the Pastoral Leadership Institute, St. Louis, 3 December 2001.
- Cousins, Don, Leith Anderson, and Arthur DeKruyter. *Mastering Church Management*. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, Christianity Today, Inc., 1990.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II*. Translated by Fred Kramer. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978.
- Coiner, Harry G. "The Pastor As Administrator of the Christian Fellowship. *Concordia Theological Monthly*," vol. 35: 271-283.
- The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism: With Application for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974
- _____. *Spiritual Gifts: A Report of the Commission of Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1995.
- Department of Stewardship Ministry, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. *Congregational Stewardship Workbook*, 2000 edition. St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2000.

- EduSystems, Inc. *Membership. Vol. 1, User Reference Manual for the Lutheran Congregation Information System, Version 2.2.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1986.
- Elert, Werner. *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries.* Translated by N. E. Nagel. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966.
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *Model Constitution.* Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999.
- Foljanty, Lucas. "The Apple Museum," <http://www.theapplemuseum.com> (10 December 2003).
- Hollis, Jr., James W. *Beyond the Walls: A Congregational Guide for Lifestyle Relational Evangelism.* Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1993.
- Hoover, David W. and Roger W. Leenerts. *Enlightened with His Gifts: A Bible Study on Spiritual Gifts.* St. Louis: Lutheran Growth, 1979.
- Icon Systems Network, "Who We Are," 2003, http://www.iconsystemsnetwork.com/about_us/who_we_are.html, s.v. "About Us" (23 December 2003).
- Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, trans. United States Catholic Conference, Inc. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- Impagliazzo, John. "History in the Computing Curriculum, Appendix A: Computer History Timeline." http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/HCLAS/CSC/ComputingHistory/CompHist_timeline.cfm, (8 December 2003).
- Isenhower, Jr., Joe. "Third 'Igniting' Event Looks at Worship Attendance," *Reporter*, December, 2003: 2.
- Kantonen, T. A. *A Theology for Christian Stewardship.* Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1956.
- KC's Computer Closet, "Computer Closet Collection: IBM PC 5051" <http://www.computercloset.org/IBMPC.htm> (9 December 2003).
- Klos, Frank W. *Confirmation and First Communion: A Study Book.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968.
- Kueck, Bruce. "Ideas: Scatter Those You Can't Use," *Reporter*, January 1998: 14.
- Leonardas Dambriunas, Antanas Klimas, and William R. Schmalstieg. *Beginner's Lithuanian.* Franciscan Fathers: 1966; New York: Hippocrene Books, 1999.

- Lindgren, Alvin J. *Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration*. New York and London: Abingdon Press, 1963.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Small Catechism*. 1986 translation in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991.
- Marquart, Kurt E. *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, Vol. IX, gen. ed. Robert Preus. Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990.
- Moore, Gordon E. "Cramming more components onto integrated circuits" *Electronics* Vol. 38, No. 8 (April 19, 1965): 114-117.
- Muller, Lyle, ed. *Dialog Evangelism 2 Teacher's Manual*. St. Louis: Board for Evangelism Services, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1991(?).
- Nelson, E. Clifford "The New Shape of Lutheranism 1930—" in *The Lutherans in North America*. E. Clifford Nelson, ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. Vol. III. Translated by Walter F. Albrect. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.
- Salstrand, George A. E. *The Story of Stewardship in the United States of America*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956.
- Scaer, David P. *Christology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, Vol. VI, gen. ed. Robert Preus. Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989.
- Schaller, Bob. "The Origin, Nature, and Implications of 'Moore's Law:' The Benchmark of Progress in Semiconductor Electronics," 26 September 1996. <http://mason.gmu.edu/~rschalle/moorelaw.html> (December 9, 2003).
- Schmucker, Kurt J. *Fuzzy Sets, Natural Language Computations, and Risk Analysis*, Rockville, Maryland: Computer Science Press, 1984.
- Squires, Con "The Moment of Actual Giving," *Fund Raising Management*, vol. 28, no. 12 (February 1998): 32.
- _____. "Recapturing the Lapsed Perennial Donor." *Fund Raising Management*, vol. 28, no. 8 (October 1997): 36.
- Tappert, Theodore G., ed. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fisher, and Arthur C. Piepkorn. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.
- Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow: How to Find Your Gift and Use It*. Glendale, California: Regal Books Division of G/L Publications, 1974.

Walther, C. F. W. *Walther's "Pastorale" that is American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*. Translated and abridged by John M. Drickamer from the Fifth Edition of 1906. New Haven, Missouri: Lutheran News, 1995.

_____. *The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Congregation Independent of the State: A Collection of Testimonies from the Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and from the Private Writings of Its Orthodox Teachers in Walther on the Church* translated by John M. Drickamer. Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther. August R. Suelflow, ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981.

_____. *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry in Walther on the Church*, translated by John M. Drickamer, Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, August R. Suelflow, ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981.

Werning, Waldo. *Vision and Strategy for Church Growth*. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1977.

Ylvisaker, Joh. *The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with Explanatory Notes*. English edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932, Reprinted by Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 1977.

Other Works Consulted

Arn, Win, Carrol Nyquist, and Charles Arn. *Who Cares About Love? How to Bring Together the Great Commission and the Great Commandment*. Pasadena: Church Growth Press, 1986.

Callahan, Kennon L. *Visiting in an Age of Mission: A Handbook for Person-to-Person Ministry*. New York: Harper Collins: 1994.

Clark, Stephen B. *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1980.

Chemnitz, Martin. *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*. Translated by Luther Poellot. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981.

- Department of Systematic Theology, Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne. *The Formula of Agreement in Confessional Lutheran Perspective: With a Summary and Study Guide Prepared by The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: The Office of the President and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999.
- Fritz, John H. C. *Pastoral Theology: A Handbook of Scriptural Principles Written Especially for Pastors of the Lutheran Church*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932.
- Gahl, Dick and Dave Hoover, eds. *Congregational Stewardship Workbook*. St. Louis: The Department of Stewardship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1993.
- [Gambill, Linda]. *LCIS Installation Workbook*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1983.
- Kolb, Erwin J., ed. *Evangelism Resource Book*. Revised Edition, St. Louis: The Board for Evangelism of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1979.
- McGavran, Donald and Win Arn. *Back to Basics in Church Growth*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to St. John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, general editor. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971.
- Mueller, Norbert and George Kraus, eds. *Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990.
- Mueller, Walter. *Direct Mail Ministry: Evangelism, Stewardship, Care Giving*. Creative Leadership Series, Lyle E. Schaller, ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Schaller, Lyle E., *Activating the Passive Church: Diagnosis and Treatment*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- Schuetze, Armin W. and Irwin J. Habeck. *The Shepherd under Christ: A Textbook for Pastoral Theology*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974.
- Werning, Waldo. *Supply-Side Stewardship: A Call to Biblical Priorities*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.
- _____. *Christian Stewards: Confronted and Committed*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982.
- Zerbst, Fritz. *The Office of Woman in the Church: A Study in Practical Theology*. Translated by Albert G. Merkens. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.